THE FAMILY AT COURT IN LITERATURE AND ART
DURING THE REIGN OF PHILIP IV

AN ABSTRACT
SUBMITTED ON THE FIRST DAY OF APRIL 2014
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
OF THE SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS
OF TULANE UNIVERSITY
FOR THE DEGREE
OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY
Kurt R. Hofer

APPROVED:
Prof. Laura Bass, Ph.D.
Director
Laura Bass
Prof. James Boyd, Ph.D.

Prof. Henry W. Sullivan, Ph.D.

Prof. Tanya Tiffany, Ph.D.
Abstract

This dissertation examines representations of the family in art and literature of the Spanish court during Philip IV’s reign. I contend that depictions of royal and noble families in court settings—and by artists who resided at court—spoke to the monarchy’s social and political concerns at a time of imperial crisis. Family is understood here not as a fixed entity, but as a mobile cultural construct that bent, in Golden Age Spain, to address a variety of needs. The emotional and theological intricacies of a prince’s marriage indicated the preparedness or ineptitude of a king to be; a noblewoman’s marriage abroad to a foreign prince embodied Spain’s struggles to contain the Thirty Years’ War; the depiction of an artist’s family in a royal palace demonstrated the ambitions of the courtier-artist.

Chapter 1 examines Vélez de Guevara’s play Reinar después de morir (1635). I propose that the play’s thematic interest lies in an attempt to reconcile the strictures of dynastic marriage—marriage for reasons of state—with the necessities of emotional fulfilment and mutual trust of marriage partners suggested in contemporary conduct manuals. Chapter 2 reads two short stories from María de Zayas’s Desengaños amorosos (1648), “Mal presagio casar de lejos,” and “Estragos que causa el vicio,” as nationalist allegories. I suggest that the families Zayas depicts are metaphors for a Spanish national family, belagured in European theaters of war and beset by domestic conflicts such as the Portuguese and Catalonian uprisings of the 1640s. In Chapter 3 I explore a painting, La familia del pintor (1665), by Juan Bautista del Mazo, son-in-law of Diego Velázquez and heir to his post as painter of the king. I compare Mazo’s La familia del pintor to Velázquez Las meninas. Mazo’s proud portrayal of his own biological family and of a
dynasty of court artists indicates that the painting is not merely deriviative of his father-in-law’s masterpiece, *Las meninas*; rather, Mazo has a pictorial agenda all his own, one that includes the social advancement of the court artist and of a multitude of heirs seeking the king’s patronage in other careers.
THE FAMILY AT COURT IN LITERATURE AND ART
DURING THE REIGN OF PHILIP IV

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED ON THE FIRST DAY OF APRIL 2014
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
OF THE SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS
OF TULANE UNIVERSITY
FOR THE DEGREE
OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

Kurt R. Hofer

APPROVED:

Prof. Laura Bass, Ph.D.
Director

Prof. James Boydan, Ph.D.

Prof. Henry W. Sullivan, Ph.D.

Prof. Tanya Tiffany, Ph.D.
Table of Contents

List of Illustrations iii

Introduction 1

Chapter 1 Marriage and Kingship in Luis Vélez de Guevara’s Reinar después de morir 23
1.1 Kingship and Matrimony According to Ribadeneira and Calderón 31
1.2 Marriage, Manhood, and Political Leadership 35
1.3 Framing Marriage: Inés de Castro According to Antonio Ferreira and Luis Mexía de la Cerda 45
1.4 Vélez de Guevara Frames Marriage: A Virtuous Wife, a Feeckless Husband, and the Failure of Kingship 57

Chapter 2 Family and Nation in María de Zayas’s “Mal presagio casar de lejos” and “Estragos que causa el vicio” 73
2.1 A Royal Household Abroad: The Nation as a Family in “Mal presagio casar de lejos” 77
2.2 Don Gaspar in Lisbon: Learning Loyalty to the Royal Family 96
2.3 The Enemy in the House: Zayas’s Florentina, María de Guevarra’s “Tratado,” and the Portuguese Presence in Madrid 105

Chapter 3 Family Portraits and Families of the Artist 120
3.1 Spanish and European Family Painting 124
3.2 Velázquez’s Family: Las meninas 140
3.3 Mazo’s Family: La familia del pintor 145

Conclusion 163

Appendix 168

Bibliography 181
List of Illustrations

1. Velázquez. *Las meninas, o la familia de Felipe IV* 168
2. Rubens. *The Artist and His Wife in the Honeysuckle* 169
3. Mazo. *La familia del pintor* 170
6 and 7. Companion portraits *Don Diego Corral y Arellano and Antonia de Ipeñarrieta y Galdós and her son Luis* 172
8. Velázquez. *Felipe Próspero* 172
10. Pantoja de la Cruz. *Nacimiento de la Virgen* 174
11. Murillo. *Sagrada familia del pajarito* 175
12. The four eldest sitters of Mazo’s *familia* 176
13. The interrelated body language of the sitters 177
14. Mazo’s second wife holds her daughter’s hand within hers 178
15 and 16. The monarch in the backgrounds of *La familia del pintor* and *Las meninas* 179
17. Velázquez and Mazo. *Infanta Margarita* 180
Introduction

In 1434 Leon Battista Alberti, the great Italian Renaissance polymath, published his paean to the culturally and politically ascendant Genoese merchant class, *I libri della famiglia (The Family in Renaissance Florence)* (1434). The book begins at the deathbed of a dying patriarch, Lorenzo Alberti, who gives practical advice to his heirs on how they may achieve fame and prosperity. The text covers not only grave and morose themes but also such pragmatic suggestions as to pick the first house you move into carefully so as not to experience the “discomfort and irritation” and lost items that inevitably accompany a subsequent move (182). By the early 1500s, conduct manuals not unlike Alberti’s arguably eclipsed the heretofore dominant genre of instruction for the monarchy, the *specula principum* (mirrors for princes). Queen Isabel “The Catholic,” for instance, commissioned a now lost book *On the Education of Well-Born Girls (De erudition nobelium puellarum)* (Fantazzi 24). A generation later, her daughter, the ill-fated Catherine of Aragon, was the dedicatee of two conduct manuals concerning the preparation for marriage of Christian women, by Juan Luis Vives and Desiderius Erasmus. Juan Luis Vives’s *The Education of a Christian Woman (De institutione feminae Christianae)* (1523) and Erasmus’s *The Institution of Marriage* (1526) were seminal texts of Renaissance humanist literature. The works of Vives and Erasmus presaged a boom, within Renaissance and baroque European letters, of the conduct manual genre: texts concerning the proper etiquette and behavior of kings, courtiers, royal and aristocratic men and women, and, increasingly, the family.
With the twin rise of the printing press and increasingly centralized monarchical states willing to sponsor the intellectual endeavors of humanists, the family of early modern Europe was effectively brought to court, as the title of this project indicates. That is, with the onset of court-centered urbanization and the swell of literate nobles and professional classes that accompanied the growth of cities, there came too a growth in the number of paintings, plays, short stories, and conduct literature directed to an ever-expanding audience that took up family life. Textual debates over family life were not, however, projects of humanist fancy disconnected from the acute political crises that beset Imperial Spain and were perhaps felt most acutely from the seat of power, at court in Madrid. Indeed, the application and interrelationship of family life to early modern political, economic, and social thought was a veritable topos of Renaissance and baroque cultural production, as a growing body of scholarship on the subject recognizes. Well-planned betrothals and marriages undergirded the stability of monarchical regimes, a well-administered and economically self-sufficient estate shielded against the nobility’s proclivity for debt-fueled leisure and excess consumption, a man’s healthy and faithful relationship to his wife determined fitness for public leadership, and so on.

Fray Luis de León’s *La perfecta casada* (1583) is perhaps the most canonical manual of family life in Golden Age letters, but it is matched by myriad lesser-known works from the same time period: Juan Costa’s *Buen gobierno del ciudadano* (1584), Marco Antonio de Camos’s *Microcosmía y gobierno universal del hombre christiano* (1592), Gaspar Astete’s *Tratado del gobierno de la familia, y estado de las viudas y doncellas* (1597), Luisa Padilla’s *Nobleza virtuosa* (1644), and so on. For what reasons was writing on the family so prominent in early modern Spain? Did literature and
painting on the family in Spain reflect historical circumstances that pertained distinctly to that national tradition, as opposed to the vast body of cultural production on the family in other Western European countries? How did treatises on the family interact with imaginative literature and the visual arts that took up the same questions of marriage, parenting, and behavioral expectations within and outside the home? Finally, was the family of baroque Spanish literature and painting nothing more than an amalgam of reified models in which patriarch, wife, and children all assumed formulaic roles; or did family roles allow for some degree of individuation?

This dissertation project aims to study representations of family produced by court artists during the reign of the Philip IV in an effort to answer these questions. Following James Casey and Bernard Vincent, I take family not as a static entity but as a mobile methodological framework by which to examine cultural objects (210–11).¹ That is to say, family is a point of departure for exploring broader themes in early modern Spanish cultural history. A comedia about a contentious clandestine marriage of a prince to a socially lesser noblewoman draws forth debates surrounding the ideal nature of kingship (chapter 1); short stories (novellas) concerning treacherous trysts between Spanish nobles who serve the king and suspect foreigners elicit an examination of the essence of early modern Spanish nationhood (chapter 2); and a self-portrait of the artist within the Spanish royal palace (chapter 3) suggest how overlapping articulations of family informed the early modern subjectivity of nascent professional elites at court.

¹ Casey and Vincent: “La familia es un concepto metodológico para comprender la estructura de una sociedad, no una entidad fija, una «cosa» que se define a priori y se procede a estudiar en sí y de por sí” (210–11).
Contemporary scholarship on the family in early modern Spain has generally been conducted through two methodologies: social historical approaches based on archival research, and cultural approaches that take literary works and/or visual representations as their main objects of study. Each method articulates a different understanding of the family. One of the most important historians on the subject is James Casey; explaining his methodology in *Early Modern Spain: A Social History* (1999), he proposes that the “rather private, [and] therefore hidden” workings of Spanish life are gleaned in large part from “testaments and marriage contracts, litigation over inheritance, [and] records of the moral policing of ecclesiastical tribunals” (199). Casey sees pride in lineage (dynastic pride), the entail system, and the heavy involvement of parents and extended families in betrothals as evidence that the family reproduced “the clan structure of Spanish society” (202). The word “clan” implies a diffuse definition of social relations that minimizes the importance of specific family bonds such as that of husband and wife or of parents to their children. Although a scholar of literature and not strictly history, Jorge Mariscal corroborates Casey’s sentiment in *Contradictory Subjects: Quevedo, Cervantes, and Seventeenth-Century Spanish Culture* (1991) with his own pronouncement on the early modern family: “because the subject could not be conceived of as separate from social relations, the idea of the family continued to be more generally understood in the form of broader collectives such as the clan, the monarchy, or the Church” (73).

If Casey and Mariscal represent what might be called an orthodox view on the family of early modern Spain, more recent scholarship, especially on early modern Spanish women, has come to an increasingly nuanced understanding of the family, and of the capacity for individual agency within it. In two recent books, *Guardianship, Gender,*
and the Nobility in Early Modern Spain (2011) and Women and Authority in Early Modern Spain: The Peasants of Galicia (2006), Grace Coolidge and Allyson Poska, respectively, have documented women’s ability to assert their rights within a historical context that, they argue, has too often uncritically been deemed “patriarchal.” Focusing on the nobility, Coolidge argues that the “prescriptive gender roles” of early modern Spain—such as those espoused by Vives and Erasmus, for instance—were ultimately trumped by noblemen’s need to preserve “family, power, and lineage” (2). Thus when a nobleman died before his son was old enough to assume the responsibility for affairs of the estate, widowed women exercised considerable influence as executors of their husband’s estate through the legal title of guardianship. Coolidge calls this a “flexible patriarchy” (8). Poska comes to a not dissimilar conclusion regarding the agency of Galician peasant women, who also had recourse to multiple avenues of social empowerment, from the drawing up of dowries to lawsuits and the ability to inherit.

In Subject Stages: Marriage, Theatre, and the Law in Early Modern Spain (2010) María M. Carrión similarly finds fissures in normative ideals. By studying court cases and the Spanish comedía together, Carrión fuses the methodology of the historian and the literary critic, proposing that theater and litigation both voiced dissent against marital norms as established by religious and civil law (28). Carrión argues that the sixteenth century marked the beginning of a “forceful” move to “institutionalize” marriage both in the comedía and within secular and ecclesiastic law—Philip II’s reformed legal code of 1569, La nueva recopilación, and the Council of Trent, respectively (22). However, instead of reproducing marriage as articulated by the letter of the law, theater and court
cases expressed counterhegemonic alternatives to the ideal of marriage staged by the Spanish Crown and the Catholic Church.

While Carrión focuses on marriage, other literary scholars engage the theme of family through the study of domesticity (rural and urban) and gender. In *La utilización del espacio doméstico rural en textos españoles del Renacimiento* (2010), for instance, Mar Martínez Góngora explores domestic space as a source of masculine concern as opposed to uniformly feminine duties and responsibilities. As her title suggests, domestic space is not conceived of as wholly feminine; rather, the domestic sphere becomes, in Renaissance and baroque prose, poetry, and conduct manuals, a space that depends on the patriarch’s assertion of his own authority and omnipotence (19). Propositional links between “el orden familiar, el monárquico, y el divino” (15–16), Martínez Góngora demonstrates that the well-administered home was a mirror image of the “política económica unificadora que hace posible la emergencia de un Estado nacional” (16). The early modern Spanish family, then, was at once a cultural, economic, and political entity that authors of both normative and imaginative literature strived to constitute as an expression of state power. Gender roles, family life, and political projects all intersected in Spanish Renaissance and baroque letters.


---

2 In Martínez Góngora’s own words: “en los textos de este periodo, el entorno doméstico no es concebido como un espacio exclusivamente femenino, sino que su configuración depende del dominio que su patriarca es capaz de ejercer en su interior así como el efecto económico y social que cada unidad familiar ejerce en la comunidad” (18–19).
draws from multiple literary genres, in this case plays, short stories, and conduct manuals, to assess “actitudes premodernas hacia la idea de lo doméstico” (4). However, Cirnigliaro addresses urban space, while Martínez Góngora addresses rural space. The distinction might seem superfluous, given that many, if not most, of the writers who eulogized ideal rural spaces, including Antonio de Guevara’s *Menosprecio de corte y alabanza de aldea* (1539), Fray Luis de León’s *La perfecta casada* (1572), Lope de Vega’s peasant-honor drama *Peribáñez y el Comendador de Ocaña* (1614), and treatise writer María de Guevara’s *Desengaños de la corte y mujeres valiosas* (1644), resided at court and addressed a court audience. “Rural space,” it would seem, was more often than not merely a platform to discuss the concerns of the urban nobility and royalty; indeed, expanding on the groundbreaking work of Noël Salamon, Martínez Góngora shows that supposedly rural spaces were models of urban household production pedaled by *arbitristas* hoping to counteract the urban nobility’s proclivity for debt and consumption. Yet, as Cirnigliaro shows, early modern Spanish cultural production also did not hesitate to engage the complexities of urban court life by recreating the urban environs of the court. Particularly pertinent examples were the *comedias de enredo* and *novela* genres. In other words, in the same time period Golden Age authors both attempted to recreate an Edenic (pre-urban) past and acknowledged the perils of the city—especially its dangerous ability to blur and thus undermine Spain’s theoretically rigid social hierarchy.

Madrid itself, Cirnigliaro argues, underwent a process of literary “domesticación” (19), by which characters in short stories, plays, and conduct manuals voiced the “actitudes, emociones, y comportamientos que la sociedad cortesana tuvo en relación con
la vida doméstica urbana” (48). While theories of domesticity and modernity, from Marx to Habermas to Walter Benjamin, have identified the nineteenth century as the period in which a bourgeois private sphere emerged, Cirnigliaro contends that the early modern period produced its own cultural forms of domesticity. Regardless of whether early modern domesticity was the precursor of modern domesticity in a teleological sense (the former inevitably “causing” the latter), Cirnigliaro proposes that early modern domesticity is worthy of study in its own right and on its own terms (37–38)—albeit, in her case, with heavy recourse to contemporary critical theory, such as Foucault’s notion of “heterotopia.”

My project has also drawn inspiration from Nieves Romero-Díaz’s study of the novella (novela cortesana), *Nueva nobleza, nueva novella: Reescribiendo la cultura urbana del barroco* (2002), for it too treats literary production at court. The novella genre post-Cervantes, according to Romero-Díaz, is essentially an urban one, in which an urban nobility confronts a series of primarily economic changes that threaten the very category of nobility itself as a distinct social class. Romero-Díaz argues that all of the forces of social organization of the *ancien régime*—“limpieza de sangre, el ejercicio militar, la genealogía, el principio de honor y el mayorazgo” (19)—are challenged, within the *novela cortesana*, by alternative discourses that the urban nobility must appropriate and assimilate if it is to survive as a coherent social class in Madrid. These alternatives, which we might call proto-bourgeois values, include “la importancia de la virtud, el poder del dinero, la realidad del progreso histórico, [y] la[s] . . . actividades comerciales” (19).

Just as J. H. Elliott identifies the Spanish baroque as a period characterized by imperial crisis generally, I agree with Romero-Díaz’s contention that Madrid’s urban
nobility experienced its own crisis *en miniature* vis-à-vis its privileged status as the administrators of Philip IV’s monarchical regime. This moral-ideological crisis is readily visible in Spanish *novelas* and other imaginative genres. The connections that Cirigliaro and Romero-Díaz make among literary production at court, urban domesticity, and the proximity of authors and their works to royal power—both in the representational sense of depicting court society and in the geographical sense of authors residing at court—heavily influence this dissertation project. Throughout my own study of family at court, I intuit the same interface that Romero-Díaz’s works suggest between exemplary or unexemplary representations of urban noble domestic life and the repair of Imperial Spain’s fortunes that Golden Age authors hoped to effect. Further, I propose that depictions of the urban nobility in literary and visual media participated in active dialogue with reformist discourses in other genres, such as conduct manuals and political treatises, that in unison if not always in perfect agreement sought to influence the actions of nobles and the Hapsburg monarchy alike for the betterment of Spain.

The last of the literary scholars from whom I take cues are Jorge Mariscal and Ruth El Saffar. *The Family at Court* was initially conceived of as a study of early modern subjectivity, and Mariscal and El Saffar, through their observations concerning the constitution of the early modern subject, influence my project’s theoretical scope in fundamental ways. Mariscal’s *Contradictory Subjects: Quevedo, Cervantes, and Seventeenth-Century Spanish Culture* (1991), for instance, with its grounding in Marxist historicism, draws a distinction between the “aristocratic subject” (of early modernity) and its “competitor, the singular or individuated rival” (of nineteenth-century bourgeois modernity) (32). I agree with Mariscal’s argument that the “autonomous individual” is
indeed a construction of the modern, bourgeois cultural imaginary—that early moderns could not conceive of themselves as sovereign creators of their own destiny in the same sense that moderns could. But I flatly disagree with Mariscal’s contention that an aristocratic ideology that privileged inherited title over social mobility, blood purity over individual virtue, landed wealth over commercial activity etc. was as successful as Mariscal claims “in representing itself as the only medium through which one could become a subject” (36). Indeed, as I show in chapter 3 of this study, on the Spanish court painter Juan Bautista del Mazo, a careful negotiation between individuated and more hierarchical (aristocratic) forms of subjectivity could and did occur in early modern culture.

My examination of the early modern family owes a great deal to Mariscal’s insistence on a non-essentialist construction of the early modern subject in which subjectivity is construed by competing and overlapping discourses (often) in conflict with one another. But I contend first that Mariscal overestimates how “successful” the “ruling elites” were in precluding alternative pathways of subjectivity that challenged aristocratic ideology. Second, I dispute Mariscal’s claim that the family of the early modern era could not be considered a “locus of moral and spiritual values” (62) and thus was powerless to “produce subjects”—that is, to contribute to the constitution of the subject in a meaningful way. Again, Mariscal is right to remind us that the notion of family and home as a private and autonomous sphere of life that protects us from the rigors of a brutal world is the inheritance of bourgeois modernity, but he is mistaken, in my view, to implicitly disregard the family as an object of study in early modern Spain simply because its definition does not conform to our own. In The Family at Court, I propose a
revisionist reading of Mariscal’s groundbreaking book, one in which the family and the affective relationships that constituted it were indeed mobilized within Spanish letters to fashion subjects that could at once conform to and contest regnant royal and aristocratic ideology.

In “The ‘I’ of the Beholder: Self and Other in Some Golden Age Texts” (1995), Ruth El Saffar treats aspects of early modern subjectivity that Mariscal’s study neglects: namely, the place, or lack thereof, of the feminine in the construction of the masculine subject. According to El Saffar, the male subject of Renaissance and Golden Age texts was constructed through a violent rejection of all that was “other,” the other signifying anything associated with femininity generally and motherhood especially. “Women,” El Saffar claims, came to “represent the passions and the emotions that work to destabilize the social order” (181). Scholars indebted to her such as Margaret Greer and Georgina Dopico-Black expand on this thesis by arguing for the association of the female body—in Dopico-Black’s case, that of the wife—with a variety of contagions that threatened early modern Spanish patriarchy.³ These contagions included impure (non–old Christian) blood, as well as sexual desire and the “interiority” (Greer, “Spanish” 364) associated with it—for a man’s indulgence of romantic feelings threatened his ability to act effectively within the all-male body politic. That is, it was believed that men were emasculated by excess contact with and contemplation of women, whose world of the body and feelings disarmed ideal manhood.

³ See Dopico-Black’s Introduction to Perfect Wives, Other Women: Adultery and Inquisition in Early Modern Spain (2001) and Greer’s reading of María de Zayas’s “Estragos que causa el vicio” (306–14) in María de Zayas Tells Baroque Tales of Love and the Cruelty of Men (2000).
El Saffar, Greer, and Dopico-Black all demonstrate that no study of subject construction in early modern Spanish literature can dispense with an examination of women. I expand on their work through the methodological and thematic filter of family. Despite’s women’s obvious relegation to second-class status in early modernity, the female characters studied in *The Family at Court* played intricate, even commanding roles as betrothed, wives, mistresses, or mothers. From a queen-wife tasked with defending her claim to the throne against a rival dynastic marriage candidate (chapter 1), to a betrothed noblewoman subject to the aggression of a Flemish foreigner (chapter 2), to the outstretched arm of an elegantly dressed courtier who unifies in a portrait two branches of painter’s family (chapter 3), the examples I study contribute to our understanding of the place of women and feminine subjectivity at the core of Hapsburg patriarchy.

In bringing together both literary texts and visual representations in the study of the family, I follow in the footsteps of Richard Helgerson. Helgerson’s combined study of the English domestic genre, Dutch genre painting, and the Spanish peasant-honor drama, *Adulterous Alliances: Home, State, and History in Early Modern European Drama and Painting* (2000), provides a compelling blueprint for dialogue across national traditions and between cultural media. Helgerson’s cross-disciplinary scholarship helps to dispel the myth of a nascent (Protestant) bourgeois culture that could only develop in the historical and cultural conditions of northern Europe, and offers keen insight into the exploration of early modern family and domesticity in the Spanish national tradition. In works such as Lope de Vega’s *Fuenteovejuna* (1619) and *Peribáñez y el Comendador de Ocaña* (1614), Helgerson perceives a “paradoxically enabling” (128) trope of Spanish
absolute monarchy. The awarding of “new dignity and new affective power to peasant homes, marriages and families” (131) works in conjunction with a need to align the home with the interests of the nascent modern state. Representations of the early modern home, then, often expressed an ideal relationship between state (the monarch) and subject—that is, the domestic family was an expression of the state’s highest ideals, the embodiment of its quest for mastery of the early modern body politic.

Helgerson observes that peasant-honor dramas, which vouchsafed the site of the home as protected by the Crown from intrusion by abusive feudal lords, were viewed primarily by court audiences. These audiences were meant to infer from these domestic dramas a sense of loyalty to the monarchy rather than to the organs of aristocratic power such as military orders or regional aristocracies that impeded state consolidation. Within Spanish court culture, then, court art of the family (re)imagined the bond between sovereign and subject, portraying it not as it was but as the monarch and his sponsored writers and artists wished it to be. The cue I take from Helgerson’s book is twofold. First, I appropriate Helgerson’s insight that the early modern domestic sphere was a vehicle for the expression of state power, not the refuge of so-called “private life” that it would become in the cultural forms of nineteenth century, especially the novel. Second, Helgerson’s Adulterous Alliances, along with examples of research in the field of Golden Age Spain such as Laura’s Bass’s The Drama of the Portrait (2008), demonstrate that the study of painting in conjunction with literary genres does not weaken, but rather rejuvenates the individual disciplines concerned and broadens the opportunities for symbiotic dialogue among them. Indeed, this project would be incomplete without the inclusion of religious and secular family painting, for these provide yet one more medium
by which the early modern family was conceptualized. As I will show, family painting harbored both key similarities to and striking differences from the families of printed words studied in chapters 1 and 2.

Although Helgerson serves as a model for my own scholarship, his book’s art historical dimensions provide only the creative impetus, not the theoretical content, for my own art historical pursuits. In including painting in this study of representations of the family in early modern Spain, I owe my greatest debt to the work of Javier Portús and Charlene Villaseñor Black. Portús’s article “Orden y concierto: Escenas familiares en la pintura española del renacimiento a Goya” (2002) provides a useful and insightful overview of the family in Spanish art from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. Portús identifies three specific manifestations of the family in Baroque Spanish art: portraits, genres scenes (often called bodegones), and religious art (20). He also makes the crucial observation that most Spanish family painting prior to 1750 was religious in nature and meant to illustrate the collective piety of the family body (32). Portús’s insight underscores the enormous importance of the relatively few secular family paintings of the Golden Age we possess, which include, most prominently, Velázquez’s Las meninas and a partial imitation by his son-in-law that I study in depth in chapter 3. At the same time, he reminds scholars of early modernity just how pervasive the lives of saints and the Holy Family (Jesus, Mary, and Joseph) were, not only as subjects of fervent religious devotion but also as popular models of family conduct that the Catholic Reformation taught believers to emulate.

Noting a perceptible “cambio de sensibilidad” (38) in religious art, Portús describes an “intimidad doméstica” (38) in works by prominent artists such as Zurbarán,
Juan Sánchez Cotán, Murillo, Alonso Cano, and others. Portús is not alone among art historians who have recently paid attention to the depiction of the family and promulgation of what we might call “family values” in Golden Age religious painting. Perhaps most notable is Villaseñor’s Creating the Cult of Saint Joseph: Art and Gender in the Spanish Empire (2006).\footnote{For studies of the overlap of royal domestic space and religious painting, see work by María Cruz de Carlos Varona such as “Representar el nacimiento. Imágenes y cultura material de un espacio de sociabilidad femenino en la España Altomoderna” (2007).} Villaseñor argues that seventeenth-century baroque religious art shifted away from depictions of the Virgin Mary to those of a “patriarchal nuclear Holy Family” (70) that emphasized husbandly masculine virtue and “the sanctity of marriage, family, and procreation” (69). Villaseñor and Portús scholarship disproves Mariscal’s argument that the early modern family possessed no “power to produce subjects” (63); they show that in fact the Holy Family of religious art was indeed such a site of subject formation for viewers who sought to emulate religious models in their everyday lives. At the same time, Villaseñor and Portús implicitly raise a question that The Family at Court seeks to answer: namely, if some notion of the nuclear family—husband, wife, and children—was operative in early modern Spain, how did it relate to the understanding of “family” fundamentally as a “clan” or tribe, as described by Casey and Mariscal? In other words, how did the “nuclear” family, with its discrete requirements of conjugal bliss and domestic fulfillment, resonate with or perhaps antagonize the conceptualization of family as a collective entity rooted in the pride of a great dynasty or “house” (Casa de)?

To address the overlapping meanings of a term that, I argue, underwent a visible process of cultural re-signification during the Spanish baroque, we must turn to the
definition of the family in the first dictionary of the Spanish language, Covarrubias’s 

_Teso ro de la lengua castellana o española_ (1611):

Familia. En común sinificación vale la gente que un señor sustenta dentro de su casa, dedonde tomó el nombre de padre de familias; . . . Cerca de los antiguos se escribía con E, famelia; y se entendía de solos los siervos, trayendo de origen la dicción osca famel, que cerca de los oscos sinificava siervo . . . pero también los padres y abuelos y los demás ascendientes del linage, y dezimos la familia de los Césares . . . ni más ni menos a los vivos, que son de la mesma casa y descendencia, que por otro nombre dezimos parentela. Y debaxo desta palabra familia se entiende el señor y su muger, y los demás que tiene de su mando, como hijos, criados, esclavos . . . Y hazen familia tres personas governadas por el señor. (584)

Covarrubias’s definition starts not with blood-based relationships but with a network of economic dependence. The _pater familias_, or “padre de familias,” provides for (“sustenta”) all of those living under one roof. As Covarrubias later points out, the Latinate root of the word denoted slavery, with the “family” indicating the number of slaves the patriarch owned. Again, the stress here is on the submission of others to the authority of the patriarch.⁵ Support (“sustenta”), “have under his control” (“tiene de su mando”), “govern” (“governadas”)—these are the active verbs of assertion (by the patriarch) and subservience (by all household dependents) that characterize the family according to Covarrubias. The lexicographer’s definition reminds us that early moderns considered nonbiological dependents, such as servants, part of the family as well. Thus, families, especially the households of wealthy nobles and, above all, the Alcázar, the

---

⁵ In _The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State_ (1884), Engels famously made the same observation Covarrubias does regarding the dark origins of the word; naturally, they were both drawing from the classical Roman model of the family. In Engels’s words: “The original meaning of the word ‘family’ (_familia_) is not that compound sentimentality and domestic strife which forms the ideal of the present-day philistine; among the Romans it did not at first even refer to the married pair and their children but only to the slaves. _Famulus_ means domestic slave, and _familia_ is the total number of slaves belonging to one man” (88).
royal household of the Hapsburg monarchs, were characterized by a complex interface between blood relations and a wide array of servants whose rank and responsibility varied greatly. Finally, we must not discount Covarrubias’s reference to lineage ("linage"). Dynastic pride—the concept of one’s patrimony as both material possessions and a kind of immortal spiritual essence that at once asserted itself throughout time and transcended it—was also essential in the conceptualization of family.

Of course, the family of Covarrubias’s definition is idealized. He makes no reference to the possibility for discord between a theoretically omnipotent patriarch and the divergent will of a unruly son or fiercely independent daughter; nor does he address the possibility of a treacherous servant. Moreover, he does not mention the possibility for violation of conscience that occurred when the heads of family married off sons and daughters purely as a means of social or political gain. Even though the Council of Trent theoretically protected against a marriage against the will of either husband or wife, arranged marriages were indeed commonplace, especially in royal families. These social and cultural sources of conflict within the early modern Spanish family are the focus of works by the Golden Age writers, dramatists, and painters I study in this dissertation.

The families of literature and the visual arts were meant to be exemplary—models to emulate or to avoid. My project intends to show that the ideal or exemplary early modern family, however, was not an entirely stable or fixed entity. Writers and artists cultivated competing and overlapping conceptions of the family as the fundamental social

---

6 Chapter 2 of this dissertation treats the relationship between king and a high-ranking servant ("gentilhombre de su real camára") in the *novela* "Estragos que causa el vicio" by María de Zayas. Chapter 3 also briefly discusses the court painter Juan Bautista del Mazo’s role as "ujiér de cámara" to the king, and the careers of his sons in service to the royal household.
unit of their society. Inherited nobility and upward social mobility awarded by (Christian) virtue or unique service to the king, the passive submission of wives in the construction of their marital identity or their active contribution to the shaping of their husbands’ manhood, the (perceived) interests of the family clan as a whole versus the hopes and desires of individuals and more—these conflicts and more are the stuff of early modern family plots. The corpus of works I study does not so much resolve these tensions as it brings them to the surface. Together, they point to the interrogation of the family—both a bedrock of stability and a bellwether of (un)welcome change—as a means of scrutinizing the very foundational premises of Spain’s sociopolitical order.

Chapter 1, “Marriage and Kingship in Luis Vélez de Guevara’s Reinar después de morir” (1635), examines a comedia that reenacts a fourteenth-century event in which a Portuguese prince must choose between the wife he has clandestinely married and the children they have together, and a dynastic marriage alliance forged by his father. Ultimately, the king’s henchmen execute Prince Pedro’s virtuous, but nonroyal, wife; the prince crowns the beloved posthumously, and hence she “reigns in death.” I analyze the competing marriage plots of Vélez’s play first in relation to early modern political thought, an allegorical play (auto), and conduct manuals on marriage and manhood. I then analyze the play alongside previous versions of it. Finally, I examine the play by Vélez. Pedro de Ribadeneira’s political treatise Tratado de la religión y virtudes que debe tener el Príncipe Christiano (1585) frames an ideal Catholic statecraft to contend with Machiavellian political thought—one in which Christian morality and state-preservation work in concert, not against, each other. Calderón de la Barca’s La segunda esposa

---

7 In the case of Reinar, my dating refers to the year the play was probably performed. For the subsequent plays mentioned, I refer to their dates of publication.
(1648) complements Ribadeneira’s treatise by portraying Mariana’s betrothal to Philip as the sublimated encounter of two royal dynasties dedicated to preserving European Christendom. The union of exalted bloodlines, then, functions as the apotheosis of Christian kingship. In these works marriage is not a union based on love or compatibility between partners, but rather the foundation of statecraft in which the needs of the state demand the uncritical submission of the prospective bride and groom.

If Ribadeneira’s treatise and Calderón’s autos leave little room for mutual love as the basis of marriage, the Council of Trent and Trent-inspired prescriptive literature written in its wake take up the private life of the married parties as a subject of utmost concern. Above all, the Council established “marital liberty” (Usanáriz 168) as dogma, protecting against marriages that violated the individual will of the prospective husband and wife. This implicit challenge to the royal practices of betrothal known as dynastic marriage, in which individual inclination is subsumed into the collective of family and state interest, was met, in conduct literature, with increasing attempts to define noble manhood in relationship to conjugal life founded on emotional bonds. Juan Costa’s *Buen gobierno del ciudadano* (1584) and Luisa Padilla’s *Idea de nobles* (1644), both prescriptive texts, link the husband’s private spousal relationship to the construction of his public political identity and capacity for civic leadership. Whether his love for his wife is selflessly “Christian” or libidinous and egocentric, whether he trusts her to carry out the affairs of the estate in his absence, and whether he reciprocates the affection and trust she shows him—these spousal obligations incumbent upon the husband indicate his fitness to govern.
In the closing sections of my first chapter, I compare Vélez’s *Reinar después de morir* to the Portuguese Antonio Ferreira’s *Castro* (1598) and fellow Spaniard Luis Mexía de la Cerda’s *Tragedia famosa de doña Inés de Castro, reina de Portugal* (1613). I link the reification, within prescriptive literature, of the caring and compassionate husband to an evolutionary arc in the representation of the Inés–Pedro bond. Their union is transformed from a corrupt and morally corrupting indulgence of the flesh (in Ferreira’s version) to a wellspring of spiritual renewal and Christian kingship (Vélez’s). Previous scholarship has argued that Vélez’s play, much like his predecessors’ versions, indicts femininity and love themselves as the source of Pedro’s corruption and fecklessness in the political arena; I propose instead that Vélez lauds and elevates Christian matrimony as the bulwark of an ethically sound Christian kingship at a time of imperial crisis for the Philip IV–Count-Duke of Olivares regime.

Chapter 2, “Family and Nation in María de Zayas’s ‘Mal presagio casar de lejos’ and ‘Estragos que causa el vicio,’” reads two novellas from Zayas’s *Desengaños Amorosos* (1647) as allegories of incipient Spanish nationhood. Like Vélez’s *Reinar después de morir*, Zayas’s “Mal presagio” depicts a failed dynastic marriage between a high-ranking court noblewoman and her Dutch counterpart, while “Estragos” presents a failed marriage between a king’s trusted servant and a powerful, manipulative Portuguese noblewoman. While chapter 1 focuses closely on Pedro’s biological family—and particularly the husband–wife bond—this chapter looks to an expansive usage of the term family as a constitutive metaphor of public life. Zayas’s family plots, narrated by the same class of court aristocrats to which her critique of Philip IV’s policies is directed, seek to awaken proto-nationalist sentiment at a time when Spain’s European and
domestic conflicts—and the attempt to distinguish between the two—weighed heavily on the minds of a spiritually and financially exhausted noble class.

Chapter 3, “Family Portraits and Families of the Artists” moves from the early (chapter 1) and middle (chapter 2) years of Philip IV’s reign to the year of the monarch’s death. Diego Velázquez’s son-in-law and the heir to his post as painter to the king (pintor de cámara), Juan Bautista del Mazo, painted La familia del pintor in 1665. The painting has received far less scholarly inquiry than the masterpiece that inspired it, Las meninas (1656), even though it takes up some of the same questions as its forbear—particularly the way in which court professionals of non-noble background fashioned identities that both suited established pictorial conventions of social power and acknowledged their own status as a nascent court elite with distinct forms of cultural expression. Unlike Las meninas, which features Velázquez as a privileged dependent within the king’s family of servants and blood kin, La familia del pintor proudly displays across its foreground an abundance of Mazo’s own descendants—and those of Velázquez. Replacing the mirror reflection of king and queen is a portrait-within-a-portrait of an aged Philip IV (which confirms the painting’s setting, like Las meninas, in a royal interior), and substituting Velázquez’s vividly rendered self-portrait is a comparatively unassuming silhouette of an artist who works with his back facing the viewer, his countenance concealed from us. Unlike his father-in-law, Mazo does choose to reveal to the viewer the canvas on which he paints.

The chapter on Mazo is unique among the three not only for its treatment of visual rather than literary art but also because the painting illustrates the mutually reinforcing and overlapping early modern definitions of family. The elegant rendering of
his own children (on the left, heirs of Velázquez himself) as dignified courtiers indicates both Mazo’s affection for his blood kin and his belief in their future success as privileged subjects of the Crown. The painting-within-a-painting of Philip IV, in turn, suggests the presence of the sovereign in the hearts and homes of his people—the king as a “head of family” who transcends regional affiliations and structures one’s public identity. Finally, the image of a painter at work points to Mazo’s own pride in his trade as court painter. The artist’s choice to emphasize the act of painting over his individual identity demonstrates that even pre- or proto-capitalist societies could accommodate the dignity of physical labor as informative of the individual’s public and private sense(s) of self. I argue that Mazo’s artist does not function as a self-portrait in the orthodox sense of identifying one person; rather, it serves to reify a prototype of the king’s painter. Hence, multiple familial dynasties exist alongside one another within the same picture: the Hapsburg royal dynasty (embodied by the king), a dynasty of the king’s artist (embodied by past and present painters of the monarch) and the dynasty of the Mazo family lineage (embodied by his heirs in the painting’s foreground). Staged within a royal domestic interior, Mazo’s painting attests to the representation of family as a web of interdependency that funnels back to a sole patriarch (the king). At the same time, however, the picture demonstrates how conventional relationships of patronage could be creatively reimagined into highly nuanced, even novel, forms of cultural expression.
Chapter 1

Marriage and Kingship in Luis Vélez de Guevara’s *Reinar después de morir*

In 1633 work began on the Salón de los Reinos (Hall of Realms), a room in the new leisure residence of the royal family in Madrid, the Palacio del Buen Retiro. The palace was part of an attempt by Philip IV and his favorite, the Count-Duke of Olivares, to project an image of kingship that conveyed Spain’s hegemony over Europe. The grandiose room was meant to awe and impress distinguished guests and remind the royal family of its special function as the guarantor of political and spiritual order across the world. On the room’s north and south walls hung paintings of battle scenes designed to show that Spain was winning the war against heresy, as well as a series by Zurbarán called the “Labors of Hercules” (Brown and Elliott 163). On the west and east walls hung equestrian portraits of three generations of the Hapsburg dynasty, signifying the monarchy’s past, present, and future. All the equestrian portraits were executed by Velázquez, or under his direction by workshop painters, and their collective uniformity was readily apparent. In their frame on the west wall, Philip III and Queen Margaret of Austria sat atop their horses in partial profile view, inclined slightly towards one another. Philip III leaned forward, gripping his baton, with his red sash lifting into the wind, atop his bucking horse, in a show of movement and prowess meant to convey military leadership. Queen Margaret—not passive, yet indeed restrained—sat upright but did not
lean forward like her husband, her long skirt draped over the animal’s torso, allowing a lifted hoof to poke through.

On the east wall the formula repeated itself: Philip IV leaned forward, sash whipping in the wind and baton in hand, atop a bucking horse. Queen consort Isabel, like her mother-in-law, commanded her horse with the reins to lift a hoof; but, in accordance with her gender role, she did not make the powerful beast buck. In a smaller painting that hung between and slightly higher than husband and wife was their son Baltasar, the only one of the five Hapsburgs who faced the viewer directly instead of in a partial profile pose. The frontal view of the bucking horse gave the image more immediacy, as if Baltasar, like his father, might eap from the picture’s frame. As the living heir to the throne, it was Baltasar, not his now deceased grandparents on the opposite wall or even his still living parents to his lower left and right, who, in 1633, was meant to lead the monarchy into the future. And so he, not Philip IV or Isabella of Bourbon, leapt toward us, small in stature and young in age, but with a countenance that conveyed the confidence and sobriety of an adult. Even in his youth, the portrait suggested, Baltasar understood that his duties were to dynastic continuity and the protection of the Spanish Hapsburg kingdoms.

Two years after construction began on the Salón de los Reinos, Luis Vélez de Guevara’s *Reinar después de morir* (1635) was performed across Spain, and probably for the royal family (Larson 20). The play projected almost the obverse of the portrait hall images: the destruction of a royal family and the near-breakdown of dynastic continuity. It was based on a fourteenth-century historical event chronicled by Castilian historians and rendered in multiple iterations of song, poetry, and plays. In the *comedia*, Prince
Pedro of Portugal clandestinely marries his deceased wife’s lady-in-waiting, Inés de Castro. After an interlude of relative bliss, in which Pedro frequently absconds from court to be with his beloved and their children at a rural retreat in Mondego, Pedro’s deception of his father finally catches up with him. King Alonso, Pedro discovers, has promised him in marriage to the Infanta of Navarre, cementing an important political alliance with the kingdom of Navarre, with the enthusiastic approval of the court nobility in Lisbon.

When Pedro’s father and the deeply offended princess-to-be of Navarre both find out that Pedro harbors a clandestine wife who, by virtue of their marriage, has become a claimant to the throne, a series of confrontations ensues that would not have been fit for the world of Velázquez’s canvas. These interrelated showdowns include ones between a father and his disobedient son, between rivals for the title of queen, and also between Prince Pedro and the king’s privados (royal favorites) who have executed his wife. Inés de Castro ultimately “reigns in death,” when Pedro crowns her corpse queen, having just executed his wife’s killers.

Vélez de Guevara was a prolific playwright who managed to retain posts at court during the regimes of both the Duke of Lerma and the Count-Duke of Olivares, maintaining these positions despite the animosity that the partisans of each royal favorite felt for each other. Like Juan Bautista del Mazo (the painter who is the subject of chapter 3), Vélez held the salaried post within the king’s personal chambers titled ujier de cámara, which indicated the benefit of royal favor (Peale 77). According to George Peale and Gareth Davies, the playwright’s access to the royal household made him a privileged
witness of quotidian palace life. Vélez has not achieved the canonical status of the three most famous dramatists of Golden Age Spain, Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, and Calderón de la Barca. The expanding corpus of critical editions of his works, spearheaded by Manson and Peale, nonetheless reveal a playwright with a penchant for dissecting the exercise of royal power matched only by his more well-known contemporaries. His 1615 play El Conde don Pero Vélez, for instance, dramatizes the story of a royal favorite who falls in love with the king’s sister, bringing to bear the same controversy of the privado’s proper role at court so thoroughly examined in Reinar. Titles such as A lo que obliga el ser rey (1628) or La corte del demonio (1644) are more examples of court plays. The latter was written shortly after Philip IV’s expulsion of the Count-Duke of Olivares from the court and has been interpreted as a partial apologia for the privado by a sympathetic fellow converso (Araico 1–33), further substantiating Vélez’s interest across the breadth of his oeuvre in cultivating the ethical tensions of rulership as a source for his dramas.

In the mid-1630s, when Reinar was probably first performed, there was much to bemoan about Spain’s present fortunes under the stewardship of Philip IV and his favorite, the Count-Duke. Promised victories in rebel Holland continued to prove elusive. The Count-Duke’s ambitious project, the so-called “Union of Arms,” which was to organize the peninsular kingdoms under greater bureaucratic and fiscal control by Madrid, was sputtering, leaving the disgruntled Castilian nobility to simmer in the same brew of disproportionate taxation and economic stagnation that had plagued the

1 Peale contends that of all Philip IV’s pensioned artists, none had such unparalleled access to life behind the palace wall as did Vélez (“entre todos los artistas pensionados del rey . . . ninguno tendría mayor aceso como observador de los vaivenes, mañas y contingencias de palacio que Luis Vélez desde su puesto en la cámara del rey”) (77–78).
monarchy’s home province for half a century. After much dallying in war by proxy, Cardinal Richelieu of France formally declared war on Spain in 1635. The nascent political culture of the state system, urged forward by the maturation of the Thirty Years’ War from a religious conflict into an increasingly secularized struggle to maintain Europe’s precarious balance of power, likewise left the Holy Roman Empire and its Spanish Hapsburg sponsor puzzled. Her separate peace with France, a full decade after the debacle of the Thirty Years’ War had ended, was a sign of Imperial Spain’s reluctance to abandon the vision of European mastery that had so clearly been defeated. Her continuing losses left an imbroglio for more than just Philip IV and the Count-Duke to ponder. If Spain was the custodian of Catholic Europe, then her military defeats in Germany and the Low Countries, coupled with her monetary crises at home, felt to the lettered elites like God’s indifference, or his just punishment of a nobility that had turned from its chivalric values toward a culture of court-centered consumption and effeminate, debt-fueled leisure.

For many of Spain’s arbitristas, the key to restoring Spain’s imperial greatness rested above all on her people’s assuredness of the nation’s superior spiritual and ethical standing within Europe. While the highly programmatic conduct manual of the arbitrista often heaped blame on a noble class that had lost touch with its roots, court writers did not hesitate to conceptualize a Christian morality for the royalty itself; in fact, doing so served the program of courtly kingship that Philip IV and the Count-Duke so adamantly pursued. Stephen Rupp and others demonstrate the link between the Spanish royal family’s enduring preoccupation with the rise of secular political philosophy—above all Machiavelli—and the monarchy’s patronage of playwrights that expounded a “Christian
statecraft” to counter moral and spiritual degeneracy both within Spain and among the enemies that fought against her. Rupp and the historian Robert Bireley have shown quite convincingly that early modern Spanish dramatists and political theorists firmly believed that Spain’s Christian kingship would not only guide her to safe harbor as a prosperous and stable empire, but perhaps even lure the rudderless heretic states back to the Austro-Spanish fold, whether through a noble use of force or the alluring exemplarity of her own Christian conduct.²

And yet at the same time that dramatists, political theorists, and, as I will argue, writers of prescriptive literature firmly believed in Spain’s elevated moral standing in a continent racked by spiritual and political rebellion, these same writers also recognized Spain’s failure to live up to its own ideal of a truly Christian statecraft. The achievement of a more perfect Catholic monarchy—of a Christian kingship for the Christian faithful—was not a simple matter of the static application of entrenched dogma but instead the subject of rich cultural debate. As we will see, even in the nation that prided itself on being the most genuinely Catholic of Europe, the material concerns of political stability and class interests were not always easily reconciled with church teachings. That is, the church and state of early modern Spain did clash with one another in meaningful ways. Whether in imaginative literature such as plays or in the genres of the political treatise and prescriptive texts, Spanish baroque cultural production recognized the apparent incommensurability of temporal and spiritual gain. A near-perfect vehicle for addressing the disconnect between Christian teachings and the un-Christian conduct of the noble

² In Allegories of Kingship (1996), Rupp contends that Calderón’s autos and comedias expound a consistent anti-Machiavellian political message. Bireley’s The Counter-Reformation Prince (1990) dissects the tradition of anti-Machiavellian thought in southern Europe.
class and royalty was often found in the part-religious, part-social institution where these discrepancies were most apparent: marriage.

This chapter proposes that the Catholic sacrament of holy matrimony served as a platform by which the conduct manual writers Juan Costa and Luisa Padilla, as well as the dramatist Vélez de Guevara, explored the interrelationship between personal and imperial fortunes, between bedroom and battlefield, between family strife and civil unrest. Marriage, in other words, functioned as a framework within which the very nature of Spanish society was probed and questioned. Taking my cue from scholars such as María Carrión, who documents the push, beginning in the sixteenth century, to “institutionalize” marriage in theater and the law as a “capital unit of government, culture, and society” (22), I suggest that marriage was a subject of intense scrutiny in light of the conflicting worldly and spiritual imperatives of early modern Spain. Everything from practices of betrothal such as dynastic (arranged) marriage or clandestine marriage, to the feelings husband and wife felt for one another, to the actions man and wife took, or did not take, to strengthen and protect the integrity of their marriage bond were the substance of a debate regarding the proper (Christian) conduct of the ruling elites and ultimately of the monarch himself; his solemn duty was the exercise of a Christian statecraft and kingship.

My analysis begins with a brief discussion of Pedro de Ribadeirea’s Tratado de la religión y virtudes que deve tener el Príncipe Cristiano (1585) and Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s Auto sacramental la segunda esposa (1648). Ribadeneira’s text, which purported to instruct the young Philip III in the ways of a Christian statecraft that would counteract the malign influences of Machiavellian political thought, provides an excellent overview
of the religious and political parameters within which the king’s Christian consciousness was supposed to operate. Although it was published a half-century before Vélez’s play was performed and likewise predates Calderón’s *auto sacramental* (religious allegorical play) by over sixty years, the moral-political debate concerning Christian kingship that Ribaneira helped to frame did not abate—and in all likelihood strengthened—during the Spanish high baroque. Calderón’s *auto* in celebration of Philip IV’s marriage to his niece, Mariana of Austria, complements Ribaneira’s treatise by espousing the same notion of a Christian kingship that Ribaneira so assiduously cultivates in his own work. Furthermore, it applies the theory of Christian kingship specifically to the context of royal marriage, affording important insights into one, but by no means the only, way Golden Age dramatists conceived of royal nuptials.

While Ribadeneira’s treatise and Calderón’s *auto* provide an excellent theoretical context for how the morally upright ruler should govern, their rendering of royal marital life, much like the rendering of family in Velázquez’s Salón de los Reinos portraits, is purposefully incomplete. Moving on in the next section to a discussion of Tridentine decrees regarding marriage and of conduct manuals by Juan Costa (1584) and the Aragonese countess Luisa Padilla (1644) on the same subject, I propose that the largely ceremonial and propagandistic function of the sacrament, as portrayed by Velázquez, Calderón, and others, fails to account for the personal, inter- and intra-subjective conditions of marriage that Costa, Padilla, and ultimately Vélez himself do take up.

Dilemmas of married life, such as the issue of marriage by mutual consent and attraction; marriage and family as a pillar not just of one’s own private identity but also the public, political self; and the interrelationship of the husband’s marital character and
his capacity for civic leadership, provide a frame of reference for how early modern audiences of Vélez’s drama may have understood royal marriage and kingship as being inextricably bound and codeterminant of one another. Finally, by examining the play alongside two previous versions of it by the Portuguese Ferreira (1598) and Sevillan Mexía de la Cerda (1612), we gain a greater understanding of Vélez’s uniquely positive portrayal of Inés de Castro and of the vision of married life she represents. Elements of theme and plot unique to Vélez’s interpretation of the highly treated subject of Inés de Castro demonstrate that dramatist’s particular interest in affording moral, spiritual, and perhaps political legitimacy to a queen-consort whose motives elsewhere had been impugned, or at least questioned. In staging Inés’s death, Vélez at once critiques the un-Christian statecraft that Spain’s ruling classes would have attributed to Spain’s enemies and identifies the threat posed to the Spanish Crown by royal nuptials contracted solely with the aim of political gain.

1.1 Kingship and Matrimony According to Ribadeneira and Calderón

In 1585 Pedro de Ribadeneira published his Tratado de la religión y virtudes que debe tener el Príncipe Christiano. Dedicated to the then Prince Philip, the treatise anticipates the challenges the sovereign-to-be will face as a ruler, particularly the temptation to surrender his own Christian morality in the name of state preservation. Contrary to what Robert Bireley, in his study of early modern anti-Machiavellian political thought The Counter-Reformation Prince (1990), calls the “unified vision of life” (217), Ribadeneira’s enemies of Christian kingship—the Machiavellians—espouse a pernicious belief: that when it comes to affairs of state, sovereigns are exempt from the teachings and doctrine of the church. Thus, religion, according to Ribadeneira’s
interpretation of Machiavelli’s ideas, is cordoned off into a sphere of life to which only the king’s subjects, and not the king himself, are subject; the king, in other words, operates outside the jurisdiction of God’s law, conforming only to the (political) needs of the moment.

Ribadeneira, notably, does not directly blame monarchs themselves for straying from the unitary vision of kingship in which faith and political decision making are always in agreement with one another. The author reminds the Hapsburg prince that, after all, his own illustrious ancestors, from the Catholic Monarchs to Charles V, were all God-fearing Christians who gloriously served the cause of Christ: “justos, prudentes, valerosos, clementes, y por extremos piadosos y amigos de Dios” (6). Thus, the prince’s very blood dictates that he should be a just ruler. The enemy, according to Ribadeneira, is the “Político,” the professional class of advisers to the king who cloak horrendous crimes against God under the guise of a sweet-sounding name (“dulce nombre”), reason of state (“razón de estado”). In Vélez’s play, King Alonso’s two advisers, Egas Coello and Alvar González, cite precisely the “reason of state” motive to justify the killing of his daughter-in-law, Inés. According to Ribadeneira, the monarch who follows the advice of “políticos” and allows “razón de estado,” rather than “la ley de Dios,” to guide him will ultimately lose, not retain, the state he had hoped to save through un-Christian acts: “necesariamente han de perder el estado, la prudencia, y el poder” (76). In the case of Reinar después de morir, Ribadeneira’s prophecy comes true. By having his daughter-in-law murdered, King Alonso brings civil strife upon his kingdom, not the peace and stability promised by his advisers.
While Ribadeneira vehemently denounces the false kingship of the Machiavellians, his treatise rarely seems to put the king, and especially not the king’s personal behavior, directly under the microscope. In a sense, it respects the same division that Machiavelli had created and that Ribadeneira so loathed between politics and other spheres of life such as family or religious life, because the examples Ribadeneira uses to expound his theory of Christian kinship are primarily military or doctrinal in nature. That is, kingdoms collapse not because of the personal sins of rulers but because of fecklessness on the battlefield or some form of straying from religious orthodoxy. Unlike in the comedia, then, here the king’s personal behavior is not subject to scrutiny.\(^3\) Whether the king is a good father or husband has no relevance to whether his kingdom will flourish.

*La segunda esposa,* Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s 1648 *auto sacramental* performed to celebrate the betrothal of Marianna of Austria to her uncle, Philip IV, is a prime example of how even marriage itself could be channeled into an abstract theory of statecraft in which the affective lives of groom and bride go largely unexamined. The play dramatizes the royal nuptials in conjunction with an explanation of the nature and origins of the seven sacraments. The character Esposo represent both Jesus Christ and Philip IV, while the sacraments serve as ministers to the kingdom that Esposo has established for his wife, Esposa, who is also Philip IV’s wife, Queen Marianna. Calderón imbues Esposa with Marian character traits—above all fidelity and constant love—to emphasize Queen Marianna’s sanctity as the perfect follower of the Christ-king. The

---

\(^3\) See Rupp’s *Allegories of Kingship* and also Melveena McKendrick’s introduction to *Playing the King: Lope de Vega and the Limits of Conformity* (2000) regarding the degree to which Spanish drama criticized contemporary society and even, according to McKendrick, served the pedagogical function of educating the prince.
royal betrothal of Philip IV and Marianna, then, serves to frame the ideal relationship of Christ and (Spanish) king to their subjects: one of love, devotion, and obedience. When marriage (Matrimonio) speaks, he explains that the sacrament secures political stability: “Monarquías que se heredan / de una en otra sucesión / las más asentadas son” (vv. 113–15).

The sacrament, then, protects the integrity of royal bloodlines. Dynastic marriage, or marriage to preserve or expand royal bloodlines, was of course a key source of political legitimacy for early modern monarchy. Although Calderón’s *auto* overwhelmingly takes its imagery directly from biblical sources—which is to be expected of the *auto* genre—one of its comparatively few non-biblical visual motifs comes from the reference to dynastic pride (“legítima sucesión”) of a marriage that involves Spanish and Austrian Hapsburgs. Philip IV is repeatedly referenced as the lion king (“rey león”) (v.567), while Marianna is called the “ave imperial” (v. 568), both images associated with their respective royal houses. According to the character called pleasure (Placer), the two branches of Hapsburg family have formed this marriage alliance in the hopes of defeating the rebels (“los rebeldes”) (v. 559), presumably the “rebels” against God (sinners generally) and those who have rebelled against his order on earth embodied by the Austro-Spanish Hapsburg alliance. Thus, in Calderón’s rendering of kingship, and of the relationship of marriage to kingship, the sacrament is above all an extension of statecraft, the means by which monarchies retained legitimacy and secured a legitimate heir, and a vehicle for sovereigns to bolster their political fortunes through powerful alliances.

As we shall see in the next section, both Tridentine marriage theology and early
modern conduct manuals targeted at noble audiences provided a much more nuanced picture of matrimony, one in which the spiritual, emotional, and social intricacies of the sacrament are more fully addressed, and in which the links between the conjugal bond and governance are more explicitly drawn.

1.2 Marriage, Manhood, and Political Leadership

The twenty-fourth session of the Council of Trent, held in 1563, took up the subject of the marriage sacrament. At the time, the Catholic Church was seeking both its own spiritual renewal and to address challenges to marriage posed by Protestant theology. The termination of clandestine marriage and the conubinage it was thought to endorse may be considered aspects of the church’s inwardly oriented self-renewal. The Council’s reaffirmation of the sacramental nature of marriage, on the other hand, might be considered a direct rebuff to Protestantism’s refusal to acknowledge marriage as a sacrament and to the image of the priest as husband and father that Protestantism espoused. By affirming the sacramental nature of marriage, the Catholic Church sought to preserve the distinct nature of the “calling” to the priesthood or married life as mutually exclusive life paths. In addition to their theological importance, the Council’s decrees on marriage were a watershed moment in Western European history. While the church’s intent at Trent was not to articulate “new” doctrine but rather to define existing doctrine more clearly, the effects of Tridentine marriage decrees were in fact novel, if not revolutionary, for their impact on the Western cultural imaginary. One of the church’s great sources of influence in the comedia and novella genres, as well as in conduct literature, is its first “Decree on the Reformation of Marriage,” which bans the practice of clandestine marriage. Embedded within this seemingly simple, straightforward decree,
the Council acknowledges multiple antagonisms among church, state, and individual(s) that drive at the very heart of *Reinar después de morir*’s core conflict, what Henry Sullivan calls “the question of licit and illicit union” (151).

One such antagonism is the stress between the free choice of individuals to marry and the degree of parental authority involved in choosing or approving marriage partners. The church acknowledges, in its decree on clandestine marriage, that previously contracted clandestine marriages will be recognized by the church, despite the misinformed public perception, for example, that all marriages consecrated “without the consent of [the bride and groom’s] parents, are invalid” (Waterworth 196). The Council’s acknowledgement of parents’ attempts to nullify their children’s marriages without consulting any ecclesiastical body would seem to suggest just how prevalent parental meddling and overriding of religious authority were in the early modern era. Of course, Prince Pedro’s father hopes to do precisely that: invalidate his son’s union to Inés because it was made without his consent. As social historians such as Jesús Usanáriz and James Casey have shown, laws in Castile such as that of the Cortes of Toledo that predated the Council indeed forbade marriage without parental consent before the age of twenty-five. And even after the formal close of the Council of Trent, parental intervention, or “dirigismo familiar” (Casey and Vincent 170), permeated the marriage practices of especially the upper classes, which sought to protect and expand family wealth and social prestige. In justifying the decision to end clandestine marriage and

---

4 See Usanáriz’s article “El matrimonio como ejercicio de libertad en la España del Siglo de Oro” (2005) for an overview of “marital liberty” as it applied to the Spanish context. See Casey and Vincent’s “Casa y familia en la Granada del Antiguo Régimen” (2007) and Casey’s *Early Modern Spain: A Social History* (1999) for an overview of prevailing attitudes and socioeconomic forces that shaped family life.
require the presence of a priest as well as stipulate that the marrying parties “three times announce publicly in the church . . . on three continuous festival days” (197) their intention to marry, the Council cites the effective polygamy of persons who marry once “secretly” and then “publically marry another, and live with her in perpetual adultery” (197). 5 Again, this very proposition is offered to Prince Pedro at the behest of his father, King Alonso, who commands his son to abandon his clandestinely married wife in favor of the dynastic marriage candidate approved by the court nobles, the Infanta of Navarre.

While Trent’s prohibition of clandestine marriage in some ways reaffirmed parental authority, the Council also sought to (re)define the sacrament of matrimony in an empowering, affirmative way for the man and woman involved. In this respect, the session’s most emotive language on marriage arguably comes in chapter 9, subtitled “Temporal lords, or magistrates, shall not attempt anything contrary to the liberty of marriage” (203). As was the case with the ban on clandestine marriage, here again a seemingly straightforward decree belies the greater complexity and affective depth in its details. The chapter’s paragraph-long explanation of marital “liberty” impugns especially the material concerns of “lords,” “magistrates,” and those “such as are rich” who coerce parties to marry “against their inclination” to a person “prescribe[d]” to them (203).

The council calls arranged or forced marriages “especially execrable” and warns all persons, “whatsoever grade, dignity, and condition they may be,” that interference with the free decision to marry risks excommunication (“anathema to be ipso facto

---

5 The instructions to “announce” the marriage three times were likely yet another way to avoid any possibility that marriage within the Catholic Church could still be “clandestine.” A public announcement would give any objecting parties the necessary time to do so and reinforce the idea that marriage was fundamentally public, not private, in nature.
incurred”) (204). The church’s particular indictment of the upper classes—and by implication ruling elites such as royal families—again bears relevance to the union of Pedro and Inés, not because royal or nonroyal marriages were necessarily contracted in early modern Spain by the free will of both parties; rather, the Tridentine decrees gave playwrights, poets, arbitristas, theologians and others the fodder, within early modern Spanish and European literary culture, to challenge political and spiritual decadence where they saw it, using the (Tridentine) marriage plot to do so. The protection afforded by explicit church teaching on marriage allowed Vélez and others to assail the (mis)behavior of the royalty and nobility without appearing to hold those same ruling elites in contempt. The doctrinally enshrined concept of marital liberty, while perhaps a chimera at the level of early modern historical praxis, granted Golden Age letters the opportunity to discuss such controversial themes as the clash of secular and divine authority, the latter embodied, for instance, in the divinity of the marriage sacrament.

Of course, “marital liberty,” as defined by the Council of Trent and tested and challenged within Vélez’s Reinar, came at a price—a price that in many ways forms the very essence of the Foucaultian transition from (apparent) medieval laxity to the intrinsically modern imperative of self-discipline and the (self-)surveillance of the body. That is, marital freedom was now purchased by renouncing sexual, sentimental, and other forms of domestic privacy; one was “free” to marry whomever one chose only as long as that marriage was freely declared to the public gaze, such as the three times at mass mentioned in the Council’s of Trent’s twenty-fourth session. One’s freedom, paradoxically, became an invitation for others to look upon and validate or condemn the life one “freely” led. Why a husband chose his wife, whether this husband was successful
in ordering the affairs of the home and submitting his household to his authority, even the attitudes that wife and husband held toward each other—these intricacies of private life became subject to public scrutiny and debate and, as we shall see, defined noble, and perhaps royal, manhood. Beginning in the Renaissance and especially in the context of the project of spiritual and political renewal that defined the art and culture of Philip IV’s Spain, the nature of the marital bond between husband and wife became a qualifying condition of one’s capacity for civic duties and leadership.

The two conduct manuals studied in this section, Juan Costa’s Buen gobierno del ciudadano (1584) and Luisa Padilla’s Idea de nobles (1644), are separated by a span of sixty years but share a common purpose in their imperative to fashion ideal nobleman by constituting them as domestically accountable husbands. Costa’s intended audience are town mayors or alderman (regidores) throughout Spain, while Padilla appeals more broadly to Spain’s noblemen—“el Noble.” Each text, then, declares its audience as exclusively male representatives of political authority. Both the non-nobleman of letters and the prominent Aragonese aristocrat, a distinguished patroness turned prescriptive writer late in life, draw explicit links between the conjugal life of the home and the nobleman’s capacity for leadership. In each instance, the author aims to capture and define, often by citing exemplary and unexemplary conduct, life within the home so that it may be channeled toward the common good. As studies of seventeenth-century masculinity by Elizabeth Lehfeldt and of Padilla’s writings by Rosilie Hernández have argued, these conduct manuals seek at once to eliminate any presumption, on the reader’s part, of the private and public spheres’ autonomy from one another, as well as to
conceptualize positive models of manhood meant to guide Spain through the political and economic turmoil it faced.

Hernández observes that Padilla’s treatises view the domains of “self, family, and... the Spanish Empire” (899), as mutually determinant of one another; this is actually borne out by the way Costa and Padilla thematically and sequentially order their treatises, with chapters (in the case of Costa) and a section or book (libro) dedicated to family life that precedes subsequent discussion of politics. The first dialogue in Costa’s first treatise bears the subtitle “En el cual se muestra que el ciudadano ha de regirse a sí, a su casa, y familia para que sepa regir bien su república” (78). The third—and final—part of Idea de nobles, titled “De las virtudes políticas,” begins with a chapter on family life with an equally revelatory subtitle: “De como ha de governar su casa el Noble, adestrandose en esta economica, para la política y govierno de la Republica” (416). Each book’s discussion of domestic governance before political leadership suggests the natural formative impact exerted by the domestic sphere on the public.

Padilla and Costa both establish an overt connection between the family and public components of the self in their chapters on married life. Padilla, for instance, identifies three types of prudence required of any “gobernador”: “la personal, para governarse en todo tiempo, la domestica para su familia, la política para la Republica” (417). Juan Costa similarly views control of oneself, of one’s family, and of one’s political environment as harmonious reflections of one another. He asserts that the manner in which one governs the home, “esse mismo tendra para gobernar su república” (81–82). Costa explains that “es más necesaria la integridad de la vida en los que gobiernan que en los que son gobernados” (80). This is because the behavioral
expectations placed by society upon those who govern are naturally higher; their example will result in imitation by the social inferiors who look to them for leadership.

For Costa, authority over the self, the family, and the polity come down to the word “integridad” (80): the harmonious unity of equal parts means that when any one dimension of the person is pure, the others will be so as well. The converse is also true: a loss of restraint in the governance of one realm of the self inevitably alters the proportionality of the whole. According to Costa, in other words, a “bad” husband simply cannot be a “good” leader because the author refuses to acknowledge a compartmentalization of the self into independent parts. Padilla’s rhetoric arrives at the similar ideal of a harmonious noble selfhood—a selfhood free of internal contradictions and antagonisms—by way of stressing Christian virtue as a matter of praxis, not theory. Even inherited nobility is a gift of God’s grace, she says, which compels nobles above all others to lead exemplary lives as Christians (156). The “noble Christiano” must not, Padilla warns, find ease in his “buena sangre” (noble blood) without reinforcing that God-granted privilege through individual acts (“virtud propia”) (5–6).

As Lehfeldt observes in “Ideal Men,” the emphasis that writers like Padilla and Costa place on the “comportment” of nobles as a key component of their status alongside blood and title had its origins in late-medieval rhetoric. In the early modern period, however, ideal noble conduct had to be rearticulated to escape anachronism. With the rise of court culture anchored in the figure of the king, classical chivalry and virtue on the battlefield were substituted for more recognizably modern values such as maintaining the

_6_ According to Lehfeldt, “the core of the medieval and early modern discourse on nobility was the recognition that noble status was conferred only in part by bloodline” (476).
profitability of one’s estate and devotion to the wife and children upon whom the noble head of household depended for that very profitability. Noble conduct, often referred to in conduct literature as “Christian” conduct, literally wed the emotional well-being of husband and wife to the administration of the home in a pragmatic, economically aware fashion. According to Hernández’s reading of Padilla, although the ultimate authority of the husband over his wife was never threatened, she garnered significant marital agency as a “counselor” and “partner” in the affairs of the home, which was tantamount to the same status concerning affairs of state (“the republic”) (913). The wife’s status as her husband’s partner, albeit an unequal one, in the public and private spheres made her virtues—or vices—of increasing value for ruling elites that sought to preserve their families’ wealth and social privileges.

Costa’s second chapter, subtitled “De cómo ha de regir su familia,” links the husband’s emotional well-being to his wife’s ability to protect his financial assets, thereby highlighting the wife’s role as a privileged subordinate within the family hierarchy. At certain points in the chapter, Costa emphasizes the importance of wives for the companionship they provide, only to metonymically recast the affective life in relationship to the financial health of the estate. God gave man a wife, Costa explains, so that he would have someone with whom to share the Creator’s gifts (“porque tengan con quien regozijarse con los bienes que Dios le da de su mano”) (252) or so that man might find solace and comfort in times of duress or hardship (“quien les ayude a passar igualmente sus mohinas y adversidades, sintiéndolas como ellos mismos”) (252). While wifely companionship and empathy (“sintiéndolas como ellos mismos”) may seem like the indicators of equal footing on a same plane of sentimental relations, Costa
subsequently specifies that emotional and material well-being are intimately intertwined, if not indistinguishable, within the early modern home. Such is the case in his observation that when a man arrives home tired from public business, he may trust in his wife as a faithful treasure chest (“tesorera fiel”) who guards the fruits of his public labors. In this context, Costa ascribes to her the roles of guarder or preserver (“conservadora”) and governess (“governadora”) (252). Such roles are a source of the husband’s ease of mind (“descanso”), happiness (“contento”), and benefit (“provecho”) (252). The fact that ease of mind, happiness, and prosperity are all linked within the same sentence illustrates just how intertwined economic and amatory interests had become for the judicious early modern husband, even in an age that predated the advent of so-called bourgeois consciousness by at least a century and a half.

Although Costa’s and Padilla’s separate texts are similar in their linking of men’s capacity for leadership to their successful governance of the home, the Aragonese countess differs from her predecessor in one crucial respect: the manner in which the wife’s subordination to her husband is rhetorically argued and portrayed. Above all, Padilla explicitly states that the husband must value and esteem his wife, whereas Costa at best implies such sentiments as an end product—and not a precondition—of the wife’s successful administration of the home. For a nobleman, as head of household, to successfully govern a home, Padilla explains, his principal focus (“la principal atención”) must be in valuing his wife (“ha de ser la estimación de su muger”) (425). Repeatedly, Padilla explains that man’s appreciation of his wife is nothing short of an “obligation” (“obligación”), such as his obligation to love and treat his wife as he would himself
Padilla’s insistence on a form of affective reciprocity—if not full gender equality—within the marital bond even includes such basic concepts as fidelity and love: “si a su muger quisiere fiel, seale fiel; si quisiere que le ame, amela” (426).

Padilla’s emphasis on the husband’s treatment of his wife, or what Hernández calls the “privileg[ing of] the affective aspect of marriage” (910), reflects two objectives. The first is to improve the condition of women by drawing attention to their emotional needs. These include displays of trust and love on the husband’s part, as well as his genuine desire to seek her counsel regarding important decisions. A second, equally important imperative, in a book whose declared intention is to fashion the ideal nobleman, is to implicate the husbands’ treatment of his wife in the construction of noble manhood itself. Indeed, Padilla does not hesitate to assess the nobleman’s moral character in relation to the character of his love for his wife. The only man who truly knows how and why to marry, Padilla explains, is he who puts the dowry of the soul (“la dote del alma”) before material gain (“interés”) (428); the only nobleman who knows how to love is he who loves the way a true husband loves his wife, honestly and in a Christian (“honesto y cristiano”) manner, without lustful desires (“no liviano, o indecente”) (429). From such pure love will spring a union of souls and wills (“un espiritu comun, una voluntad ha de aver los casados”) (429). The harmonious husband–wife pair that Padilla creates here reflects her larger project to construct an ideal noble manhood throughout the whole of her Iidea de nobles. Bad husbands, Padilla insists, make bad leaders, while the

---

7 Padillas lines here about “loving your wife as yourself” undoubtedly derive from a combination of Mark’s command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12.31) and Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, which instructs husbands to “love their wives as their own bodies” (Eph. 5.28).
restrained, honest, and affectively reciprocal Christian husband indicates true manhood and hence readiness for the role of leadership assigned to noble males in Spanish society. As we will see in the following section, playwrights too were deeply concerned with the connections between marital character, public leadership, and ideal manhood.

**1.3 Framing Marriage: Inés de Castro According to Antonio Ferreira and Luis Mexía de la Cerda**

Poetic and dramatic interpretations of Inés de Castro’s story were abundant from the late medieval period through the Renaissance, both in Castile and in Portugal. Inés de Castro began to appear in chronicles from as far back as the late fourteenth century, just a few decades after her execution in around 1355. Thanks to chronicle accounts and artistic portrayals, certain details about Inés’s life would have been considered indisputable by early modern audiences: that Pedro hid his relationship with Inés by providing her a rural estate out of the court’s view; that she was executed by King Alfonso XI for fear that her sons would displace Prince Pedro’s son by his first marriage as heir to the throne; that after her execution Pedro had her body retrieved and publicly recognized as that of the rightful queen; and that her execution prompted a period of internecine struggle between the partisans of Prince Pedro, who sought vengeance for Inés’s death, and those who remained loyal to King Alfonso XI. Perhaps luckily for the dramatists and poets who sought to portray her, the information that escaped historians’ accounts was precisely what only Inés and Pedro themselves could know with certainty: the nature of their love for each other.

---

8 See Sellers’s “Una historia convertida en mito” (1999) and Rebaudí’s “Inés de Castro, mártir y mito” (1999) for the history of Inés de Castro’s reception over time as a prominent figure of late medieval and early modern literature.
Had Inés, the lady-in-waiting to Pedro’s first wife, Constanza, seduced him while he was still married, or did they fall in love after the latter’s death? Had their alleged clandestine marriage even taken place to begin with, making his wife “legitimate” before the eyes of God, or had a power-hungry temptress exploited his fickle promises to wed her so as to claim the Portuguese crown for her own noble but nonroyal heirs? These are the questions taken up by Ferreira, Mexía de la Cerda, and Vélez, each of whom provide distinct interpretive possibilities regarding the place of a strong-willed queen consort within the monarchy’s body politic. Whether a strong-willed queen-consort strengthened or undermined the monarchy was of utmost concern to playwrights exploring the nature of early modern monarchy at a time of imperial crisis.

While this chapter assumes that wifely and queenly virtue could have a place and purpose within early modern kingship, I must acknowledge here that prominent early modern Hispanists flatly deny any positive connection between feminine agency and the king’s ability to rule. In her highly influential article “The ‘I’ of the Beholder,” (1995) Ruth El Saffar, for instance, claims that femininity, as well as elements associated with femininity such as the body and maternity, were eschewed entirely in the construction of the elite masculine subject. In Golden Age Spain, the feminine, according to El Saffar, represented “the passions and emotions that destabilize[d] the social order” (181). Margaret Greer, supporting her argument in part with El Saffar’s, makes a not-dissimilar observation regarding women as they relate to the debated category of seventeenth-century Spanish tragedy. Innocently murdered women, such as Pedro’s Inés or Calderón’s murdered wives, are “always associated with interiority,” according to Greer: “Feminine ‘interiority’ represented not only the pleasure of the flesh condemned by
Counter-Reformation dogma, but also a threat to aristocratic male dominance” (Greer 364). Femininity, then, and derivatives thereof such as motherhood and wifehood, signaled only weakness for a male-dominated political order. I will suggest here that previous versions of the play such as Ferreira’s and Mexía de la Cerda’s do condemn the Inés–Pedro union as a “threat” to political order—that Inés is indeed associated with excessive eros, with the succumbing of the mind to passion and of rationality to the libidinous. In prior iterations of the play, the love between Pedro and Inés is indicted as weakening, feminizing, and corrupting of the male body politic, as El Saffar, Greer, and others propose. By contrast, Vélez’s Inés and the Inés–Pedro union that the playwright brings to stage would not have been so easily and readily impugned by his viewership. This is the case both because of his divergent portrayal of the affective and theological circumstances that brought about their marriage, and thanks to Inés’s own exemplary conduct and attributes, which make of her a laudable wife, not a suspect mistress.

Published by his son in 1598 but written at least twenty years earlier, Antonio Ferreira’s Castro was styled closely along the lines of Greek tragedy. It was loosely translated into the Spanish by Jerónimo Bermúdez, who published it in Madrid in a volume titled Primeras tragedias (1577), indicating the high probability that Vélez,

---

9 See for instance Weber’s “Hamartia in Reinar después de morir” (1976), which also faults love for bringing about Pedro’s downfall. I discuss her article at greater length later in the following section.

10 According to Donald Larson’s 2008 introduction to Reinar, no study exists comparing Vélez’s version of the play to the predecessors by Mexía de la Cerda and Ferreira (20). To the best of my knowledge, I am the first to comprehensively compare Vélez’s version to previous ones—with the partial exception of Sellers, who does compare Vélez to Ferreira, although in less depth than I do here.
himself a resident of Madrid, had at least indirect knowledge of Ferreira’s play. Unlike the Spanish *comedia*, whose characteristics were outlined in Lope de Vega’s verse treatise *El arte nuevo de hacer comedias* (1609), Ferreira’s play had no stage directions, offered little plot, and maintained the ancients’ chorus that the *comedia* had done away with. The play is composed mainly of lengthy monologues between the king and his counselors, Pedro and his secretary, and Inés and her servant. As in Vélez’s version, Inés is reluctantly executed at the command of a hesitant king, who is finally persuaded to go forward with the act by his *privados*, drawing forth a sharp critique of Machiavellian political thought. Where the play differs most from Vélez’s is in the fact that Ferreira offers no alternative marriage candidate against which to compare Inés Castro. Instead, the king’s counselors mention the threat posed to the rightful heir, the king’s grandson, by Inés’s children. (Vélez’s version, as we shall see, makes no direct mention of Pedro’s legitimate heir; by eschewing such a reference, Vélez effectively dispenses with the succession dispute as a subplot.)

Another distinction between Ferreira’s *Castro* and Vélez’s *Reinar* lies not in what Vélez omits from his version but in the affective and theological details of the Inés–Pedro union. In Ferreira’s version, Castro confides to her servant that even though Pedro has been forced (“forçado”) (v. 60) by his father to marry Constanza, his allegiances were always to her first: “Deu a Constança a mão, mas a alma livre, / Amor, desejo e fé me guardou sempre” (vv. 64–65). By professing to her servant that Pedro loved her before his nuptials were contracted with his father’s approved choice in marriage, Inés allows

---

11 See Mitchell D. Triwedi’s introduction to his edition of Bermúdez’s play for the debate regarding whether Bermúdez’s or Ferreira’s version came first. Triwedi contends that Ferreira’s version was first and that Bermúdez’s play is heavily indebted to Ferreira’s, to that point that it can be considered a loose translation.
the viewer to infer multiple transgressions, whether of deed or conscience only. In Ferreira’s version, if Pedro desired Inés so intensely, he very well might have committed adultery against his own wife or at least allowed adulterous thoughts to occupy his mind during his marriage to another. Vélez, by comparison to Ferreira, forecloses the possibility that adultery of the flesh or even of the mind occurred between Pedro and Inés prior to his first wife’s death. In Vélez’s version, the prince explains to Blanca, the rival marriage candidate to Inés chosen by his father, that he was (conveniently) never attracted to Inés before Contanza’s passing:

ni un instante
me atreví, señora, a verla
con pensamientos de amante,
que a sola mi esposa entonces,
rendí de amor vasillaje. (vv. 464–68)

Pedro’s explanation as to how he fell in love with Inés hews more closely to the kind of “honest” and “Christian” that love Padilla advocates in her Idea de nobles.

Ferreira’s Prince Pedro, on the other hand, who desired another before his legitimate wife passed away, is more akin to the lustful (“livano”) and indecent (“indecente”) species of attraction against which the countess warns. Ferreira further exacerbates the tension and ambiguity between what Henry Sullivan, in his study of Reinar, calls “licit and illicit union” (151) by never allowing any character in the play to explicitly state when or if Pedro and Inés were actually married. The words “esposo” and “esposa,” unlike in Vélez’s version, do not appear in Ferreira’s. The most any one character has to say on the subject is a fleeting, cryptic statement by Inés Castro’s servant that her “sins” have been purged (“purgado”) (v. 118) because she and the prince are “confederados santamente” (v. 120). The absence of more definitive wording such as matrimônio or casar-se, notes
F. Costa Marques indicates that Ferreira did not believe Castro and the prince had ever been truly married, and put these words in the mouth of a minor character merely to compound the play’s aesthetic effect regarding Inés’s “misfortune” (20). Again, a comparison to Vélez’s rendering of the Inés–Pedro bond is enlightening.

Not only does Vélez’s play eschew any characterization of the union as “sinful,” but all the play’s characters acknowledge the theological validity of the bond. Blanca, the king’s rival marriage candidate, tells Alonso that she has discovered Inés and Pedro are in fact husband and wife, not lovers (“el Príncipe, es ya su esposo”) (v. 1492), and the king shortly thereafter concedes to his privados that his options in dealing with Inés are limited by the fact she and his son are married (vv. 1527–28). Any lingering doubts as to the validity of the clandestine marriage between Pedro and Inés are finally cast aside moments before Inés’s execution. When the king protests to Inés that she and his son could not have been married because of their consanguinity (“vos no pudistes casar, / siendo mi deuda, con Pedro / sin dispensación”), Inés explains to the king that Pedro and Inés in fact sought and attained a papal dispensation to marry (vv. 1977–83). No mention of such a dispensation is made in the chronicle accounts of Pedro and Inés’s union.

Vélez’s addition creates a tension between church and state that is comparatively muted in Ferreira’s version—for unlike the Portuguese playwright’s Castro, here there is no dispute as to Inés’s status as a (theologically speaking) legitimate claimant to the Portuguese throne.

---

12 Marques states that Ferreira’s ambiguous statements regarding the possible marriage of Inés and Pedro “indicam claramente que Ferreira partiu da convicção ou da lenda de que D. Pedro e D. Inês estavam casados” (20).
While Vélez’s play cultivates a profound, ultimately irresolvable power struggle between God’s law and its violation by temporal powers, Ferreira, particularly through the voice of his Pedro’s secretary, is forthright in his condemnation of the Inés–Pedro union and of the remedy that the prince spurn his lover for the sake of his kingdom. Framing Pedro’s devotion to Inés as the surrender of reason (“razão”) (v. 395) to his soul (“alma”) (v. 395) or will (“vontade”) (v. 409), the secretary calls love itself the “poison” (“peçonha”) (v. 423) that corrupts the prince’s soul, honor, and life (“d’alma, d’honra e vida”) (v. 423). Following the secretary’s reasoning, Prince Pedro’s rightful course of action is self-abnegation, or the abandonment of his desire for Inés, in service of the kingdom (“De ti hás-de fugir, por teu remedio”) (v. 461). Such an argument is in keeping with El Saffar’s and Greer’s assertions that love is associated with a kind of sinful, feminine indulgence of the self or one’s feelings (“interiority”). According to this model of manhood and kingship, “love” must be sacrificed for the sake of order and stability. Perhaps in the same way that theologians grappled in the early modern period with the question of celibacy as a holier state than marriage, so too was a similar antagonism reproduced within dynastic marriage: between sinful self-indulgence and dutiful self-restraint. To marry out of one’s narrow personal interest, such as physical attraction, was indicative of the former, while to marry with an eye to the benefit of the kingdom as a whole signaled the latter. Only in Vélez’s version would it become possible to question these motivational categories as being mutually exclusive of one another.

The secretary’s chastisement of Pedro’s relationship with Inés Castro also assumes the rhetorical form of “exemplarity” so assiduously cultivated in conduct literature generally and in Costa’s *Buen gobierno* in particular. In other words, because
the lower classes naturally follow the example of their superiors, whether magistrates or kings, Pedro’s immorality will at once precipitate others to follow his path of transgression and erode the very moral and spiritual authority upon which the title of sovereign is supposed to rest. How will you be capable of punishing others (“com que rosto, Senhor, darás castigo”) who perpetrate the crime—presumably fornication—that you yourself indulge in? (“Aos que assi cometerem o que cometes?”), asks the secretary (vv. 350–51). Your own children (“teus filhos”), the secretary warns, as well as monarchs generally (“reis”) will have been given permission (“darás licença”) to wreak havoc on their kingdoms because of their own selfish desires (vv. 356–57).

As María Sellers astutely observes, such overt, heavy-handed moralizing and didacticism are entirely absent from Vélez’s play. According to Sellers, Vélez’s version has not just substituted a dignified and innocent wife for a corrupting, manipulative lover; in addition, by portraying Inés, and husband and wife’s love for each other, in a more favorable light, the play’s message on kingship and reason of state (razón de estado) also changes. Whereas Ferreira’s tragedy, in keeping with its Christianization of the genre of the ancients, bluntly condemns Inés’s murder as a crime that awaits divine justice, none of the play’s characters, other than the lovers themselves, interrogates the work’s infallible poetic truth: that the prince’s love for Inés impedes his ability to govern, and that to restore his own manhood and capacity for kingship, he would need to abandon Inés altogether for the sake of his kingdom.

---

13 On Vélez’s version in comparison to its Renaissance precursor, Sellers states, “Todas estas ideas, propias del teatro renacentista peninsular, tan preocupado por las cualidades del gobernante, del que depende el destino del país, y por enseñar al público lo que debe esperar de éste a través de la pintura de los vicios y desmanes de la Corte como ejemplo moralizador del que se debe huir, ha desaparecido en la obra de Vélez” (163).
The malevolent, inebriating effects that love exerts on Pedro’s character in Ferreira’s version are made clear in a dialogue with his secretary in act 1. In the face of his secretary’s criticism, the prince justifies his affair with simple arrogance or outright refusal to correct behavior he knows to be sinful. “Não quero nem desejo arrepender-me” (v. 464). Pedro haughtily interjects at one point. In another instance, Pedro claims that the unique relationship that sovereigns maintain with God makes their actions unintelligible to others: “Cos príncipes tem Deus outros segredos, / Que Vós não alcançais” (vv. 373–74). As work by literary scholars such as Stephen Rupp and Melveena McKendrick as well as that of revisionist historians such as Ruth MacKay has shown, the notion that the sovereign’s conduct should be exempt from scrutiny or held to a different moral standard was anathema in early modern political thought. According to Ferreira’s play, then, Pedro’s love indicates sinful indulgence of the self, while the virtuous prince would choose self-abnegation (the abandonment of Inés) as the path to just kingship. In the next section of this chapter, I will argue that Vélez’s message on kingship is quite the reverse of Ferreira’s: within Vélez’s poetic universe, for Pedro to regain his own political authority from the clutches of impotency and fecklessness, he would have needed to defend and protect his wife, asserting her worthiness of the crown, instead of abandoning her.

The Sevillan Luis Mexía de la Cerda’s Tragedia famosa de doña Inés de Castro, reina de Portugal was published in Madrid, in the anthology of plays Tercera parte de las comedias de Lope de Vega y otros autores (1613), about twenty years before Vélez’s version was performed in the same city. Vélez borrows extensively from Mexía’s comedia, yet significant differences between their two works remain. In the portrayal of
the Inés–Pedro bond, Mexía’s version does allow for the lovers’ use of the words “esposa” and “esposo,” thus legitimating the union where Ferreira did not. However, the play’s opening scene begins with Inés’s weary questioning of whether Pedro’s deceased first wife will somehow seek vengeance for the “offense” Inés has committed against her—presumably adultery (“Que a mi señora la Reina / Pienso hago ofensa grande”) (391). The original sin that also makes the union suspect in Ferreira’s version has yet to be excised. While the specter of a morally dubious union owes more to Ferreira’s Renaissance play than Vélez work of the high baroque, a pivotal bridge in the evolution of the Inés–Pedro love plot comes from Cerda: namely, the insertion of a rival dynastic marriage candidate.

Although Vélez further develops the marriage rival by actually bringing the character on stage, it is Cerda, through the mouth of Pedro, who first questions the logic of prearranged dynastic marriage. The Tridentine dilemmas of individual conscience and consent that are altogether absent in Ferreira’s version appear initially in Cerda’s work, even if they are not exploited to full dramatic effect in Vélez’s later play. Indeed, because the chronicle accounts of Inés de Castro speak of no alternative marriage candidate, Cerda’s 1613 version must be credited with initiating an agenda to scrutinize royal practices of betrothal that was absent not only in earlier versions of the play but also in such later works as Calderón’s celebratory auto of 1648. In Calderón’s auto, we will recall, the character of the conjugal bond between Philip IV and Marianna of Austria, sublimated through the use of religious allegory, assumes the guise of dynastic pride (the imperative to perpetuate illustrious blood lineage[s]) and of prescriptive behavior
attributed to fervent religious devotion. The feelings or individual inclinations of husband and wife for one another do not come into play.

Cerda’s Prince Pedro, by contrast, challenges the premise that royal marriage is a matter of unquestioning submission to duty and obligation as defined solely by paternal authority (what Greer calls the “paternal signifier” [“Tragedy” 364]). In a bitter quarrel between father and son, which Vélez replicates in his version of the play, Pedro chastises his father for arranging a strategic marriage that will unite the crowns of Portugal and Aragon without consulting his thoughts on the matter (“Sin saber mi voluntad”): “No han de darme a puñadas / Lo que por gusto ha de ser” (vv. 393-394). Pedro’s invocation of “gusto,” or personal inclination, in the matter of marriage, echoes both Tridentine thought on the liberty of the marital pair and contemporary thought by religious writers such as Fray Luis de León. In his highly popular conduct manual, La perfecta casada (1583), the priest insists that men and women should only marry if true inclination is present (“verdadera afición”), both for the institution of marriage as a vocation and for the person chosen. Pedro further questions his father’s wisdom in the matter of arranging marriages “no coligo / De tu ingenio el fin postrero” by stating the obvious: that the kingdom’s succession is already secured (“Nieto tienes, y yo hijo”), implying that a union of the crown of Portugal and Aragon is either superfluous or greedy (393). Vélez, who resided in Madrid in the same time period as Mexía de la Cerda, undoubtedly took a cue from his fellow madrileño, further developing the latter’s initial inquiry into the rationale and internal logic of dynastic marriage.

The first most important discrepancy between Mexía and Vélez’s works is in the former’s cultivation of a more diffuse family plot in which the Inés–Pedro bond is but
one of many, probably too many, moving parts, and in Mexía’s sublimation of Inés’s
death into the meaningful sacrifice by which the homosocial bonds within an exclusively
masculine body politic are reestablished. In Mexía’s play, it is not only Pedro who has an
alternative suitor. Inés, in fact, has two: a cousin of Pedro, and Pedro’s son by his first
marriage, Fernando. The preponderance of suitors seems to suggest that Inés’s beauty can
hardly be tamed, as if she herself were to blame for a kind of sensual beauty that disrupts
the otherwise tenable bonds of family that hold monarchies together. Ultimately, in
Cerda’s play, Pedro’s rivalry with his father is replicated between him and his son by the
play’s end, with Fernando fearing for his claim to throne after his stepbrothers embark on
a murderous rampage to avenge their mother’s death. But, in a stroke of Christian
moralizing and redemption entirely absent from Vélez’s work, the ghost of Inés descends
upon Pedro. Her body, Inés explains, will not be brought back to life by ceaseless
mourning: “no la dan vida llantos ni pasiones” (405). Rather, much like a saint, Inés
prefers to receive prayers (“oraciones”), pleas for her intercession (“ofrendas”), and
offerings to the poor made in her memory (“limosnas”) (405). Twice Inés implores Pedro
to refrain from being vengeful (“vengativo”), insisting instead in the mundane world’s
equivalent of a beatification, which is to recognize publicly her claim to throne.

Inés’s apparition before Pedro achieves the desired effect. She thereby becomes a
heavenly agent of God’s divine plan, because the prince is able to mitigate the play’s
tragic ending with a final reinstatement of familial, and hence political, order. In the
play’s closing scene, Pedro explains to his firstborn son that his intention was never to
remove his claim to the throne (“mi intención / No es quitarte la corona”), but now that
Fernando’s fears have been dispelled, Fernando’s duty is to raise and protect his
stepbrothers (“a mis hijos poner quiero / Debajo el amparo tuyo”) (409). Mexía’s “happy ending,” in which Inés’s purpose-giving sacrifice enables the flourishing of an all-male political community, contrasts sharply with the closing scene of Vélez’s play. In Vélez’s final scene, Pedro agonizes over her death, displays an un-Christian mercilessness in his execution of his enemies, and receives no heavenly assurances from beyond the grave. Vélez’s simpler plot homes in more directly on Inés’s character and the nature of the conjugal bond she shares with Pedro. Furthermore, he refuses to make of Inés a Christian martyr rather than a victim of senseless violence. Thus, his work is a tragedy of another order.

1.4 Vélez de Guevara Frames Marriage: A Virtuous Wife, a Feckless Husband, and the Failure of Kingship

The most significant scholarship on Vélez’s Reinar después de morir focuses primarily on the play’s nature as a peculiarly Spanish form of tragedy. Allison Weber’s “Hamartia in Reinar después de morir” (1976), for instance, analyzes the paradoxical nature of Pedro’s love for Inés as a source of positive values such as “fidelity, passion, and beauty,” but also as the cause of his demise through “blindness, naivité, and the paradoxical selfless egotism of the lover” (94). According to Weber, Pedro’s human frailty (hamartia) is by Vélez’s design less a flaw in character worthy of punishment than a foil for the maximum arousal of fear and pity (catharsis) within the audience. In his influential article “Vélez de Guevara’s Reinar después de morir as a Model of Classical Spanish Tragedy,” Henry Sullivan similarly attempts to dissect the tragic nature of the work. Sullivan argues that the play cannot be reduced to a single definitive “tragic flaw,” but rather that Spanish tragedy distinguishes itself from the Greek variety by the
collective guilt of all its protagonists; that is, every character makes some kind of an error ("diffuse responsibility") that leads to the play’s tragic conclusion: Pedro’s refusal to acknowledge his wife to his father; Inés’s excessive pride in her confrontation with her royal marriage rival, Blanca; the king’s manipulation at the hands of his conniving privados; and so on.

Analysis of the play’s tragic scope is both useful and necessary, but, as Donald R. Larson points out, studies of the play as a tragedy in many respects divert attention from its “centro emocional,” who is undoubtedly Inés de Castro (22). As I have attempted to show in my analysis of Ferreíra and Cerda, Inés does not, prior to Vélez, occupy the play’s emotional center; in each version she is subsumed into a larger thematic economy of sin (sexual transgression) and the restoration of political order. María Sellers’s claim that the principal antagonism in Vélez’s play is between the individual and society ("amor" and "razón de estado") (174) comes closer to identifying my chapter’s thematic interest. But Sellers, like Weber and Sullivan, leaves aside the greater task of analyzing the character of that love—a love embodied primarily, in Vélez’s version of the play, by Inés and through her actions as the play’s true protagonist or “emotional center.” As I will argue, an enhanced focus on Inés as emblematic of a kind of wifely virtue that Pedro fails to reciprocate in kind unlocks the comedia’s unique perspective on the place of the feminine in the body politic. In addition, an Inés-centered reading affords nuanced understandings of ideal kingship at a time of imperial crisis for the Philip IV-Count Duke of Olivares regime.

As we saw above, Ferreíra’s and Mexía de la Cerda’s versions of the play, from the outset of their first acts, each call into question the legitimacy and purity of Inés and
Pedro’s love for each other. Vélez’s version does not. Instead of comparisons of their love to an inebriating poison (Ferreira), or the recriminations of a fearful mistress who believes she has deeply offended her lover’s deceased wife (Mexía de la Cerda), Vélez’s first verbal portrait of Inés is one of unparalleled platonic beauty, domesticity, and maternal tenderness. At the opening of act 1, Pedro asks his servant and go-between, Brito, to describe how Inés looked to him on his last visit to exchange letters. Brito describes passing through several rooms before he finally finds her lying in her nuptial bed, her children grasping her around the neck:

Entro, al fin, sin sentido,
y en el dorado tálamo que ha sido
teatro venturoso
más de tu amor que del común reposo,
amaneciendo entonces,
y enamorando mármoles y bronce,
los ojos en estrellas,
en nieve y nácar las mejillas bellas,
en claveles la boca,
la frente y manos en cristal de roca,
en rayos los cabellos,
entre Alfonso y Dionís, tus hijos bellos,
asidos a porfía,
por maternal terneza, o compañía,
al cuello de alabastro,
deidad admiro a doña Inés de Castro (vv. 171–86)

Neither Ferreira’s nor Mexía de la Cerda’s play provides such pictorial detail in its visualization of the feminine protagonist’s beauty as Vélez does here. The connotations of her cherubic or celestial beauty are unmistakable. Her skin is the white of snow and pearls (“nieve y nácar”), her lips the pink of carnations (“claveles”). Parallels can also be drawn here between the comedia and early modern religious art. Much like Velázquez’s Virgin Mary in The Immaculate Conception (1619), Inés appears before Brito as if a source of light unto herself—for her locks of hair are rays of light (“en rayos
los cabellos”), light being a common symbol of spiritual purity and divine revelation. More surprising, perhaps, within the canon of extant baroque comedias, is Brito’s description of the conjugal bedroom itself. With notable exceptions, such as Lope de Vega’s Peribáñez y el Comendador de Ocaña (1614), rarely does Golden Age drama showcase domestic bliss. Indeed, rarely is the act of sex portrayed positively in the comedia, as it seems to be here with Vélez’s gentle reference to the nuptial bed (“dorado tálamo”) and to the fruits of marital sex, children (“Alfonso y Dionís, tus hijos bellos”).

Just as rare as scenes of domestic bliss within the comedia were those that contained children. While Henry Sullivan has observed the tendency within Spanish baroque drama to foreclose generational renewal to preserve the ancien régime or “mortgage the future at the expense of the present,” here Vélez seems to indulge—albeit fleetingly, given the play’s tragic ending—an optimistic image of the future.14 Because, as El Saffar and others have noted, the Spanish comedia is so bereft of children and maternity generally, Vélez’s highly pictorial rendering of domestic family life arguably bears greater resemblance to religious art than to drama. Bartolomé Murillo’s Sagrada familia del pajarito (1650), for example, depicts the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph as doting parents, delighting in their son Jesus as he holds a bird just out of reach of a curious dog.15 Not dissimilarly, in Fray Luis’s La perfecta casada, the new Christian Augustinian friar emphasizes that the mother, not servants and midwives, should breastfeed and raise her own children. Insisting that motherhood is a “natural” desire in women, Fray Luis

14 My quotation derives from conversations with Professor Sullivan.

15 For more on this painting and on religious family art generally, see chapter 3 of this dissertation.
explains the rewards of maternalism with visual imagery that anticipates Vélez’s scene of children dangling from their mother’s neck. The mother’s reward for her child-rearing labors, Fray Luis explains, comes in a child’s smile, a laugh or—and here the direct comparison with Vélez—when he grabs his mother by the neck and kisses her (“cuando se le anuda al cuello y la besa”) (72). As the play progresses and the focus on Inés’s character intensifies, Brito’s perception of Inés as a virtuous wife and mother is validated by the highest political authority within Vélez’s poetic universe, the king.

Soon after Brito relays his verbal portrait of Inés to his master, Prince Pedro, the prince’s father, the king, explains to his son that he has married him off to the Infanta of Navarre. “Yo os he casado en Navarra” (v. 379), the king tells him, delighted that in Lisbon the nobility has already begun to celebrate the dynastic union (vv. 379–85). Of course, the transformation of a typically reflexive verb (casarse) into the present perfect (“os he casado”), a semantic shift in which the subject of an action exerted upon oneself becomes the object of action by another, betrays a fundamental violation of Tridentine marriage theology—of what Usunáriz calls “libertad matrimonial,” the right to freely choose one’s spouse (168). And yet unlike Mexía de la Cerda’s play, where the subplot of a rival marriage candidate remains undeveloped and ultimately dissolves within a broader framework of the restoration of political order, Vélez chooses to literally bring Inés and the infanta face to face in confrontation. This plot twist obliges the king to ponder the sparring value systems comprised by competing wives—one who meets total agreement with Tridentine marriage theology but offers no political benefit to the

16 Fray Luis describes the compensations of motherhood thus: “Porque, ¿qué trabajo no paga el niño a la madre, cuando ella le tiene en el regazo, desnudo: cuando él juega con la tetaf , . . . cuando la mira con risa, cuando gorgeja? Pues cuando se le anuda al cuello y la besa, parécame que aún la deja obligada” (72).
kingdom, and the other a dynastic marriage candidate who strengthens Portuguese political power and secures the loyalty of the nobility. The fact that Vélez’s play, unlike Mexía de la Cerda’s, contains no succession dispute as a subplot further underscores Vélez’s dramatic intent to frame the marriage bond between Inés and Pedro as the play’s primary thematic interest.\textsuperscript{17}

When the king descends on Inés’s rural estate at Mondego, with the infanta and his privados Egas and Alvar in tow, his hostile, if not yet clearly defined, intentions are paralyzed by a newfound affection for the family he never knew he had: “Qué honestidad! ¡Qué cordura!” he marvels in an aside upon meeting Inés for the first time (v. 875). He similarly comments upon the beauty of his grandson (“Lindo es”) (v. 877) and insists that the relative refer to him as his grandfather (“Por vuestro abuelo”) (v. 879). Speaking once more to Inés, he again compliments her as “hermosa y muy noble” (v. 880), at once acknowledging her physical and moral attributes. The infanta and the king’s privados are predictably furious at what they see as an affront to the royal house of Navarre and, by implication, to the inherent supremacy of royalty (the king’s and infanta’s bloodlines) over the nobility (Inés’s). Finally, the privados reluctantly heed the king’s vague explanation for deferring resolution to the marriage dispute (“no es ocasión agora / de salir de tanto empeño”) (vv. 894–95), and the sovereign says a last, enigmatic goodbye to Inés before their next encounter, which will be on the eve of her execution:

\begin{quote}
¡Ay, Inés, 
Cuánto con el alma siento 
No poder aquí, aunque quiera, 
Mostrar lo mucho que os quiero! (vv. 903–06)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} In Vélez’s version, Alfonso and Dionís are innocent, politically harmless young victims of their mother’s murder, whereas in Mexía de la Cerda’s they are violent avengers whose political aspirations are unclear.
The reason the king cannot show love for his daughter-in-law and children—that is, the reason he cannot show love for his own family—appears to be that such a show of love would be interpreted as weakness by the king’s *privados*, eager as they are to bring the dynastic marriage between Pedro and the infanta to fruition. Repressing the natural desire to love one’s own kin would not have been commensurate with the deportment of a Christian king as espoused in Ribadeneira’s *Tratado de la religión y virtudes que deve tener el Príncipe Christiano*. By bending to the will of his *privados*, King Alonso seems to suffer from the malign sway of Machiavellian *políticos* who, according to Ribadeneira, justify un-Christian conduct in the name of state preservation and in doing so guarantee the exact opposite: the state’s destruction (76–77). Thus, competing marriage plots and the competing notions of family life they entail—and the place each may or may not have in the royal body politic—cannot ultimately be dissociated from the moral-ethical conscience of the Christian king himself.

Act 1 closes with the initial confrontation between king, advisers, and the infanta in one camp, and Inés and Pedro in the other. In the beginning of act 2, another confrontation occurs, this time solely between Inés and Blanca. Thus, an important distinction separates Vélez’s *comedia* from its antecedents: a prolonged examination of feminine and wifely subjectivity that ultimately implicates whoever becomes queen in the economy of kingship. The infanta arrives at Blanca’s rural estate under the pretext of a hunting trip. Vélez uses the symbolism of the hunt to critique the potential for arrogance and immorality facilitated by royal privilege. The infanta comes armed and in the company of the king’s *privados*; Inés is the prey of the ruling class and its unchecked aggression. In a heated exchange of words, Blanca compares Inés to the heron (“garza”)
with which she is associated because of her beautifully long and slender neck. Drawing a metaphor between the hierarchies of animal and human kingdoms, Blanca proposes that the heron that soars too high must be shot from the sky:

Inés,
Suspended un poco el vuelo
Con que altiva habéis volado.
Reducíos a vuestro centro,
y sírvaos de corrección,
de aviso y de claro ejemplo. (vv. 1403–08)

The word “altiva” is semantically close to “alteza”—the status of royalty Inés hopes to achieve—and has dual literal meanings: distance from the ground and arrogance. Inés’s return to her “centro” amounts to a return to her natural place in the social order, and her demise—prompted by the infanta’s action as guarantor of the social order represented by her royal birth—will serve as a cautionary tale to those who might attempt to follow in her footsteps (“aviso y claro ejemplo”). Blanca illustrates her point by explaining that during her hunt, she herself released a hawk (“volé”) that tore a heron to pieces in its talons; the hawk’s action was an expression of its anger that the lowly heron had tried to compete (“competir”) for its crown (“coronado ceño”) (vv. 1415–16). Blanca’s hawk befits Calderón’s own “ave imperial” by which he describes Marianna of Austria in his auto, who weds Philip IV, the “rey león,” in an exaltation of dynastic pride (vv. 567–68). The key distinction between Calderón and Vélez’s use of royal emblems is that Vélez commandeers the hawk’s status as imperial master of the skies for a more sinister connotation, that of an imperious aggressor without an equally matched rival, save for the only authority that soars higher, the divine.

Despite the infanta’s aggressive and threatening onslaught, Inés is quick to defend her own social worth authoritatively and positively—that is, without the defensiveness of
one who has been humbled—even in the presence of royalty. Inés’s articulate response is based on a defense both of her own noble identity and of the identity she has acquired as Pedro’s legitimate wife:

Infanta, con el respeto
que a tanta soberanía
se debe, deciros quiero
que no ajéis, no, mi nobleza
lo encumbrado con ejemplos. (vv. 1424–29)

Inés audaciously states her unwillingness to subject herself to Blanca’s slander (“no ajéis”), thus defying the latter’s attempt to subordinate her to the status of a social inferior. She also seems to openly challenge the inherent superiority of royal blood by insisting that her nobility (“nobleza”) is crowned by virtuous deeds (“encumbrado con ejemplos”). That Inés would insists on examples (“ejemplos”) as proof of her good deeds implicitly calls the infanta’s moral attributes into question. By lecturing her social superior as to the nature of nobility, Inés’s insinuates that Blanca, the rival queen-to-be of royal birth, fails to demonstrate the character of her royal blood through deeds and hence may be unworthy of the throne. By challenging, if not directly impugning, the infanta’s character, Inés at once elevates herself as a model of patience and equanimity in a time of great duress and undermines the notion that the behavior and actions of royalty must always remain inscrutable to society at large.

In the same response to Blanca, Inés goes on to explain that because of her marriage to Pedro, she in fact outranks her rival, given that she is now the queen-heir to the throne (“reina de aqueste hemisferio / de Portugal, y casada / con el Príncipe don Pedro / estoy primero que vos”) (vv. 1433–35). Inés seems to attempt to smooth over or
slightly retract the arrogance of this statement (she is not yet queen, and yet she calls herself such) by then claiming to speak for the unitary identity of the married subject:

No penséis, señora, no,
que es profanar el respeto,
que debo hablaros así,
sino responder que intento
desempeñar a mi esposo,
pues si él asiste en mi pecho,
con él habláis, no conmigo. (vv. 1439–45)

If Inés’s claim of being “queen of Portugal” smacks of arrogance and is decidedly impolitic, her assertion that she speaks on her husband’s behalf in his absence is in keeping with ideals of wifely conduct espoused by Padilla’s *Idea de nobles* and other companion texts such as her *Nobleza virtuosa* (1637). As Grace Coolidge notes in her book *Guardianship, Gender, and the Nobility in Early Modern Spain* (2011), noblewomen often ran the affairs of the estate in their husband’s absence; according to Coolidge, women were crucial actors within a “flexible patriarchy” (8) that was ultimately more concerned with the “preservation of family, power, and lineage” than with strict adherence to “the prescriptive gender roles” of the early modern period (2). Padilla’s *Nobleza virtuosa* (1637) echoes sentiments expressed in *Idea de nobles* and Costa’s *Buen gobierno* by endorsing the wife’s role in the successful administration of the estate. “Quando hagays ausencias largas, dexad siempre el gobierno, y poderes à vuestra muger,” Padilla instructs her nobleman reader (*Nobleza* 75). To entrust one’s wife with the responsibilities of governing the estate in one’s absence, Padilla explains, is

---

18 We should recall from our discussion of conduct manuals that the verb “gobernar” acquires special importance as an attribute of male selfhood in *Idea de nobles*; the fact that Padilla should grant noblewomen access to this politico-semantically charged verb is noteworthy.
a necessary show of love and appreciation for her ("amor y estimación"), while to not do so is tantamount to her belittlement ("desestimar el marido a su muger") (75).

While Inés fulfills the role of the virtuous wife, Pedro fails to actualize his love and esteem for her as the ideal husband. As we will recall from this chapter’s earlier section on Padilla, the construction of ideal noblemen, from at least the time of the Council of Trent, understood domestic life as an indicator of one’s fitness for political leadership. Not just how women acted, but rather how noblemen behaved toward their wives, and to what extent their private lives were congruent with their public identity as virtuous persons, both determined and reflected their capabilities as leaders. Pedro confesses his lack of true esteem and love as exhibited by actions, not just words, when he confides to the infanta, early in act 1, the precarious position he has put Inés in by not publicly recognizing her as his wife:

> En una quinta que está cerca del Mondego pasa ausencias inexcusables, solamente acompañada a ratos de mi firmeza, y siempre de su esperanza. (vv. 565–70)

Pedro’s fickle words, “firmeza” and “esperanza,” stand in for the one demonstrative action on his part that would secure her status as his legitimate wife: the public recognition of their union. The prince’s failure to formally acknowledge their union indicates his deferred entry into the world of manhood and politics embedded in the institution of marriage as a public institution of vital social importance.

Inés herself tries to incite Pedro’s full initiation into manhood, and into the world of political leadership such initiation entails, with a last request that he defend her before he leaves her estate. She implores him thus:
Mostrad, mostrad los blasones
de vuestra heroica piedad
para que conozca el orbe
que si matarme el Rey ha pretendido,
me habéis, heroico dueño defendido
con valiente osadía y fe constante,
por mujer, por esposa, y por amante. (vv. 1642–48)

These words of admonition, of course, go unheeded. Pedro, fearing imprisonment by his father, departs from Inés’s rural estate, absconding to a hunting lodge in Coimbra (v. 1825–30). Despite the increased threat to Inés born of the infanta’s arrival in Portugal, Pedro defers to the same precarious modus operandi of married life that got him into the marriage and dynastic crisis initially: instead of staying in the home of his wife and children to protect them, he resides apart from them and communicates in the form of letters, using Brito as his go-between. The king, in the meantime, returns for a final visit to Inés’s rural estate, reluctantly convinced by his Machiavellian privados that for reasons of state Inés must be killed.

“Señor, / si severo no os mostráis, / peligra vuestra corona” (vv. 1928–30), advises one of the king’s privados. Inés, of course, makes a last plea for her life, which is immersed in both Christian morality and the family ties that bind her to her executor. She begs the king to be pious and human—that is, to show mercy—“Sed piadoso, sed humano” (v. 2066). In addition to asserting that her death would mean death to both members of the marital union (“hay dos sujetos / que, muerto el uno, ambos mueren”), Inés also invokes the language of family in an attempt to ward off her assassination, reminding the king she is his own son’s wife (“mujer de vuestro hijo”) and mother to his grandchildren (“madre de vuestros nietos”) (vv. 2078–81). Finally, she is pulled off stage by the king’s privados, begging to hug her children one last time (v. 2156). A family’s
destruction, then, is cast in the shadow of reason of state’s imperious, un-Christian method. The juxtaposition of a sympathetic wife-queen’s pleas for mercy against the plotting of the king’s *privados* may echo the rising anti-Olivares sentiment of mid-1630s Madrid. As Magdalena Sánchez explains, Philip IV’s own wife, Isabel de Borbón, was credited in court rumors with having convinced her husband to dismiss his favorite, just a few years before her own untimely death in 1644 (106–07). Sánchez even proposes that pious court women were associated with a kind of kingship that was decoupled from the sinister influence of the *privado*—that, paradoxically, by relying more on his wife and female relatives than on a royal favorite, a king was in fuller control of his kingdom (107).

Because Pedro cowers from defending his legitimate wife, he learns of his father’s sudden death (of natural causes) before hearing of Inés’s execution. Thinking that Inés still lives and that he will never again have to face the wrath of his father, Pedro ignorantly proclaims wedding celebrations much as his father (ignorantly) had at the beginning of the play when he supposed he had married his son to the *infanta*. Pedro addresses the constable joyously:

> ¡Que ha llegado ya el día  
> en que pueda decir que Inés es mía!  
> ¡Qué alegre y qué gustosa  
> reinará ya conmigo Inés hermosa!  
> ¡Agora en Portugal al casamiento  
> todo fiestas será, todo contento!  
> ¡En público saldré con ella al lado! (vv. 2244–48)

Pedro’s complete lack of knowledge of Inés’s fate, coupled with his jejune optimism that he might publicly recognize and crown his wife without ever needing to face down her political enemies, demonstrates this character’s status as the weaker player in a drama
that has already taken place. Inés, not Pedro, heroically confronted death without ever renouncing her claim as wife and queen-to-be; Inés defended the duties of wifehood, including protecting her home from intruders, while Pedro aimed to make marriage a public institution only at a convenient time of his choosing, hoping all the while to skirt his obligations as a husband.

If Pedro’s father succumbed to a Machiavellian political logic, Pedro himself failed to execute morally sound kingship. His sin, though, is not as a Machiavellian. According to the standard of conduct of the ideal nobleman espoused by Luisa Padilla, Pedro failed to fulfill his Christian duty to his wife. Had he honored her, defended her, and publicly recognized the virtuous attributes by which Inés governed their conjugal home, the prince might have salvaged some kind of practicable kingship from the wreckage of his fragmentary marital life. Instead, his failure to link the private and public spheres into a unitary pillar of identity, or “integridad” as Juan Costa calls it (80), equates, as the conduct manuals would suggest, to a failure of both ideal manhood and kingship. Whereas Alison Weber, for instance, cites Pedro’s “love” of Inés as the source of both his positive attributes and his tragic flaw, I contend that Pedro’s failure to defend his love—that is, to defend his legitimate union to Inés—not “love” itself, is the ultimate sin of omission that dictates the play’s tragic ending.

Conclusion

This chapter opened with a discussion of the ideals of royal family life as embodied by the equestrian portraits in the Buen Retiro Palace’s Salón de los Reinos. As highly formulaic endeavors, Velázquez’s family paintings of three generations of Hapsburgs tell us far less about the inner workings of royal family life or how the
Spanish Hapsburgs weathered crises than they do about the way the Philip IV–Count-Duke of Olivares regime wished the royal family be perceived. Ribadeneira’s treatise and Calderón’s *auto* similarly provided a hallowed image of the Hapsburg monarchy: one in which individual and familial (dynastic) imperatives never collide and church and state act in concert with one another. The Council of Trent and the plethora of conduct literature that followed in its wake, by contrast, did polemicize the (Christian) morality of the ruling classes. Tridentine theology decreed that no individual could marry against his or her will, while Padilla, Costa, and ultimately Vélez himself implicated the affective substance of the marriage bond in the success or failure of Spain’s ruling classes, the nobility and the monarchy. In the absence of “integridad” between public and private life, without a love for one’s wife that is “honesto y christiano” (Padilla 429), true manhood and strong political leadership could not be achieved.

Vélez’s essentially positive portrayal of Inés as a queen who could have been sheds light on the interconnected fields of early modern gender and political thought. Vélez’s Inés displays all the positive attributes of wife and motherhood that noble and royal men would have eagerly sought for the protection and perpetuation of their privileged station in Spanish society. Moreover, Prince Pedro’s failure to publicly recognize Inés and reciprocate the love she shows him foreshadows his own failures as a political actor within the Portuguese kingdom. But of course Vélez’s representation of ideal wifehood does not indicate woman’s equality in relationship to the opposite sex. Rather, the attributes of the virtuous wife ultimately reflected the sovereign’s ability to dominate his own political surroundings—for he claimed her benevolent qualities as the subordinate domain of the male-dominated marriage union. Within an asymmetrical
power relationship, the wife helped the husband rule over his domain more than he helped her achieve the status of co-ruler.

In *Microcosmia y gobierno universal del hombre cristiano* (1592), Marco Antonio de Camos corroborates the seemingly contradictory assertion that the wife’s moral and intellectual traits can be claimed by her husband as part of his capacity for political leadership. In a chapter regarding marriage and the administration of the home, Camos explains that the influence of women (by their very nature more compassionate than men) on their husbands often leads the latter to make wiser decisions (66), for the ideal wife tempers and even corrects the husband’s tendency toward vice. Similarly, in her article “Court Women in the Spain of Velázquez,” Magdalena Sánchez argues that the image of the loving, pious wife Isabel de Borbón, the example par excellence of a dynastic marriage, came to be associated “with a style of government . . . that did not rely strongly on a *privado* but instead was based on a monarch who himself retained the reins of power” (106). The queen’s virtue and religiosity translated into the king’s mastery of the polity and independence from the malign influence of un-Christian *privados* against which Ribadneira and ultimately Vélez himself warn. Marriage, then, became an important institution for the expression and protection of royal power, as well as a source of moral authority for the projection of an earnest Christian kingship.
Chapter 2

Family and Nation in María de Zayas’s “Mal presagio casar de lejos”
and “Estragos que causa el vicio”

When María de Zayas published her Parte segunda del sarao y entretenimiento honesto [Desengaños amorosos] Spain was a nation under siege. Just a year later would mark the end of the Thirty Years’ War and, with it, the loss of the Hapsburg monarchy’s hold on its northern European dominions. But by 1647, Spain’s waning hegemony beyond the Iberian Peninsula was not all that was at stake. From 1640 onward, first Catalonia and then, shortly thereafter, Portugal were in open revolt, with the specter of war creeping ever closer to Castile and ultimately Madrid, the seat of the monarchy and home to the very idea of a modern, unified Spanish nation.1 Zayas’s 1647 collection, markedly darker in tone than her comparatively playful Novelas amroosas of just a decade earlier, captures the bleakness of the period. What is more, they capture the drama of the Spanish nation at a time when the disintegration of the unified peninsular kingdoms was palpable. As in the earlier collection, the novellas are structured around a party hosted by Lisis at a home in Madrid. Aristocratic narrators tell and gloss each other’s stories, implicitly inviting the reader’s participation in the hermeneutical act. The

1 J. H. Elliott explains, “The years of 1647–8 . . . saw . . . the narrow escape of the Spanish Monarchy from total dissolution. . . . Had Aragon and Valencia rallied to the help of the Catalans, the Iberian peninsula of the mid-seventeenth century would have reverted to its condition in the mid-fifteenth, divided between the three power blocs of Portugal, Castile, and the Crown of Aragon” (Imperial 352–53).
hostess closes the novella’s frame narrative with a diatribe against men’s mistreatment of women and the effeminizing effects of life at court, both of which, according to Lisis, bear upon Spain’s fecklessness in the battlefield. The only hope for moral and political revival, Lisis tells her listeners (and Zayas’s readers), lies in the heroic times of the Catholic Kings (505). The Desengaños thus end with the advocacy of an empowered female voice that shapes the terms of a debate regarding Spain’s imperial decline.

Contemporary criticism does not neglect Zayas’s acerbic critique of Spanish Golden Age society, particularly from the standpoint of Zayas’s success as an early modern woman writer in a canon dominated then and now by men. Lisa Vollendorf and Marina Brownlee both argue that Zayas’s rendering of feminine subjectivity at once attacks the unidimensionality attributed to women’s actions and thought processes and exacts “women’s inclusion in the institutional workings of society” (Vollendorf 23). In her more recent study Dressed to Kill: Death and Meaning in Zayas’s ‘Desengaños,’ Elizabeth Rhodes similarly affirms that gender and imperial crises are indissolubly bound. Rhodes argues that Zayas sought the reform of Spain’s noble class, upon whose smooth functioning the monarchy depended to administer the needs of the empire. Like Vollendorf and Brownlee, Rhodes calls Zayas a defender of “female subjectivity,” reiterating that Zayas empowered the voice of noblewomen as a linchpin of Spanish renewal (120). Further, Rhodes expands the critical purview of Zayas’s themes. Analyzing both the failure of the marriage plot and the appropriation of hagiographic models (lives of women saints) in the Desengaños, Rhodes identifies their unequivocal
Devoid of religious transcendence, Zayas’s *Desengaños* portray human failures and suggest human solutions. The former underwrite Spain’s inexorable decline; the latter offer alternative futures.

Viewed in the aggregate, Zayas criticism reveals a politically engaged writer. Crucially, she is not a revanchist Catholic imperialist seeking to tame heretical Europe. Her concerns are much more pragmatic, much more localized: what is tearing Spain apart here and now, within the peninsula, and what can keep the nation together? Zayas scholars agree that she does not revel in Spain’s demise, as though the punishment amounted to poetic justice for a misogynist society’s mistreatment of Spanish women. Rather, she wishes Spain to live up to its ideals. The broad lens through which Zayas criticism operates is often gender studies, with attention to the role, or lack thereof, of women in Golden Age society. As far as a particular political ideology advanced by Zayas, the term used, more often than not in passing, is “nationalist.” Rhodes, Brownlee, and another scholar, Nancy LeGreca, all use a derivative of nationalism to describe Zayas’s novellas. Rhodes ranks Zayas among “nationalist authors” and concludes that her message is that without honorable women, the Spanish “nation” can only “fail” (34, 163). With regard to the novellas that are the subject of this chapter, Brownlee notes that in “Mal presagio casar de lejos,” “the topic of nationalism . . . is firmly established from the opening moments of the unfolding narrative” (43); while LeGreca calls “Estragos que causa el vicio,” a “nationalist rewriting” of the Portuguese rebellion of 1640 (577).

---

2 Concerning Zayas’s use of hagiography in her fiction an important precursor to Rhodes is Patricia Grieve’s “Embroidering with Saintly Threads: Maria de Zayas Challenges Cervantes and the Church” (1991).
These observations are entirely valid. What is more, they are fundamental in deciphering the didactic intent of Zayas’s writings. But they also beg the question: if Zayas is a “nationalist” writer, what constituted the nación in mid-seventeenth century Spain? Did she rally behind the cause and policies of the Crown or that of the nobility of Castile, whose perceived interests often did not intersect with those of the former? Did she sympathize with the idea of Spain as an amalgamation of peoples united, however loosely, by a common culture, values, or collective interest(s) such as defense against an external enemy? In other words, did Zayas ask herself the same question made famous by the Generation of ’98 in the wake of another devestating blow to the Spanish national psyche; did Zayas ask ¿Qué es España?, and if so, do the Desengaños provide a constructive answer to the question?

In María de Zayas Tells Baroque Tales of Love and the Cruelty of Men (2000), Margaret Greer notes that in the Desengaños historical events move to the forefront to a degree that is absent in the Novelas amorosas (María de Zayas 306). As she puts it, for the protagonists of the Desengaños the “political is made personal” (307). Her analysis of “Mal presagio casar de lejos” and “Estragos que causa el vicio” in particular suggests a degree of historicity within the Desengaños that merits further exploration (299–314). The two stories form a unique pairing, first in that both reference concrete historical events: the Duke of Alba’s bloody tenure as governor of Flanders from 1567 to 1573, and Philip III’s 1619 visit to Lisbon to swear in Philip IV as heir to the Portuguese throne, respectively. Likewise, both tightly interweave family plots and royal politics. Doña Blanca, of “Mal presagio,” a Castilian noblewoman of royal descent, is strategically married off to a tyrannical Flemish royal family, only for the failed marriage to end in
bloodshed and Spanish military intervention. Don Gaspar, of “Estragos,” enjoys a prestigious post as attendant to King Philip III—a member of the royal family in the seventeenth century sense, which covers the dependents of a household—only to jeopardize his good standing through the illicit pursuit of a powerful Portuguese noblewoman, Doña Florentina. Florentina’s disruptive power over men presents a clear threat to the sovereignty of the royal family. In each case the tale’s grim ending is somewhat ameliorated by a protagonist’s return to Castile and successful marriage to a fellow Castilian. Both novellas have at heart the interrelatedness of family and nation.

2.1 A Royal Household Abroad: The Nation as a Family in “Mal presagio casar de lejos”

“Mal presagio casar de lejos” is the seventh desengaño in the story collection Desengaños amorosos (1647) [“The Disillusionments of Love”]. Narrated by Doña Luisa, it tells the story of four aristocratic Spanish women who, bereft of their father, a “gran señor de España,” experience death at the hands of foreign men (337). The first woman to die, Doña Mayor, is killed by her Portuguese husband after he forges a letter from an alleged Spanish lover. As in “Estragos,” an contributing factor in her death is the poor state of Luso-Castilian relations (“la poca simpatía que la nación portuguesa tiene con las damas castellanas, en no hacer confianza de ellas”) (338). The youngest sister of the four, Doña María, who accompanied Doña Mayor to Portugal, is thrown from a window but rescued by a Castilian nobleman. She returns to Castile to spend a few years of bedridden life in her homeland before dying. The second eldest, Doña Leonor, marries an Italian. He kills her for complimenting a Spanish soldier, and also kills their son because he can no longer be sure the child is not a bastard. Doña Blanca, the third
daughter, is the smartest and most beautiful of the three. Her courtship by a foreigner becomes the subject of great interest and speculation at court.

Although Doña Blanca’s position at court is not quite clear—later on she states the she is of royal descent (“real sangre”) (358)—we infer her importance to the Crown by the fact that she is the subject of a strategic marriage to a Flemish prince. The marriage alliance is forged “por convenencias a la real corona y gusto de su hermano” (339). Doña Blanca reluctantly agrees to the marriage, stipulating that the prince must come to Spain and court her over the period of a year, because love is won, according to her, through the process of getting to know one another. “No hay . . . más firme amor que el trato,” Doña Blanca explains to her most trusted servant, Doña María (340). The year-long courtship of a bride already betrothed is the subject of great entertainment and speculation for the court, as well as frustration for the prince and his father, who writes angrily from Flanders about the delay in his son’s return. When Blanca is finally married in Spain, still reluctant and sad to leave homeland and brother behind, the ceremony is marred by the news of Blanca’s sisters’ deaths. Had Blanca known her sisters’ fates before her marriage, the narrator tells us, she never would have agreed to marry (“se tiene por seguro que si no se hubiera deposado, por ningún temor, interés, ni conveniencia se casara”) (348).

In Flanders Blanca suffers isolation. She is ignored by her husband and insulted by her tyrannical father-in-law as well as her husband’s favorite servant, Arnesto. She finds comfort mainly in the strong bond she maintains with her lady-in-waiting, Doña María, and with her sister-in-law, Marieta. Marieta, however, is summarily executed by her husband and the prince’s father, in keeping with the pace of speciously motivated
uxoricide that drives the novella’s plot. Doña Blanca pleads once more to her husband that he allow her to return to Spain, where she will seek an annulment of their marriage and enter a convent. The Flemish prince is unresponsive. Shortly thereafter, Doña Blanca, imagining that her husband has a mistress, instead catches him in bed with Arnesto. She burns the tainted bed and awaits her imminent death, which comes in the form of a bloodletting ordered by the prince’s father.

Don Gabriel, Blanca’s servant and the suitor of Doña María, meanwhile has fled the palace to alert Blanca’s brother in Antwerp of the perilous situation that has engulfed her. Blanca’s brother organizes an expedition to rescue her sister’s servants and confessor, knowing by now that it is too late to save his sister. All are Spaniards and are imprisoned in a tower. After four long years, they are liberated, and we are told that the Duke of Alba’s bloody tenure as governor of the Low Countries (1567–73) was retribution for her death. Blanca’s body, miraculously preserved in a timeless beatitude, is taken back to Spain alongside the “damas y criados” who accompanied her to Flanders (365). In Spain Doña María and Don Gabriel marry, and Doña María gives birth to a daughter, who marries a close relative of Blanca. Doña María’s child and Doña Blanca’s relative are the parents of the novella’s narrator. Thus, like “Estragos,” the story is given an air of authenticity and contemporaneousness, underwritten by historical events.

Superficially, “Mal presagio” seems a prime example by which to gauge Zayas’s nationalism. Unmerited deaths of Castilian women at the hands of foreigners, especially from lands (Italy, Portugal, and Flanders) all warring with the Crown in the 1640s, seem to beckon a call for scrutiny of Spain’s place in the international political order. Hence, a comparison of the faring of Spanish women and the Hapsburg monarchy abroad,
especially when the women are killed by state enemies, does not seem farfetched. Many elements of the plot, however, appear to frustrate a nationalistic reading of the text. Unlike “Estragos,” for instance, in “Mal presagio” no monarch is named, though we assume the story takes place in the reign of Philip II, given the mention of the Duke of Alba and the family connection of the story’s narrator to its protagonists. Furthermore, while Don Gaspar of “Estragos” has a clear function within the royal family of Philip III, Doña Blanca’s precise connection to historical personages is decidedly less clear. Again, a broad historical inference must suffice: kings often selected marriage candidates for the nobility. The belief that marriage alliances could cement political alliances pertained both to the royal family and to members of the nobility close to it. Monarchs often had a hand in both royal and noble marriages, and the latter, like the former, were an instrument of royal foreign policy (Cruz 517–38).

Finally, the lack of a plausible motive for the killing of Blanca, or even of her Flemish ally Marieta, presents further problems for a nationalist reading of the text. Unlike the Portuguese, Flemish, or Italians, all of whom had a clear political interest in freeing themselves from the Hapsburg yoke, the woman-killers of this novella profess no substantive motive for their acts. In support of the novella’s seeming caricature of foreign villains, Amy Williamsen cites Marieta’s murder as reason to believe that the story critiques the condition of women generally, as opposed to demonstrating the inherent moral superiority of Spanish men (620). Margaret Greer, on the other hand, allows that the deaths of Spanish women at the hands of Flemish, Italian, and Portuguese killers convey clear nationalist overtones for her readers—namely, that foreign murderers were an embodiment of rage against the Hapsburg authority that checked the aggression of
their respective homelands, and that “political (mis)alliance” is the cause of the demise of a prominent Spanish family (Greer *María de Zayas* 290).

Greer’s comments provide a useful point of departure for this chapter’s inquiry. If Spanish “political (mis)alliance” is the source of the extinction of a great Spanish family of Castilian extraction, does Zayas thus critique the burdens of Spanish imperialism as a toll too heavy for the noble class to bear? Are the novella’s senseless deaths the substance of a nationalist critique of a Hapsburg royal policy that places the needs of religious and dynastical warfare necessary to maintaining an empire above those of its people? That is, does Zayas find that a Spanish people, a *nación* defined by territorial contiguity within the Iberian peninsula, have interests that are distinct to those of the empire it serves, and if so, do her novellas suggest that the needs of the former must necessarily trump those of the latter?

To date, criticism has only partially addressed the nationalist undertones of Zayas’s *Desengaños*. (Re)reading “Mal presagio” through the lens of family facilitates a more penetrating analysis of Zayas’s political ideology concerning a unified Spanish nation. In particular, the detail Zayas devotes to the quotidian intricacies of royal nuptial life, including the failed marriage plot between Blanca and the Flemish prince and the royal household that alternatively supports and is supported by her in enemy lands, presents a strong case for the preservation and unity of the family body as analogous to the national cohesion sought by the nascent Spanish state. Insight into the hand-in-glove relationship between family and politics in the early modern era sheds light on the interrelatedness of dramas of family and the drama of the Spanish nation in seventeenth-century Europe. Royal marriage and political decision making were highly interrelated,
even indistinguishable, affairs; and the royal family itself was meant to serve as an emblem of imperial unity that transcended the localized meanings of patria (homeland) and nación (nation).


Through this broad, often porous body of family, a regime’s, and thus a nation’s, political order was preserved or forfeited. When placed alongside chapter 5 of Hoffman’s study, “Courtship and Marriage,” which details the trials and travails of Philip III’s daughters, Ana and María, Blanca’s courtship experience exhibits a high degree of verisimilitude. From the pressure exerted on her by her brother and the king to marry for the Crown’s benefit, to her anxieties about leaving her family and homeland behind, to her denigration by a foreign court and unhappiness as a pawn of political strategy—all these dilemmas of royal nuptial life that affect Blanca are ones Hoffman systematically addresses in her study of the Spanish Hapsburgs.

At the opening of “Mal presagio,” Doña Blanca is not only cautious but even defiant at the prospect of marrying a man she has never met. He could be ugly, a dimwit (“necio”), disagreeable (“desabrido”), or even a fortune hunter, she tells her trusted lady-in-waiting, Doña María (340). She remains apprehensive even after the prince arrives to meet her in Madrid and officially court her, her worries unabated. Part of her anxiety is
attributed to her “prophesying heart,” the voice inside her that senses doom in her marriage to a foreigner, even before the news of her sisters arrives: “¡Oh, qué profeta es el corazón! ¡Pocas veces se olvida de avisar de las desdichas que han de venir!” (343). But her own intuitive fear of death, however irrational it may seem at first to Doña María, and however suspenseful for Zayas’s baroque readership, is coupled with a more quotidian misgiving, that of leaving her homeland and family. When the prince arrives, Blanca acknowledges the grief of uprooting herself: “que tengo de ausentarme de mi natural, de mi hermano, y irme a tierras tan remotas” (343). Similarly, on her departure, the narrator remarks that she “dejó a España con tan tierno sentimiento de apartarse de su hermano y hermana y de su amada patria” (349). The words patria and natural—both connotative of one’s birthplace—twice rest alongside a reference to family. From the outset of her courtship, then, Blanca identifies herself with homeland and family, not with her role as a nexus between Hapsburg power and the Spanish Netherlands.

Hoffman explains that for royal women, marriage amounted to the “defining moment” of their lives—the moment when they were sent abroad without the prospect of seeing their family or homeland again (112). Because male heirs were privileged for rule, the task of marrying abroad to cement political alliances fell disproportionately on the female sex. Generally, royal women were trained for the role of marriage abroad from early on. In theory, at least, the prospect of leaving your family, as well as the language and customs of your court, would be not a moment of surprise, hesitancy, or emotional duress, but one that royal women were psychologically prepared for from the beginning of their lives. Marriage itself was not the endgame. Rather, royal women faced the nearly impossible task of assimilating into their adoptive court and simultaneously representing
the interests of their family of origin. Therefore, royal women and high-ranking nobility, such as those who attended her royal household abroad and were expected to marry into the aristocracy of their new country, were overloaded couriers of hope. Time and time again, intermarriage within European royal families did not stop wars, ameliorate existing military conflicts, or promote broader cultural understanding between kingdoms. And yet these were the almost magical forces of optimism attributed to royal marriages, even in the context of interminable strife that besieged Europe during the Thirty Years’ War.

Despite the failure of royal marriages abroad to deliver on their implicit promises of diplomatic breakthroughs, the practice was not critiqued in any meaningful way by the Spanish Hapsburgs. In fact, as Hoffman explains, the Hapsburgs, like their royal counterparts throughout the rest of Europe, relied heavily on their “partially foreign” status as a source of political legitimation (219). As subjects of marriages that transcended the regional and factionalist concerns of the nobility, the royalty’s interests superseded the nación and patria of the noble class, whether Aragonese, Catalanian, or Andalusian. Royals, then, knew intuitively that their loyalty was to the perpetuation of family power, not “to a particular country” (221). Herein lies a key divergence between Zayas’s portrayal of royal family and the ideal of royal family. Whereas, according to Hoffman, royals were raised to understand their obligations to power over place, and to expect that foreign courts, foreign languages, and foreign families were their duty and destiny, in Zayas’s rendering of royal nuptial life, the bride-to-be, to the contrary, does harbor a sense of attachment to family and home that is geographically anchored.

Allusions to her “hermano y hermana y amada patria,” to her “natural” and “hermano,” and once more before she exits Spain to her “paternal albergue” all
demonstrate that Blanca has not subsumed the ideology of royal leadership (343, 349). Her sense of identity is informed not by the emotionally detached, nationality-neutral outlook of royalty, but by strong affective ties to homeland and family, to the etymological origins of the very word *patria*, which at once connotes parentage and locale. While *patria* in its seventeenth-century sense could mean the city or province (in some cases both) of one’s birth, once Blanca leaves Spain, thus assuming the role of wife-diplomat assigned to royal women, her sense of self—her attachment to family and homeland—confronts new challenges. Threats to Blanca’s subjectivity, in the context of power politics and diplomatic relations between Spanish and Flemish royal families, do not just come in the form of threats to her Castilian roots. Rather, in departing her homeland, Blanca faces attacks against her that are directed not at her “Castilianness” per se—that is, not against her town or province of birth, or her family—but at her status as a Spaniard.

Blanca’s troubles with the Flemish prince begin as soon as she is out of sight of the king and her brother. The prince was feigning (“disimulaba”) his interest in Blanca, the narrator tells us, “hasta sacarla del poder de su hermano” (349). He abruptly detaches himself (“se despegó”) from her, and responds to her complaint of neglect thus: “No seas viciosa, española. . . . ¿Qué quieres: verme siempre junto a tí?” (349). The prince’s blatant disregard for Blanca’s emotional well-being can only be interpreted as an equal show of disregard for the supposed political alliance cemented by the marriage. At this point in the story, *Spain* (“España”) and *Spaniard* (“español[a]”) appear with greater frequency. In the mouth of her father-in-law, “español” and “la españoleta” take the form of an insult. Significantly, however, *Spaniard* also becomes the blanket term used by the
narrator to describe Blanca and the members of her royal household, as opposed to referencing their “nationalities” in the localized sense of a particular province or city.

The prominence of the word “Spaniard” to describe Blanca and her royal household abroad belies the slippage between “Castilian” and “Spanish” used to describe Blanca and her family at the start of the novella. Her father is called a great man of “España,” not Castile, while Blanca herself and her sisters are referenced as “damas castellanas” (337–38). This case of ambiguous signification is not attributable simply to carelessness on the author’s part; it is indicative of a crossroads in early modern European history. Broadly speaking, the Castilian nobility alternatively relished Castile’s role in the union of the Crown under the Catholic Monarchs and despised the disproportionate burden in taxation and army building that fell to it in maintaining the Spanish Hapsburg Empire. But by the 1640s, Castilians, unlike their Catalanian, Portuguese, and to a lesser extent Andalusian counterparts, could not seriously entertain the idea of schism from the Hapsburg monarchy. By then, their 150-year history as the head and heart (cabeza y corazón) of the unified kingdoms meant they were too entangled, emotionally and historically, with the project of the nascent Spanish state. Thus, calling a Spaniard a Castilian, or a Castilian a Spaniard, as happens to Doña Blanca in the story, reflected the defining paradox faced by Castilians and, to a perhaps lesser but still significant extent, by peoples of the peninsula who professed loyalty to the monarchy. On the one hand, traditional ties to all that was local, the product of residual feudalistic power bases of regional aristocracies and wealthy cities, remained strong. On

---

3 Portugal and Catalonia both rebelled against the Hapsburg Crown in the 1640s, receiving international aid for their causes, in the former’s case from England and in the latter’s, from France.
the other, in the context of an evolving political and military landscape across early modern Europe, seventeenth-century monarchies aspired to the centralization of power and resources. Each patria writ small was obligated to seek protection within the broader entity—the nascent Spanish state—that could protect it.

The necessity of group identification as Spaniards, particularly in the context of a royal household that becomes in the novella a microcosm of the Spanish state’s faring on the European stage, is evidenced by Blanca’s own intuition of her place among “allies” and “enemies” who are sharply divided along nationalistic lines between Spaniards and Flemings. This despite the shared oath of loyalty the two presumably hold to the Spanish Crown. As Doña Blanca’s sense of entrapment and isolation in the Flemish palace grows, she realizes that her situation and that of her Spanish household is dire, and that attempting to save face with tyrants can only achieve so much:

[A]unque doña Blanca volvía por sí, no consintiéndose perder el respeto, le valía poco, porque todos eran sus declarados enemigos, sin que tuviese ninguno de su parte, supuesto que los criados que tenía españoles estaban tan oprimidos y mal queridos como ella. (351)

The narrator’s choice of militarized language—enemies versus implied allies—reflects the dire state of an encircled Spain, as viewed by the Desengaños’ narrators in Madrid at the close of a disastrous decade for Spanish power. While the 1570s, from the Dutch perspective, were arguably the pinnacle of Spanish brutality—the very brutality that spawned the black legend, in fact—here Zayas seeks to rewrite the past. She tips the scale in favor of the heroic Spaniards, the real victims of abuse in a protracted war that would end a year after the novella’s publication with the recognition of an independent Dutch republic. Poignantly, Doña Blanca’s allies, those on her “side” (“de su parte”), include the entirety of her royal household, down to the servants (“los criados”) In the
context of a bellicose foreign enemy, even internal class divisions reproduced within the household ebb in favor of horizontal group affiliation. She identifies with them because as Spaniards (“españoles”) they, like her, suffer oppression. Blanca’s identification with them is both family and nationality based. It is family based because the royal household makes up Blanca’s “family” in its seventeenth-century definition as biological relationships and the dependents of a household; it is also nationality based because the language and customs that pertain to servants and mistress alike are a source of cultural differentiation that subjects them to persecution.

As we shall see in the second half of this chapter, Lisis, the hostess and narrator of “Estragos,” employs similar diction—one of “enemigos” and implied alliances—both within the novella itself and in the closing frame narrative of the Desengaños. In the latter she impugns a rhetorical “vosotros,” alternatively Spanish or Castilian men—“ánimos castellanos” and “pechos españoles”—for permitting the enemy to penetrate Spanish soil (“que estén los enemigos dentro de España”) (505–06). According to Lisis, in the time of Ferdinand the Catholic, men rushed to the battlefield to protect the Spanish national family: “el padre, por defender la hija; el hermano, por la hermana; el esposo, por la esposa, y el galán por la dama” (505). By coupling military prowess with the defense of familial relationships (father–daughter, brother–sister etc.), Lisis suggests that the integrity of the family and of the nation are mutually dependent and co-determinant. As concerns “Mal presagio,” Lisis’s words and Blanca’s failed marriage plot abroad reinforce an “us” versus “them” that is not confined merely to the gender wars undergirding the frame narrative. Though the tales, all narrated by noblewomen, are ostensibly told as a “defensa de las mujeres,” Doña Blanca’s identification of an enemy
(the Flemish prince and his family), like Lisis’s reference to a domestic enemy, takes the level of critique beyond patriarchy and (noble) gender inequality (505). Rather, the portrayal of a royal household held captive abroad and of Doña Blanca’s heroic stewardship of that household serves as a catalyst for nationalist introspection by the reader.

The necessity of Blanca’s leadership over her royal household is brought to the fore by Marieta’s execution. By then, Blanca knows that the lives of more innocents are at stake, including hers and those of the servants of her royal household. After she makes a last plea to return to Spain and enter a convent, Blanca resigns herself to an imminent death. Her death preparations include an impassioned monologue to her royal household, predicated once again not on the necessary burdens of dynasty building and empire preservation, but on the interlocking bonds of family and nation, with the promise of a belated return to Spain. Her first action is to divide her jewels among her servants, in the hope that “Dios os volviere a España, sacándoos de entre estos enemigos” so that they can marry (“tomar estado”) in Spain, unlike Blanca, who “[s]e entreg[ó] a un enemigo” (359). Repatriation to Spain, like the dissolution of her marriage to the prince, was entirely outside the purview of royal family politics. Just as internecine strife between royal families that shared bonds of blood was not grounds for the dissolution of a marriage, so too did poor relations between husband and wife have to be borne with as much equanimity as brides could muster. Blanca further exposes her leanings toward (Spanish) family and national loyalties by acknowledging the sacrifice of her servants who have left their “patria, padres, y deudos” (359). Here, as earlier on in the novella, Blanca’s subjectivity seems informed much more by nationalism, by ties to the local,
than by the transnational bonds of religion and a common Crown. Like her servants, she desires only to return to her “paternal albergue”—that is, to the safety of family and homeland, not to serve royal policy goals that, if even understood by the author, are never articulated by any of the novella’s characters. Interests of state have receded into the background. The story’s pathos now hinges upon the alienation of Spaniards from the loved ones and towns they have left behind.

Blanca invests the fleeting hope that she might be saved in a message sent to her brother via Don Gabriel, the servant who will ultimately marry Doña María, her lady-in-waiting. Although her brother arrives too late to save her and only after years of fighting, here it appears that Lisis’s maxim about Spanish heroism as being motivated by the preservation of family and national bonds (“el padre, por defender la hija; el hermano, por la hermana”) holds true. The fact that Blanca’s salvation rests upon the Spanish military might embodied by her brother gives testament to what Greer calls in a footnote “the sociopolitically conservative self-limitation of Zayas’s critique of the fundamental structures of Hapsburg Spain” (María de Zayas 439). Zayas’s nod to military might, however, occurs in the context of a mission to rescue imprisoned Spaniards, one of whom is a direct blood relation to the military leader. Notably, no mention is made of the need to convert heretics or reconquer lands for Christendom. By 1647, when the novella was published, the interminable tit-for-tat nature of military victory in contested Flanders was abundantly clear. The irony of mentioning the Duke of Alba’s merciless but ultimately ineffectual tenure as governor as payback for Doña Blanca’s death would not have been lost on Zayas’s educated court readers, who had been told of decisive victories and glorious retaliations more times than they would have cared to remember.
Soon after Marieta’s execution, another disastrous event precipitates Blanca’s self-awareness as stewardess of her royal household: the witnessing of the gay love affair between her husband and his servant Arnesto. Shortly after walking in on the sex act, Blanca confers with Doña Marúa, who articulates to her mistress the responsibility she has for the well-being of her Spanish family, all the while insisting that Blanca feign ignorance of this affront to her honor until her brother arrives to save them:

Y pues desde que le escribiste dándole de ellos [the news of Marieta’s murder], tenías tu remedio puesto en él, ¿por qué le quieres aventurar todo? Mejor es disimular, haciéndote desentendida, hasta que venga, como te avisó, a estos estados, y entonces, con su amparo, podrás mejor sujetar tu venganza. Muchas veces te he suplicado que disimules tu pasión con esta gente cruel. . . . [M]e espanto que tengas en tanto padecer aborrecida la vida, por tus tristes criados, que quedaremos sin tu amparo, en perpetuo cautiverio, si ya no hacen con ellos lo mismo que tú dices esperas harán contigo. (361)

Doña Blanca awaits her brother’s “amparo,” and so too her royal household needs hers. To protect her servants, she must not betray a sense of despair to them or to her captors. Her familial obligations are made clear. The extent to which Doña Blanca confides in Doña María, both by confessing her fears and by heeding her advice, further strengthens the case that bonds of family and nation took precedence, at least in Zayas’s artistic rendering, over pressures that royalty assimilate into the host country (Hoffman 112). The intimacy of the María–Blanca relationship speaks to the enormous importance Zayas gives the queen’s lady-in-waiting within the royal family. Clearly not a passive participant in royal domestic life, she serves both as adviser to Blanca and as a clutch of national identity when faced with the alienating effects of a foreign culture. Whether the

---

4 In Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville (1990), Mary Elizabeth Perry explains that men accused of sodomy often blamed a “foreigner” for convincing them to engage in the sexual act (125). The prince’s deviant sexuality, then, could to serve as another nationalist foil in the story’s Spaniard-versus-foreigner narrative antagonism.
Blanca–María relationship illustrates the degree to which Spanish queens confided in their servants, or simply Zayas’s tendency to often—though not universally nor unconditionally—advocate for strong bonds between women, remains subject to debate. We do know from Hoffman’s account that ladies-in-waiting, like members of the nobility who often served in the royal household, were subject to the same pressures to assimilate, including through marriage to someone of similar rank in the host country.

Blanca responds to María’s admonition to offer leadership and guidance by explaining that feigning ignorance of her husband’s same-sex love affair will not be enough to save herself, for she has already been condemned to death simply by witnessing the event (‘sin haber más delito que verlo, me ha condenado a la muerte’) (361). Instead of submitting to dishonor, Blanca, knowing her days are numbered, deliberately exacerbates the family- and nationality-driven divisions within the palace through a bold act of defiance. By publicly burning her husband’s tainted nuptial bed in a courtyard, Blanca domesticates the military conflict between Spain and contested Flanders; that is, she renders the interminable Hapsburg campaign against the rebellious Dutch—embodied by the subplot of her brother’s amassing of soldiers in Antwerp—a drama of family. Blanca’s drama of family, which traces a failed marriage plot alongside the inability of Spanish armed forces to save her from death, imbues the vicissitudes of courtship with strong nationalist undertones.

The impression that nationalism lies at heart of the conflict between Blanca’s royal household and its failed integration into the Flemish palace—that her husband’s sexual attraction to men, like her father-in-law’s almost nonsensical hatred for her, are a superficial stand-in for the years of accumulated hostility in Zayas’s lifetime during the
Thirty Years’ War—gains credence in light of repeated references to Blanca’s nationality immediately preceding her death. “Español” or “Española” is mentioned no less than four times as Blanca takes her last confession and her father-in-law decides to execute her.

The last words Blanca hears before she is bled to death come from her father-in-law: “Así tuviera a todas las de su nación como tengo a ésta” (363). As Richard Kagan points out in his study of early modern chronicles, the term “nación” could refer either to “reinos individuales” or to the “más abstracta noción de España” (“Nación y patria” 206). Her father-in-law’s use of the word “nación” clearly represents a case of semantic slippage between signifier and signified—a conflation of Castile, the individual kingdom (“reino”) within which she was born, with the nascent Spanish state, embodied by the bureaucratic and institutional apparatus of the Hapsburg monarchy.

By the novella’s close, the narrator informs her fellow aristocratic listeners that Blanca’s body has been repatriated to “España,” while her lady-in-waiting, Doña María, has returned to her “amada patria” to marry a fellow servant of the royal household (365). “Patria,” according to Kagan, denoted one’s birthplace, and was separate from the concept of “nación,” which, by the seventeenth century, was increasingly associated with the Hapsburg monarchy instead of individual kingdoms such as Aragon or Castile (212). The (sometimes) antagonistic coexistence of local identity and the centripetal forces of the nascent Spanish state—in other words, the preservation of regional differences within a nation-state still cohesive enough to defend against external threats and internal schism—is, in this instance, sublimated. But Doña María’s successful return to a Castilian “patria” implicitly protected by the larger political entity “España,” of which she undoubtedly formed a part as an “española” in the eyes of her enemies and allies in
the Flemish palace, belies the historical complexity of early modern Spanish nationalism, especially in the turbulent 1640s. As J. H. Elliott reminds us, at the start of that catastrophic decade for Spanish power, the simultaneous revolts of Portugal and Catalonia posed the threat of the monarchy’s devolution into the late medieval “power blocs of Portugal, Castile, and the Crown of Aragon” (*Imperial* 353). In other words, nationalist sentiment—understood here as loyalty to the Hapsburg monarchy—was in fact in question and certainly not something Philip IV’s regime could take for granted.⁵

Zayas’s own inchoate Spanish nationalism is called into question by critics such as Armon Shifra, who entertains the possibility that Zayas’s “courtship” of the Aragonese dedicatee of the *Desengaños*, a powerful nobleman whose father was exiled and estranged from the Spanish monarchy in the reign of Philip III, may have signaled Zayas’s support of a resurgent Aragonese court that, aided by France, could theoretically splinter from the Crown and declare independence (153–62).⁶ Shifra ultimately hedges her bets, proposing that a veiled critique of Philip IV could also serve a “loyalist” reading whereby the Duke regains favor with the king (162). Of course, criticizing the monarch

---

⁵ R. A. Stradling gives a rebuttal to J. H. Elliot’s perhaps unduly harsh assessment of the Count-Duke of Olivares’s failure to cement national unity. According to Stradling, the survival of the monarchy was not, as Elliot asserts, merely a question of administrative regions preferring a loose affiliation with the crown as opposed to subjugation to French influence. Rather, Stradling posits that the Count-Duke’s Union of Arms did in fact provide greater unity of finances and manpower (armies), thus saving the Hapsburg kingdoms from schism: “If Olivares precipitated the Monarchy’s greatest disaster in 1640, he also had provided a groundwork which enabled it to survive that challenge in the years ahead. By the time of his fall from power, the dependencies were making (in general terms, and like Castile itself) regular contributions to administrative and defense costs on a level inconceivable a generation earlier” (185).

or harboring suspicions about the Crown’s wars in the European theater is by no means tantamount to a full-fledged endorsement of secession. As a veritable arbitrista in her own right—one uninhibited in her critique of the inequities of early modern gender relations—Zayas clearly saw ways to strengthen the Hapsburg monarchy from within, even if, according to Shifra, she tacitly acknowledged the possibility of its collapse. Her deep show of pathos for the plight of Spanish households abroad, coupled with the contemplation of the monarchy’s ruin by aristocratic narrators seated at a privileged vantage point of national introspection (Madrid), proves as much.

“Mal presagio” presents a case of nationalism in which the boundaries of family are equivalent to the boundaries of the nation. Outside the boundaries of home and family—outside the borders of the nascent Spanish state—Blanca, like the nation she represents, can only perish. This ideological viewpoint, which favors nationalism at the expense of imperialism, is perfectly understandable given the political landscape of western Europe on the eve of a defining moment for the birth of the modern nation-state: the Peace of Westphalia that ended the Thirty Years’ War in 1648. As Charles Hill observed in a recent interview with the Wall Street Journal, Catholic France’s support for Dutch and Swedish Protestants, along with other traversals of the Catholic–Protestant divide such as heretic England’s backing of Catholic Portugal’s uprising against Spanish domination, marked a fundamental shift away from the ideology of empire and its binding allegiances of old. According to Hill, the Thirty Years’ War was in essence “a war between the Holy Roman Empire and states” (“Empire”). Spain, of course, was on the side of the vanquished, and the state system replaced empire (in Europe, if not in the colonies) as the better model of international order. If, however, the Spanish Hapsburg
monarchy failed to adapt to the state system, court writers such as Zayas exposed both the unsustainable burdens of empire and the need for a new political system to take its place. Her search in the *Desengaños* for an alternative political future showed a preference for Spain’s internal cohesion over external expansion. Without using the name, without perhaps even realizing the genuinely revolutionary political ideology it entailed, Zayas was endorsing what would become the nation-state.

Zayas’s call to abandon Spain’s imperial claims and shore up the home front is given equal urgency in “Estragos que causa el vicio.” Like “Mal presagio,” “Estragos” seeks to galvanize its readers in defense of a unified Spanish national family. Like “Mal presagio,” “Estragos” articulates the boundaries of the Spanish family, and thus of the nation, as a bulwark against enemies. Unlike “Mal presagio,” in this case the enemy comes from within, not without. A pertinent complement to “Mal presagio,” “Estragos” deepens our understanding of the nationalism evinced in the *Desengaños* by analyzing the threats to domestic unity that Spain faced as a result of the Portuguese uprising.

### 2.2 Don Gaspar in Lisbon: Learning Loyalty to the Royal Family

In 1619, Philip III went to Lisbon to proclaim his son heir to the Portuguese throne. Prince Philip accompanied him, as did Don Gaspar de Guzmán, the prince’s future royal favorite, later known as the Count-Duke of Olivares (Elliot, *The Count-Duke* 39–40; McMurdo 331). The monarch’s visit to Lisbon was one of only three by the Spanish Hapsburgs, and it would be the last. The other two had taken place in 1581 and 1583. The welcoming ceremony, according to historians’ accounts, was conducted with due pomp. Thousands of ships accompanied Philip III’s boat upriver. Mythological reenactments and ornate triumphal arches welcomed his entry. Generous alms were given
to the poor in commemoration of his visit. The first person to declare allegiance to Prince Philip at the swearing in ceremony was the future Duke of Braganza, leader of the insurrection against Spanish rule. According to Edward McMurdo, Philip III’s visit to Lisbon quickly soured and, fearing for his safety, he and his royal entourage precipitously departed the city (McMurdo 333). Twenty-one years later, in 1640, Catalonia would revolt, upon which Philip IV demanded the Duke of Braganza’s presence in Madrid, fearing Portugal would follow suit (Stradling 184). Instead of subjecting himself to possible imprisonment or death, Braganza proclaimed the Portuguese restoration and entered Lisbon as king, as Philip III had done some twenty years earlier. Although occupied elsewhere with an empire in collapse, Philip IV never relinquished his claim to the Portuguese throne. The conflict followed him to the grave.

“Estragos que causa el vicio” is the final novella of the Desengaños. Lisis, the hostess of the sarao (party) that has united the madrileño narrators under one roof, is the novella’s narrator. As the last novella of the collection, “Estragos” garners added authority because Lisis is also the story’s extradiegetic commentator. Thus Lisis gets the last word twice over. The tale opens, after a brief rumination on the nature of vice, with Philip III’s 1619 visit to Lisbon. For the reader of 1647, a reference to Portugal would have instantly brought to mind the undecided fate of a kingdom still in revolt. Yet the promise of historicity dangled before the audience by a reference to a highly symbolic event is neutralized by the shifting, evasive third-person narrative perspectives. Lisis begins her story with a partially omniscient third-person narrative focused first on Don

---

7 Greer points out, “Since Lisis is both narrator of the tale and commentator on it, the break between the plotted story and the framing commentator is less pronounced in this case” (María de Zayas Tells 441).
Gaspar, a servant of the royal household (“gentilhombre de su real cámara”), whose girst
name, coincidentally or not, is the same as that of the Count-Duke of Olivares, Philip
IV’s privado who left royal office in disgrace in 1643 and the consequences of whose
policy failures were still being felt in 1647, when the novella was published.⁸ Lisis’s
third-person narrative grows more complex when Florentina, Gaspar’s object of desire,
tells him her own life story—a bedside confessional narrative that contains a “first-
person” account within Lisis’s narration. Lisis’s own narrative voice, which during the
part of the novella dedicated to Don Gaspar does in fact make a crucial interjection into
the story, suspiciously does not make the same intrusion upon Lisis’s first-person
narrative—thus granting Lisis’s novella-within-a-novella an illusion of autonomy not
afforded to her male protagonist counterpart. Both the Gaspar- and Florentina-centered
sections of the narrative are united, however, by hermeneutical gaps in the text—
ambiguities and enigmas meant to be actively contemplated by a critical readership that,
through the interpretive act, takes stock of the political landscape of Madrid in the 1640s.

     The novella’s plurality of perspectives is mirrored by a baffling diffuseness of
plot: brief musings on the nature of vice; a diplomatic mission to Lisbon referenced but
left undefined; the discovery of a moaning, moribund body by Don Gaspar during an
illicit sexual encounter; Gaspar’s falling in love with, and pursuit of, Florentina; the
discovery of Florentina half-dead in the street outside her house and a bloodbath inside
the house, which includes her dead sister (Magdalena) and brother-in-law (Don Dionís).
Thereafter, a shift occurs, from Lisis’s third-person narrative to Florentina’s “first-

⁸ Another equally confusing shift in point of view occurs in Lisis’s closing
frame narrative, when she blames “la traición de una infame sierva” for the demise of
Dionís’s home (508).
person” confessional narrative as retold by Lisis. Florentina explains that she carried on an affair with her brother-in-law and framed her sister as an adulteress so that she herself might restore her lost honor, only to have Dionís attempt to kill the whole family in a jealous rage. Finally, as the plot unfolds, Florentina is pardoned by the king for the deaths of her family. Shockingly, she inherits Don Dionís’s wealth and lives out her days in a well-endowed convent. Don Gaspar returns to Castile and marries a toledana.

As is the case with “Mal presagio,” criticism has for the most part overlooked the story’s engagement with historical events. Instead, scholars often choose to address the tale’s complex narrative structure, or the potentially subversive undertones of Zayas’s portrayal of a “bad woman” who gets away with it. Such lines of critical inquiry irrefutably broaden our understanding of Zayas’s art, but they have left untouched the nationalist ethos that emerges in sparse but poignant references to the Luso-Castilian hostilities that underlie Gaspar’s treacherous stay in Lisbon. To deepen our

---

9 A forthcoming article by Margaret Greer, “Maria de Zayas and the Dukes of Alba,” promises to shed light on the relationship of Zayas’s novellas to historical events in late sixteenth-century Flanders. Unfortunately, I learned of this article too close to the completion of this dissertation to be able to incorporate it into my discussion of “Mal presagio.” I thank Prof. Greer for granting me permission to add this footnote.

10 For a psychoanalytical reading of the Desengaños’ narrative structure as a “working through” of desire, see Greer’s María de Zayas Tells Baroque Tales of Love and the Cruelty of Men and especially her conclusion (349–55). Continuing in the psychoanalytical vein, Greer asserts in “Maria de Zayas and the Female Eunuch” that Zayas “at an unconscious level” advocates for the sexually desiring female through the figure of Florentina (52). According to Greer, by accessing the active libido reserved for men, Zayas saw a model of female empowerment—nevertheless, her loyalty to Spain’s “aristocratic ideology” meant she had to portray such empowerment in a negative light because of the threat to patriarchal social structures posed by empowered women (52).

11 A notable exception to my observation that Zayas’s nationalism goes largely unexplored or under-studied by critics is Nancy LaGreca’s article “Evil Women and Feminist Sentiment: Baroque Contradictions in María de Zayas’s ‘El prevenido
understanding of the novella’s nationalist undertones, I propose separating it into two parts: (1) a Bildungsroman frame narrative in which Gaspar learns loyalty to the royal family and (2) a semiautonomous story-within-a-story (Florentina’s narrative) that ultimately gains fuller meaning as a warning to Don Gaspar, and as a statement against the Count-Duke of Olivares/Philip IV’s policy of rapprochement regarding the Portuguese population resident in Madrid and greater Spain during the Portuguese rebellion. Both the frame narrative and Lisis’s subplot can be read conjointly as nationalist allegories whereby factionalism and disorder within family and home space are tantamount to a fracturing of the Spanish nation.

The royal visit of 1619 to Portugal, like Doña Blanca’s marriage abroad—though the former was a concrete historical event and the latter a fictional rendering of a nonetheless plausible royal marriage—is laden with political symbolism. Philip III was there to proclaim dynastic continuity, to perpetuate the interests of the Hapsburg royal family, and to preserve the integrity of his empire. Prince Philip, the future Philip IV, had watched as noble vassals declared their obedience, only to see his inheritance usurped by the very subjects who had bowed before him after his assumption to the throne. The affront was a challenge to his family inheritance, which his grandfather and father had acquired and preserved. According to the historian Rafael Valldares, the “carácter patrimonial” of the Hapsburg monarchy taught Philip IV to view vassals—even rebellious ones—as family that was indivisible from the body politic: “El carácter partimonial de la monarquía estaba basado en la identificación entre ésta y la familia, cuyos bienes eran inalienables” (296). Portugal, then, was to be treated not as a foreign engañado’ and ‘Estragos que causa el vicio’” (2003), whose argument I discuss at length later in this chapter.
entity warring against the Hapsburg monarchy—not as a nascent state with a national consciousness of its own—but as a reino individual as much a part of the unified kingdoms of the monarchy as Aragon, Catalonia, or Castile.

Notably, the opening of “Estragos” conveys little of the importance of that royal visit, neither as the protagonist Don Gaspar’s lived experience of a diplomatic mission in action, nor as a moment of political betrayal to be interpreted retrospectively by Lisis, the story’s narrator. Instead, we learn simply that Don Gaspar, a “gentilhombre de su real cámara,” is curious to know whether sexual favors come more easily in foreign lands, and that this is his primary concern during his stay (“parece que iba sólo a esto”) (471).

Staying true to the story’s focus on sexual exploration, Gaspar soon begins an affair with a woman of loose morals. The woman rents a room with her sisters, in a “casa muy principal” that is otherwise full of decent people (“ocupados de buena gente”) (472). Don Gaspar sneaks in at night with a set of keys given to him. From the outset, then, the novella foregrounds a disordered home space. Sinners and deceitful persons live under the same roof as the virtuous. The home’s patriarch cannot be certain of what goes on in his domain, because women of ill repute have given away the keys to his kingdom under his very nose. The same ideas will resurface in Florentina’s frame narrative, another instance in which the patriarch loses sovereignty over his home, to dire consequence. Don Gaspar perceives a sense of the danger inherent in his sexual peregrinations when he sees the dead body of someone not unlike himself, a young nobleman dressed in black velvet, with a cap, sword, and dagger (474). After alerting the authorities, Don Gaspar confesses to a priest and determines that the discovery of the moaning body “era aviso de Dios para que se aparatase de casa donde tales riesgos había” (474). In Zayas’s rendering,
Lisbon is highly erotic and exoticized, and by now Gaspar apparently processes the lesson that he must not enter the house of the Portuguese because Portuguese women pose some kind of a threat. Still, Gaspar’s vague summation leaves something to be desired. Gaspar, Lisis seems to imply, only instinctually, not intuitively or conceptually, understands the risks posed by his lax sexual morality. Just as he is not privy to the novella’s opening discourse on the nature of vice, so too Lisis hints at the possibility that Gaspar does not grasp the whole picture—that both she, the narrator, and her readership know, or possess the capacity to know, something he does not.

When Don Gaspar discovers Doña Florentina in a church, he disavows the lesson he has learned, once again deciding to pursue his sexual impulse. In contrast to the first case, Florentina isn’t just any loose woman. Rather, she comes from a rich and powerful noble family “de las más nobles y ricas de la ciudad” (475). Perhaps because of her rank and social visibility, Don Gaspar here acknowledges Luso-Castilian hostilities, whereas before they were apparently irrelevant when pursuing the previous women. Twice Lisis highlights the mutual enmity of each nación (Castilians and Portuguese) as an obstruction to Gaspar’s attempts to woo her. In one instance, Lisis implies that the servants he attempts to bribe to gain access to Florentina rebuff him simply because he is “castellano”; in another, Gaspar fears (“temiendo”) approaching Florentina’s brother-in-law due to distrust between “portugueses y castellanos” (477). Whether because he is madly in love or because a woman of such social prominence cannot be seduced as easily as some of his previous conquests, Don Gaspar hastily supposes he will marry her (476). He even assumes that his own proximity to and rank within the royal family will help his courtship: “le parecía que apenas la pediría por esposa, cuando le fuese concedida,
This brief acknowledgment of the king and royal family he serves begs a larger set of questions: What was Gaspar’s precise function within the royal household? What would royal etiquette and/or King Philip III have had to say about Gaspar’s pursuit of a prominent Portuguese noblewoman in the midst of a delicate royal mission?

According to Antonio Rodríguez Villa’s important study *Etiquetas de la casa de Austria* (1875), the “gentileshombres de la Cámara” served in the royal apartment and were awarded their own servants (“paje”) (48). The “gentilhombre” made the king’s bed and was to follow him wherever he went, even into the queen’s apartment, unless expressly told not to by the monarch. Furthermore, the “gentilhombres” were distinguished in rank from the *ayudas de cámara, guardarropa, barbero*, and other attendants of the king’s household in that only they could serve (“servir”) the king directly and speak to him on a variety of subjects (“hablarle de cualquier asunto”) (48–49). If other servants (“ayudas”) wished to address the king, they had to relay the message through the “gentilhombre,” who would then speak to the king on their behalf (49). In other words, the “gentilhombre” enjoyed a large degree of unfettered access to the king, much the same way that Doña María did to Doña Blanca as her lady-in-waiting in “Mal presagio casar de lejos.” However, whereas Doña María serves at Doña Blanca’s side, supporting her through times of trial in a foreign land, Don Gaspar is notably absent, an attendant to the king who fails to attend. How can he justify his long departures from the king’s side? In his dealings with Florentina, Don Gaspar will belatedly realize that he ultimately must choose: either loyalty to the royal house and family, or the seductive entrapment of the house he spurned before God, “[la] casa donde tales riesgos había”
that is, the house of desire, represented as an enticing Portuguese other. As attendant to the monarch, Don Gaspar cannot serve two houses; his loyalty must ultimately lie with one family and one house: *la casa de los Austrias*.

Given Don Gaspar’s rank and proximity to the king within the royal family, we must assume that any marriage to a powerful and wealthy Portuguese noblewoman would have been a highly public affair, a noble marriage that, like Doña Blanca’s, would have had to have been vetted by the monarch. The king would have had to consider whether the match would serve to strengthen alliances or instead present a potential threat to his power and that of the royal family. Indeed, dating to the beginning of the Spanish Hapsburg line, noble marriages were often determined by the king. The theme of noble marriage alliances was an especially sensitive one with regard to the case of Portugal in the 1640s. The Duke of Braganza himself married Luisa de Guzmán, a cousin of the Count-Duke of Olivares, as part of a commonplace strategy of alliance building, only for Luisa to side with her husband when he declared himself king. The obverse of Zayas’s fictional Doña Blanca, Luisa had traded loyalty to the Spanish monarchy for power. Might Don Gaspar not make the same mistake? Migh he, seduced by lust and power, jeopardize the sovereignty of the royal family by unwittingly bringing an enemy into the house? When a wounded but recovering Florentina ends up in Gaspar’s “posada,” Gaspar makes a conscious choice to not declare his love for her until after he has learned the “causa” that has led her to her current state (478, 484). While for Gaspar the matter is one

---

12 For a compelling example of monarchical intervention in the choice of marriage partners for high-ranking members of the nobility, see Anne J. Cruz’s “Self-Fashioning in Spain: Garcilaso de la Vega.” Cruz meticulously documents Charles V’s vetting of marriage candidates for Garcilaso based on the split in Toledo’s noble class over the Comunero Rebellion.
of his satisfying his “honor” before pleasure fulfillment (“gusto”), Lisis’s explanation that Gaspar is still determining what he should do (“determinar lo que había de hacer”) because “la jornada de Su Majestad Castilla se acercaba” hints at the question that must have been, if not on Gaspar’s mind, at least on the minds of Zayas’s readers: how safe was it to welcome the Portuguese into the national body politic (484)?

2.3 The Enemy in the House: Zayas’s Florentina, María de Guevarra’s “Tratado,” and the Portuguese Presence in Madrid

Nancy LaGreca offers a bold reading of “Estragos que causa el vicio.” She calls the novella a “political allegory,” and identifies Florentina, her stepsister Magdalena, and her husband Don Dionís as fictional doppelgangers for Luisa de Guzmán (the Spanish-born queen of Portugal), Margarita de Saboya (the Spanish governess of Portugal at the time of the revolt), and the Duke of Braganza/King John IV. LaGreca states that Florentina (Luisa) was a source of enduring fascination to the Spanish public, and that her lustful urge to conquer Magdalena’s husband and his household was tantamount to “Luisa’s desire to rule an independent Portugal” (578). Don Dionís’s suicide is therefore a fictional representation of Portuguese defeat or self-immolation, a “nationalist rewriting” of a rebellion that had yet to see a decisive resolution (577). LaGreca’s argument regarding the story is the most historicized to date, and my own argument draws inspiration from hers, even as I question certain aspects of it.

First, I do not find compelling evidence within the novella itself that Zayas transfigured specific historical figures onto the pages of her fiction. Luisa, for example, as LaGreca herself acknowledges in the article, was legitimately married to the Duke of Braganza and was not the adulterous usurper of husband and household that Florentina is.
Second, the image of collapse from within of a noble household much more befits the political landscape of Castile (and Spain) in the 1640s than that of Portugal. The Spanish monarchy was under attack on two home fronts, Catalonia and Portugal, while Portugal itself had rallied behind its newly proclaimed king. It is true that the Count-Duke of Olivares and Philip IV sought to divide and conquer the Portuguese nobility over the uprising, and would have loved nothing more than to see the rebellion snuff itself out in a bout of intra-Luso factionalism. But history’s turn in favor of the Portuguese cause, as well as recent scholarship such as that of Rafael Valladares, suggests that disunity and fracture bedeviled politics far more in Castile in the 1640s than they did in Portugal. In any case, Zayas’s knowledge of Spanish court circles would arguably have given her more fertile life experience to render Spanish political ills, not Portuguese ones.

My critical reading, then, rests on a historical interpretation of “Estragos” that is both more abstract than LaGreca’s and more precise. More abstract in that Florentina is not Luisa de Guzmán, but rather potentially the domestic enemy of Castile and the Spanish nation. Irrespective of the setting of Don Dionís’s family and house in Portugal, Zayas’s rendering of the corruption of an ideal vision of family draws from the parallels between home space and national space established in early modern conduct literature. Thus, a story about the destruction of a Portuguese nobleman’s household may also be read as an early modern nationalist allegory. My reading is more precise in that I link the notion of Florentina as a potential enemy within of the Spanish national family to

13 Valladares notes that the Count-Duke and Philip IV’s strategy to divide “loyal” from dissident Portuguese noblemen was an utter failure (88). Although historians such as Stradling and Elliot debate to what extent Spain’s aristocratic class was divided by its own internal rivalries, even half-hearted separatist movements like the one in Andalusia in 1641 proved eerie reminders of Philip IV’s limitations in centralizing the Hapsburg monarchy.
historical circumstances in Madrid in the 1640s. I also tie Zayas to another woman writer, María de Guevara, who postdates Zayas by just 16 years and adopts similar diction and imagery to that of Zayas in rendering Castilian political turmoil.

The conflict surrounding Florentina and Magadalena’s sisterhood rests on a case of false paternity—a subtle reminder, perhaps, of Philip II’s oblique claim to the Portuguese throne. Florentina tells us that, as a child, she was raised as a sister of Magdalena and that they had always been perceived as such (“todos entendían que éramos hermanas”) (485). Florentina only finds out that her mother died in childbirth when her father arranges his will on his deathbed. At this point Florentina realizes “que no era hija de la que reverenciaba por madre, ni hermana de la que amaba por hermana” (485). Florentina and Magdalena now know they are not blood sisters, yet Florentina ambiguously references their lack of consanguinity once more. When Magdalena invites her into Dionís’s home, Florentina says that she brought her under her roof “pensando que traía una hermana y verdadera amiga, y trujo la destrucción de ella” (490). The fact that Florentina continues to use the vocabulary of family (“hermana”) highlights the emotional complexity of her relationship to Magdalena, a situation akin to the historical complexity of the Portuguese presence in Madrid; or, more broadly, of the relationship between Portugal and Castile. As we shall see, both cases encompass an indissoluble conflict between home(land) and family. Florentina and Magdalena, like the Portuguese in Castile, (hypothetically) share, to dire consequence, a single patria (home), but they belong to different (national) families.

Margaret Greer proposes that Zayas’s “resistance to bringing ‘the enemy within’ as close as a blood sister” shows a reluctance to make of the enemy a “kind of double of
one’s ‘self’” (María de Zayas Tells 313). The distinction is crucial. Because Florentina is not a blood sister of Magdalena, her actions, while not justified, are more explicable—even if Florentina, raised alongside her sister in the same home, is in some fundamental ways a part of that family. Spain had seen this imbroglio before, with the expulsion of the Jews and then the moriscos. Perhaps Zayas, like other members of a (potentially) conflicted Spanish nobility, ultimately could not afford, because a nascent national psyche was at stake, to view the deteriorating home front of 1640s Spain as a kind of civil war—a war that pits family against family and the nation against itself. Boundaries had to be drawn and a framework established for what the Spanish national family was, and what it was not.

When Magdalena invites Florentina into her marital home, an upping of stakes occurs. Now Florentina has become part and parcel of a marital economy, not just an accidental sister by marriage of Magdalena. Marriage, we must remember, was the aggregate of Don Dionís and Magdalena’s wealth and the social institution through which that wealth was not just preserved but ideally expanded.\textsuperscript{14} Similarly, the home or one’s estate (hacienda), precisely because of its social and economic importance as a vehicle for the accumulation of wealth, was not a uniformly feminine space in the modern sense. According to Nancy Armstrong, the bourgeois home of the nineteenth-century novel was a primarily “feminine” space whereby the body of woman became the vehicle of

\textsuperscript{14} See Fray Luis’s La perfecta casada (1584) for a plethora of examples of how wives must grow the wealth of the homestead.
expression for the nonaristocratic values of the middle class. In early modern conduct manuals, by contrast, patriarchal vigilance over the home space was paramount.

The question of whether a seventeenth-century reader would have recognized Dionís’s tolerance of Florentina’s entry into his conjugal home as a negligent “letting down of his guard,” akin to, say, Lisis’s lament in the closing frame that “estén los enemigos dentro de España”—King Philip, like Dionís, welcomed the enemy into his home—is a hard one to answer definitively (505). In Early Modern Spain: A Social History (1999), James Casey remarks that the arrangement of the home was “mostly nuclear,” while in his article coauthored with Bernard Vincent about the Spanish family in Granada, the two conclude that the noble family was more likely to have a brother or sister living under the same roof than a married sibling (Casey 211; Casey and Vincent 181–85). This, because noble families—theoretically, at least—had a strong sense of obligation to sibling and parents, a survival strategy of “solidaridad familiar ante la adversidad” (Casey and Vincent 185). Yet historical reality and literary representation do not necessarily have to run on the same plane. As a general truth, conduct manuals overwhelmingly discuss nuclear families, servants, and tutors while eschewing the perhaps un-ideal mitigating influences of in-laws or other extended family living under the same roof. Letting a seemingly innocent and undeniably beautiful women into his home could very well fall under the auspices of Zayas’s early modern feminism, which

15 See the introduction to Armstrong’s highly influential Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel (1987).

16 In La utilización masculina del espacio doméstico rural en textos españoles del Renacimiento (2010), Mar Martínez Góngora explains that conduct manuals taught men the “expectativas concretas” that they should have as concerns the economic productivity of the home space (90). Without men’s knowledge of what constituted an orderly and productive home, they could not enforce that expectation upon their wives.
critiques not just men’s repression of women but also their underestimation of women’s capabilities of persuasion and deception.

Once Florentina enters the household of Don Dionís and Magdalena, she does not merely sleep with her brother-in-law but also erodes and usurps familial order. That is, her sexual power over Don Dionís is wielded as practicable economic power. She practically boasts outright of how the power dynamics within Don Dionís’s home have changed:

[Ya era el regocijo y alegría de la casa, porque yo mandaba en ella. Lo que yo hacía era lo más acertado; lo que mandaba, lo obedecido. Era dueño de la hacienda, y de cuyá era. Por mí se despedían y recibían los criados y criadas, de manera que doña Magdalena no servía más de hacer estorbo a mis empleos. (492)]

Note that Florentina does not merely control the “casa” but also the estate (“hacienda”). The latter term wards off any empathic interpretation by the (male) reader—Don Gaspar and Zayas’s readership—that Dionís’s sexual choices might operate independently of his own managerial capacities over his financial assets. Florentina’s control over the hacienda is tantamount to total economic control, resulting in Don Dionís’s loss of sovereignty over his patrimony. If, as Martínez Góngora asserts, home space is the specular image of the “[e]stado que lucha por configurarse como centralizado y absoluto” then Florentina’s ownership of the household and its putative owner (“de cuyá era”) could be seen as an allegory for the destabilizing misappropriation of national wealth and resources (17). Florentina’s stranglehold on Don Dionís’s assets, then, runs counter to the centripetal forces of the inchoate nation-state. By divesting the patriarch of his authority, much as Portugal and Catalonia had done and were still doing to the Hapsburg monarchy in 1647 through their respective uprisings, Florentina sows the seeds
for the collapse from within of Don Dionís’s house—that is, for the collapse from within of the Spanish nation.

The thematic thread that links Zayas’s compelling rendering of a breakdown of familial order to the specific historical context of Madrid in the 1640s comes in a brief comment by Lisis at the start of the novella, when Don Gaspar has just begun to pursue Florentina. Don Gaspar’s attempts to court Florentina through illicit back channels such as contact with her servants are frustrated, Lisis tells us, because of the mutual distrust that characterizes Luso-Castilian relations. Gaspar tries repeatedly to make contact with Florentina’s household servants, “mas, como era castellano, no halló en ellos lo que deseaba, por la poca simpatía que esta nación tiene con la nuestra, que, con vivir entre nosotros, son nuestros enemigos” (476). The dependent clause jars the reader because it breaks with the narrative flow of the preterit imperfect tense, achieving a subtle but forceful effect of contemporaneity. The use of the present tense “tiene” and “son” traverses a bridge of time that spans thirty years, from Philip III’s royal visit to Lisbon to the diegetic present. The simple present tense, in other words, opens a window onto the narrator’s space of enunciation—Madrid in the 1640s—and by doing so exacts, like the Desengaños’ closing frame, an assessment of Spain’s present circumstances as a nation imperiled.

By using the present tense, Lisis draws her readership closer to her, invoking an intimacy with them that is not simply embracing and colloquial, but hard earned on the part of the reader. Portugal “has” (“tiene”), not “had,” little sympathy for our “nation” (“la nuestra”). How does Portuguese enmity affect—in the present (“tiene”)—the life of the Spanish nation? Is that “nation” simply Castile, or, as with the Flemish tyrant’s insult
of Blanca’s nation in “Mal presagio,” could the word imply more than just Castile and perhaps include the peninsular kingdoms unified under the Hapsburg monarchy before the acquisition of the Portuguese reino in 1580? And finally, if Don Gaspar’s story takes place in Portugal, not Spain, how is it that the Portuguese enemy lives among us (“entre nosotros”)?

Lisis will return to the present tense only in the closing frame narrative that ends the novella, yet here she already wills into being the same nosotros that she will exhort and reprimand in the closing frame: a nosotros that implies not just the Castilian noble circle she addresses, but any and all Spaniards who, despite their grievances with the Crown, can only envision their nación as a component part of the unified peninsular kingdoms held together by Hapsburg rule. At work in this brief narrative interjection, a visualization of the otherwise invisible narrator, is the construction of an ideal reader—a reader invested, both emotionally and critically, in the project of the Spanish nation but also aware of the threats that besiege that project; a reader who, in contemplating the parameters of nosotros and of nuestra nación, engages in the necessary process of introspection and collective identification that drives nation building.

In his book La rebelión de Portugal: Guerra, conflicto y poderes en la monarquía hispánica (1998), Rafael Valladares points out that at the time of the Portuguese rebellion, considerable Portuguese populations resided in Castile, Extremadura, and Andalusia (89). The most economically empowered Portuguese presence, however, was found in Madrid. Many of them had been there since the reign of Philip III and were “new Christian” (i.e., of Jewish descent) bankers and merchants (Romero-Díaz Introducción 13). If powerful and monied Portuguese new Christians were not enough to
provoke resentment, particularly within Castile’s nobility—a segment of the Spanish population especially hard hit by the financial burden of the Count-Duke of Olivares’s ambitious foreign policy agenda—the situation would soon be exacerbated. In 1640 the Duke of Braganza rejected Philip IV’s summons to Madrid and later that same year became the leader and, to the rebels, the rightful “king” of the Portuguese revolt. Immediately following the so-called “diciembre portugués” uprising, the Count-Duke of Olivares orchestrated an elaborate welcoming ceremony in Madrid for “loyal” members of the Portuguese nobility who had defected from Lisbon (46). Yet the king held fast to the symbolic power of a Portuguese procession of loyalty. In the spring of 1641, Portuguese noblemen were publicly received in Madrid, each accompanied by a Spanish noble. The king also awarded them mercedes, remunerations in the form of pensions and political posts (46). By 1646 and 1647, many of these same nobles had been discovered to be spies for the Duke of Braganza, a crushing blow to Philip IV’s strategy of courtship and accommodation of “loyal” Portuguese.

Philip IV, it seems, was incapable of relinquishing the royal ideal of empire and dynasty inculcated in him since birth. In a world where Catholic Portugal accepted help from heretic England, where France bankrolled Dutch, German, and Swedish Protestants in a two-front assault on the Spanish and Austrian Hapsburgs, Philip IV still saw the Portuguese uprising as an affront to his family name. That is, in a world where the loose affiliation of empire and religion was ceding ideological terrain to a new set of strategic interests embodied by the nascent state, Philip was still living in the past. In Valladares’s words, Philip IV’s regime had troubled distinguishing “objetivos de estado de los dinásticos” (296). According to the ideal of Hapsburg rulers, Flanders or Portugal was as
much a part of the unified kingdoms as Castile or Catalonia. The reason Hapsburg Spain could not separate objectives of state from the less pragmatic and more pride-based imperatives of dynastic claims was that Philip IV’s Spain had yet to awaken to the shifting geopolitical realities of the mid-seventeenth century. These realities not only favored the irreversible cleaving of Catholic Christendom but also threatened to unseat the Hapsburg monarchy. By pointing to the specious nature of union with Portugal, as she did with contested Flanders in “Mal presagio,” Zayas seems to have perceived the entirely necessary nationalist prerogative—the definition of a Spanish national family—that had to be enlisted to save España.

Sixteen years after the publication of María de Zayas’s Desengaños, María de Guevara, another Castilian noblewoman with intimate knowledge of Madrid court circles that went as far up as King Philip IV himself, published her Tratado y advertencias hechas por una mujer celosa del bien de su Rey y corrida de parte de España (1663). Addressed to Philip IV, the treatise offers a strong message of national renewal. Guevara makes her critique of the Spanish court and imperial politics both through humanist utopian discourse on the virtues of rural life and through unique instances of gendered narrative voice that garner authority from familial ancestry and personal anecdotes (Langle de Paz 465–66). Guevara and Zayas are linked by a series of common traits, most important of which is their shared background as Castilian noblewomen who participated in Madrid’s literary culture. They were also members of the small but expanding canon of known early modern women writers. Moreover, they share the same concern with the Portuguese presence within Spain, and employ a similar vocabulary and imagery to convey their preoccupation.
After mentioning a decisive loss at Évora in 1663 about midway through her treatise, Guervara addresses the Portuguese presence in Madrid. “Vamos a los portugueses que aquí tenemos; no son más que espías dobles,” she begins (58). The reference to the Portuguese that “aquí tenemos” is not semantically far off from Lisis’s naming of the Portuguese who live “entre nosotros” (Zayas 476). In addition to direct references to the pensions (mesadas) that Portuguese noblemen receive in Madrid, Guevara also indicts the financial and bureaucratic arms of the Portuguese presence, the effect of which, according to Guevara, is to bleed the monarchy and Castilian nobles of their wealth (58). The Portuguese, Guevara claims, “vinieron aquí descalzos y se han enriquecido con nuestras haciendas” (58). The image befits Florentina, the “dueño de la hacienda y de cúya era” (Zayas 492). She, like the Portuguese, has availed herself of both patriarch and patrimony, simultaneously pilfering wealth and undermining the patriarch’s authority.

Portuguese connections to Spanish power through both the awarding of political posts and their control of finance, Guevara reiterates, mean that no effective policy of war can be waged against Lisbon because the enemy is always tipped off ahead of time (58). In a striking turn of phrase, Guevara chooses a metaphor extremely similar to that of Zayas: “y es cierto que dan aviso al enemigo, y en fin, Señor, nunca es bueno tener el enemigo dentro de la casa” (58). In identifying an “enemy,” Guevara bridges home space and national space. Here, by enlisting women’s “permissible” knowledge of the domestic sphere to discuss the more controversial theme of politics, Guevara forcefully assails the royal policies that have brought the Portuguese into Castile. Just as Florentina was welcomed into Magdalena and Dionís’s home—“me trujo, cuando se vino a su casa, . . .
pensando que traía una hermana y verdadera amiga, y trujo la destrucción de ella”— Guevara identifies a palpable enemigo doméstico (490). Whether the King recognizes them as such, the Portuguese, for both Zayas and Guevara, are false kin, cohabitants of the Spanish national family that actively seek its demise. As hard as it may be to imagine, there are traitors living under their own roof: “con vivir entre nosotros, son nuestros enemigos” (Zayas 476).

Nevertheless, when Guevara advocates for the invasion of Portugal, the forced expulsion of its inhabitants, and its repopulation with castellanos, she clearly goes a step further than does Zayas’s critique (58). Lisis does advocate, in the closing narrative, for a fight against the “enemigos dentro de España” (505). But in “Mal presagio” her skepticism over the efficacy of military force in Flanders is only thinly veiled. And in “Estragos,” Zayas mentions the enemy “entre nosostros,” again suggesting a domestic threat to the Spanish nation, not an external one. Zayas’s view of warfare, judging by these two stories, is inherently more restrictive than Guevara’s: it is one in which militarism is justifiable to confront internal enemies—veritable threats to the Spanish nation—but questionable with regard to other inchoate nations. The Portuguese and the Flemish, Zayas seems to make clear, are not one of us. We (nosotros) and our nation (España), have a different set of interests. Unlike Guevara, by advocating for a strengthened home front to defend against Spain’s enemies but not proposing renewed military conflict in the European theater, Zayas may have implicitly recognized the autonomy of other national cultures—or at least the inability of the Hapsburg monarchy to Castilianize them in the sense of breeding reverence, affection, and loyalty for the Crown in Madrid.
After hearing Florentina’s full story, Gaspar returns to Castile without her and marries in Toledo. He even praises his newfound sexual restraint (“se alababa en sí de muy cuerdo en no haberle declarado su amor hasta saber lo que entonces había”) (500). Clearly Lisis’s ironic mediation on Gaspar’s interior monologue is meant to provoke mirth over her dimwitted protagonist’s inflated sense of self while cementing, perhaps, the pact of complicity—a higher plane of awareness—shared between her and her readers, who, unlike Gaspar, are beginning to realize the nature and extent of the Portuguese presence in Spain and especially Madrid. Yet in a way Florentina has only been partially rejected. The king himself pardons Florentina, and she is allowed to inherit the wealth of the family she helped destroy. She lives out her days peacefully, in a sumptuous Lisbon convent. She and Don Gaspar even write each other letters. Imperial excess might well figure, within Zayas’s poetics, as an excess of eros that threatens Spanish nationhood.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to examine María de Zayas’s proto-nationalist thought through the examination of family plots as they relate to the drama of the Spanish nation. The word nación appears in both stories, while only in Lisis’s closing frame and in “Mal presagio” do the terms España and Español surface. Even if the diction of each is not entirely uniform, both protagonists, notably, return to the Castilian nación. According to Kagan, by the mid-seventeenth century, royal chronicles had begun to associate the idea of “nation” with that of the Spanish monarchy—hence, the possibility that Zayas uses the term in both stories represents something more than the boundaries of Castile (212). This something, while not the full-blown nationalism of nineteenth-century Europe, was still
the growing awareness, to paraphrase Charles Hill, that nations had interests distinct from those of empire. In this regard, Zayas’s novellas are undoubtedly proto-nationalist texts, texts that presage the nation-state as a viable alternative to European empire.\textsuperscript{17} In each novella, the enemies are distinct, one external and one domestic. And yet once Doña Blanca and her royal household enter the Flemish palace, she too faces a kind of enemy within, one with whom she shares a same roof. Home, nation, family—this is the recurrent imagery that joins the two novellas as nationalist allegories.

An enabling metaphor of national discourse, home, in Zayas’s novellas, must share the boundaries of the nascent Spanish state, and the family that occupies that home—the Spanish national family—must not suffer from internal contradictions: native Spaniards must not leave the protection of the Spanish hearth, and foreigners, those from other national families, must not be let in, whether Flemish (“Mal presagio”) or Portuguese (“Estragos”). This isolationist and inherently endogamous articulation of the Spanish nation as an enclosed fortress comfortably alone with itself probably fit the national mood of the time, especially for a nobility conscious of royal policy and overly taxed—financially and spiritually—by the unendurable costs of holding together an empire on the wane. Oversimplifying only slightly, one might say that in lieu of the king’s patrimony, of his multilingual and multiethnic family rooted in the glory of Emperor Charles V’s oversized pan-European empire, Zayas envisioned a Spanish

\textsuperscript{17} According to J. H. Elliott, the Count-Duke of Olivares, Philip IV’s trusted adviser until his ouster in 1643, preferred to conceive of “royal authority” as opposed to state power (\textit{Count-Duke} 182). Elliott speculates that his eschewal of the “concept of the state” was perhaps a combination of Castilian traditionalism’s suspicion of the new and the peculiar composition of a “multitude of territories” composing the Spanish monarchy that made the very idea of a Spanish state seem unnatural (182). Olivares’s seeming failure to grasp the reality of the nascent state system probably influenced Philip IV’s own misjudgment of the same concept after the Count-Duke left his post.
national family, a nascent Iberian state meant to endure a European threat that included Portugal. In recognizing both the need for Spanish unity and the amalgamation of forces working against that unity, Zayas’s writings demonstrate an amazing political savvy.
Chapter 3

Family Portraits and Families of the Artist

In the last “Tratado” of the late seventeenth-century art treatise *Discursos practicables del nobilísimo arte de la pintura*, Jusepe Martínez provides an anecdotal account of Spaniards’ low regard for Spanish art and Spanish artists. In one story, a visiting Italian artist writes to a friend in Rome that he is awed both by the praiseworthiness of Spain’s native painters (“naturales pintores”) and by the little recognition they receive. What is more, he is stunned that two Flemings, simply by virtue of being foreigners, achieved high levels of fame at court despite the fact that their paintings were merely bursts of color (“colores vivos y nada más”) (279). In another anecdote, Martínez tells of an Aragonese painter who repairs a masterpiece for a prominent collector. When the painter reveals to the collector that he is in fact restoring his own masterwork, the collector insists that only a foreigner could have executed such an accomplished picture. The gentleman is later convinced when the painter explains his unique signature on the painting (284).

Martínez’s anecdote of a sophisticated but underappreciated class of domestic artists bears relevance not just for his seventeenth-century audience but also for the general skew of contemporary art historical scholarship. In *El pintor de artesano a artista*, for instance, Julián Gállego surmises that while Spanish kings held their native-born artists in high esteem, the reactionary tendencies of “nobles y caballeros,” who
wished to preserve their privileges and social distinctions by limiting the expansion of the noble class, kept artists from achieving “su independencia social y económica” until the Bourbon succession, at which point “la situación se ha alterado y las barreras que estorban a los pintores ser liberales han caído o se están cayendo” (94–95, 98). Susann Waldmann complements Gallego’s assertion by proposing that the socioeconomic illiberality of Hapsburg Spain was codeterminant with a kind of imaginative impasse that restricted artistic output. Golden Age artists, according to Waldmann’s reading, had limited recourse to patrons—“el rey, la nobleza, y la Iglesia”—all of which were at the forefront of social conservatism (16). Paradoxically, she examines a relative abundance of artists’ self-portraits while asserting that they are fewer than those of their Italian, Dutch-Flemish, and French counterparts, all of whom enjoyed the status of true humanists while Spaniards did not. Spaniards, of course, did not lack artistic self-consciousness altogether, as the abundance of self-portraits she studies from Bartolomé Murillo, Velázquez (fig. 1), and others demonstrates—but overall their art, according to Waldmann, suffered the symptoms of an inauspicious era.

Joanna Woodall’s meticulously researched article “‘His Majesty’s Most Majestic Room’: The Division of Sovereign Identity in Philip II of Spain’s Lost Portrait Gallery at El Pardo,” draws a similar conclusion regarding the subservience of the artist in Spain. The article recreates the design and execution of a portrait gallery for Philip II in his country hunting lodge, El Pardo. With the help of Antonis Mor, an artist born and trained in the Spanish Netherlands, Philip II, according to Woodall, asserted both territorial and cultural control over his Flemish and Italian dependencies. Woodall speculates that Mor’s inclusion of his own self-portrait within the gallery threatened to undermine the religious
and genealogical principles by which the monarch displayed sovereignty. If portraiture could be a show of the artist’s creative ability, of his “direct access to divine virtue,” instead of a reflection of the discernment and magnanimity of the monarch who, like God, was consubstantial with his people yet still ruled over them, then Hapsburg majesty would be undermined (91). Mor’s self-consciousness as a citizen-artist precipitated his departure from Spain and his refusal to return despite multiple summons from the monarch himself (91). Spain’s repressive cultural and political atmosphere hindered the full flowering of Mor’s “humanist identity” that Holland’s nascent Protestant culture and its accompanying social dynamism was able to accommodate (92).

Gallego, Waldmann, and Woodall all contribute to what I call a black legend of the Spanish artist that Martínez, himself an early modern Spanish artist and theorist, seems to have fomented. The former three, in one way or another, might unconsciously fall victim to the temptation to superimpose the historical master narrative of Spain’s decline as a European power onto a very particular context—a cosmopolitan court city (Madrid), that in many, if not most, respects did possess the cultural, if not always economic, vibrancy of its European sister capitals, with which it was in constant competition. Instead of proposing that Flemish or Italian artists were universally better off in terms of their social status and economic freedom, art historical scholarship might better address the question of the status of the artist in early modern Spain by examining the material, intellectual, and social conditions that enveloped him. This chapter focuses on the study of Spanish family portraits as the key to unlocking new insight into the social history of painting at the Hapsburg court. Beginning with the genre’s infancy (donor portraits), the chapter’s analysis of the construction of the court artist’s identity
culminates in a thorough discussion of the under-studied Las meninas (fig. 1)–inspired family painting La familia del pintor (1665) (fig. 3), by Juan Bautista del Mazo, the son-in-law of Velázquez and heir to the renowned artist’s post as pintor de cámara (royal painter).

From the family portrait halls that lined the houses of noble estates, to companion portraits of the king and queen, to donor portraits in chapels and in the pages of bound cartas ejectutorias (patents of nobility asserting one’s noble bloodlines), the hereditary principle profoundly shaped social and political life in early modern Spain. Whereas a proud assertion of one’s lineage or dynastic pride in painting was meant to reflect preexisting social power (for the nobility and monarchy especially), a family portrait of the artist’s family presented the unique and challenging task of defining what its own preconditions of legitimacy were to be. Powerful nobles begot more of the king’s trusted administrators, kings fathered and queens mothered more of the same, but what was to be the fate of the artist’s progeny? What continuous, unassailable role would he have in the court’s body politic? Velázquez’s Las meninas, wherein the painter immortalized himself as part of the king’s family—both blood relations and palace servants, in keeping with the seventeenth-century understanding of the term—brilliantly addressed one man’s professional and personal aspirations. But for all its theoretical and perspectival wonder, Las meninas provides little in the way of conceptual substance as far as what family painting would have meant for nobles and royals: the continuity and perpetuity of a bloodline rather than the commemoration of one man’s inimitable successes. Only a family painting, whereby self- and family-fashioning converged as to be almost
indistinguishable from each other, could address the heretofore (pictorially) undefined place of the court artist within baroque Madrid’s evolving social hierarchy.

As George Mariscal points out, the negotiation of one’s sense of self was not tantamount in the early modern period to the outright autonomy of the subject (38). Hereditary nobility based on blood purity, the preeminence of aristocracy over the lower nobility and peasantry and the subjugation of the former two to the monarch’s authority, the supremacy of intellectual over physical labor, and class distinctions based on forms of dress and jewelry—these and other forces of social organization had to be accounted for by anyone with pretenses to upward mobility. Crucially then, Juan Bautista del Mazo—the main focus of this chapter—was not “free” to portray himself and his family however he chose. Rather, a painting of his family, in the last instance, would have to conform at least to a certain degree to recognizable pictorial discourses. Specific visual codes of (family) power were not novel, in mid-century baroque Spain, for the aristocracy or the monarchy. Both had utilized portraiture for at least a century as a vital tool for the legitimation of their power and social distinction. The same cannot be said of the court artist, and least of all of Juan Bautista del Mazo’s own family. For even though Mazo’s profession had been a fixture of court life since the days of Sánchez Coello, pictorially at least, the family of the painter was still a nonentity in Hapsburg Spain.

3.1 Spanish and European Family Painting

Before portraiture became an independent genre in Spain, donor portraits—religious scenes commissioned by patrons who were depicted in the painting or altarpiece as elegant, pious observers—were the vogue across Europe. La Virgen de los Reyes Católicos (fig. 4) is a prime example of the self-presentation of Spanish royals prior to
the reign of Emperor Charles V, the emperor who ultimately brought a portrait tradition of Hapsburg majesty and sovereignty carefully cultivated at court. As was typical of the donor portrait’s iconographic structure, the holy scene—in this case the Virgin Mary and Jesus—is elevated above the devotees. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabel kneel to the left and right. Two of their children, Prince Don Juan and Isabella, are also present. Saint Dominic lends further sanctity to the painting, while Spanish saints-in-the making and contemporaries of the Catholic Monarch—the assassinated Inquisitor of Aragon, Peter of Arbués, and the infamous Fray Thomas of Torquemada, Spain’s Grand Inquisitor—are also believed to be present. Monarchs and children, the Virgin and Jesus, inquisitors and saints all form a holy alliance. In fact, they are a Holy Family that casts Catholicism and the defense of religious orthodoxy as the nascent Spanish state’s raison d’être.

In the 150-plus years between La Virgen and Mazo’s Familia, the portrait emerged as an independent genre, decoupled from its roots in depictions of religious scenes. Nonetheless, donor portraits continued to be commissioned for cathedrals and chapels across Spain, as did noble and royal patronage of religious art. A tapestry of Philip IV and his first wife, Isabel de Borbón, contemplating a religious scene that transpires above them hangs to this day in the Descalzas Monastery in Madrid, providing a patent reminder that amid the material finery and ostentations of seventeenth-century court life, power and religious (moral) legitimacy were presumed, especially in the ideal families of royals and aristocrats, to be indissolubly bound. Pedro Atanasio Bocanegra’s The Virgin and Child with Portraits (1680), with its red curtain typically reserved for secular portraits, and finely dressed daughters (presumably those of the donor) just a bit

---

1 See catalogue entry in the Museo del Prado’s online gallery.
older than the Christ infant looking serenely toward the viewer, attest to the overlap, in
the early modern visual imaginary, between religious worship and family devotion.

Patents of nobility (*cartas ejecutorias de hidalguía*) are another prime example of
the indissoluble linkage among social rank, religiosity, and family ancestry in the noble
class that endured in baroque Spain. After the litigant submitted to an official legal
review (*pleito*) that proved his family’s blood purity and showed that none of his
ancestors had practiced trades of the hand (*oficios viles*), which in the seventeenth-
century included the art of painting, he was awarded an official document by the king
(*real carta*) attesting to the family’s noble status (Docampo 47). The documents were
then bound and illuminated at the recipient’s expense as a kind of commemorative
keepsake that celebrated the solicitant’s noble ancestry and therefore elevated social
status. Illustrations in these bound volumes frequently followed the donor portrait
formula. The patent of nobility of *Captain Domingo de Castañeda* (1628) (fig. 5), with
its religious scene elevated above a family of humble supplicants, bears striking
resemblance, in terms of its basic iconographic structure, to *La Virgen de los Reyes
Católicos*.

Whether monarchs or aspirant nobles in the making, prayerful and lavishly
dressed sitters naturalize their elevated social status through a display of family piety. In
each instance the juxtaposition of an eternal model of religious exemplarity (the Virgin
Mary’s perfect trust in God) with an intact family of progenitors and progeny means to
convey parallel continuities: the omnipresence of God across all ages reinforces the
perpetuity of a great family bloodline. A prestigious family’s place in society, below God
but above the lower aristocracy and peasantry, was made to appear divinely ordained.

---

2 Bass also discusses this donor painting (64–65).
Before the rise of the autonomous subject, donor paintings—whether within chapels or as illustrations in patents of nobility—provided a cohesive, coherent means for the attainment of one’s subject-position within early modern Spain’s social hierarchy.

At the same time that donor painting lived on in seventeenth-century Spain, preserving—at least at a formal level—the foundational premises of the social order envisioned by the Catholic Monarchs, family painting as an independent secular genre also developed. Just as royal and noble donor paintings bore a strong resemblance to one another, so too is the distinction between Spanish family painting of the royals and that of the high nobility often difficult to discern, with the staple characteristics of Hapsburg court painting—characteristics that changed relatively little from the birth of Spanish court painting under Philip II’s regency through to Velázquez’s early career under Philip IV—serving as an archetype for aristocrats. Velázquez’s companion portraits Don Diego Corral y Arellano and Antonia de Ipeñarrieta y Galdós and Her Son Luis (1631–32) (figs. 6, 7) provide strong examples of how the regal sphere of influence permeated the portrayal of nonroyals. Don Diego stands with feet apart, which was standard for royal portraits. He is wearing the patent black velvet that appears in the portrayal of royals and nobles of the period, with the red insignia of a military order easily visible upon his chest. The diplomatic papers in both hands acknowledge his duties at court as oidor del Consejo de Castilla, an important role in an administrative body that, because it governed Castile, was a fundamental apparatus of state power. Diplomatic papers, like those found on the table behind him, were common symbols of leadership associated with the royalty. In the companion portrait, Doña Antonia’s hand rests on a chair, indicating that as attendant to

---

3 See the catalogue entry in Fernando Checa’s Velázquez: The Complete Paintings (2004) for further detail (116).
Prince Baltasar Carlos she was permitted to sit with royalty. For husband and wife, then, proximity to the monarch serves as a source of empowerment and legitimation. Doña Antonia’s right hand does not touch her son’s but instead grasps a decorative sleeve (manga) of his gender-netural skirt (saya). Direct physical contact between two sitters, even blood relations within the same picture, is eschewed. His upright posture and confident gaze at the viewer, along with the bells that adorn his saya, mimic the conventions of Hapsburg portraits of royal children, such as Velázquez’s *Felipe Prospero* (fig. 8) at the Kunsthistorisches. Hapsburg youths were to be portrayed essentially as miniature adults, with august command over their bodies signaling their control of their mental faculties, and hence their capacity for leadership, from a very young age.⁴

The companion portraits of Don Diego and Doña Antonia are highly derivative of—if not entirely indebted to—court pendant portraits of the king and queen. *Isabel de Borbón, futura reina de España* and *El príncipe Felipe, futuro Felipe IV y el enano Soplillo* (1620), both marriage pendants by Rodrigo de Villandrando, are good examples of the generic similarities between noble and royal pendant portraits. Villandrando’s sitters, like Don Diego and Doña Antonia, seemingly awe their spectators as much as separate portraits as they do in conjunction with each other. Were it not for the continuity of space established by the curtain hanging to Prince Philip’s right and Queen Isabel’s left, it would be hard to discern that the paintings formed a pair at all. The stunning patterns on Isabel’s dress recall Alonso Sánchez Coello’s command over the details of court fashions in paintings such as *La infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia y Magdalena Ruiz.*

⁴ See Mercedes Llorente’s article “Portraits of Children at the Spanish Court in the Seventeenth Century: The Infanta Margarita and the Young Carlos II” (2010) for more on royal portraits of children.
Philip IV’s elaborate gold and yellow have a similarly captivating effect on the viewer, at whom he and Isabel both gaze with confidence and repose, while the magnanimous hand he places on the dwarf apes Clara Eugenia’s atop Magdalena Ruiz’s forehead. As in the images of Don Diego and Doña Antonia, a cap and table adorn Prince Philip’s portrait while Isabel, like her noble counterpart, rests a hand upon a chair. The apparent lack of distinction between portraits of nobles and those of monarchs, as well as between marriage pendants and independent court portraits, stands in sharp contrast—as a matter of both form and substance—to Mazo’s own family group, which brings multiple sitters of a single bloodline together into a single frame.

In all likelihood, both the noble companion portraits and royal marriage pendants would have been hung in portrait halls alongside paintings of ancestors. Portrait halls were meant to impress invited onlookers and instruct the halls’ owners as to the importance of dynastic continuity—to perpetuate one’s bloodlines through heirs and embody the heroic and virtuous traits of those who came before you. Within the physical space of the portrait hall, individual portraits would have gained fuller meaning. Regardless, the relative paucity of group family portraits in early modern Spain—Velázquez’s royal family and Mazo’s family of the painter being rare exceptions—leaves lingering questions that art historical scholarship has yet to fully answer. For example, why did early modern Spanish artistic production (apparently) privilege history painting over the secular family portrait (where the painting of groups is concerned) in contrast to a relative plethora of family painting in other European traditions of the time, such as the Dutch and Flemish schools? What motivations might have prompted court artists like

5 According to Miguel Falomir, Philip II’s El Pardo Palace was the first Spanish royal residence to arrange portraits of ancestors in a gallery space (80–81).
Mazo to reorient family painting at court by conceiving of the relationship between sitters within a single frame instead of between several, as would be the case in portrait halls? Did the artist-courtier, unlike the Galdós family and other prominent nobles who parroted the iconographic format of paintings of royals, sense that their unique subject-position within the Hapsburg court could only be accommodated by the refashioning of family painting as a genre to suit their unique professional and personal ambitions?

Baroque Spain’s social structures weathered the tumults of the seventeenth century relatively intact, rendering less obvious and less abundant the examples of paintings wherein socially aspirant persons not of the ruling elites (the upper nobility or the royal family) portrayed themselves in visual art in a manner that deviated from the conventions of court painting. One should note that Juan Bautista del Mazo, like his father-in-law, Diego de Velázquez, would not have thought of himself as belonging to a particular “social class” with a separate, counter-hegemonic value system meant to unseat the nobility or monarchy. The early modern era predates the class consciousness that would come to define European politics and cultural from the late eighteenth century and into the present. Even if a singular family painting such as Mazo’s registered the desire to give greater detail and depth to the place of the court artist and his family at court—in short, to amplify the subject-position(s) of an elite court family—said accentuation of the artist’s subjectivity was always predicated upon valued service to, and sponsorship, from the king. Prestige and social power were measured then, within Madrid’s culture of the portrait, not as conceptual distance from the king but by closeness to him; not by autonomy, but rather by the heightened interdependency of ruler and privileged subject. Mazo’s *La familia del pintor* shares with Don Diego’s companion portraits the desire to
visually affirm closeness to king and court. But the means by which that pictorial interdependency between sovereign and subject is established differs. In baroque Madrid, then, family painting would always be a careful endeavor by which one sought accommodation within the (visual) structures of court power. This balancing act, within portraiture, between the genre’s adaptability to the evolving social life of the court and its fidelity to the ultimately conservative purpose of solidifying and preserving the power of ruling elites over others is seen even in sister traditions such as Holland, where a nouveau riche had literally upended the aristocracy’s power.

Joanna Woodall’s study of the marriage portraits of Dutch mercantilist elites (burghers) provides an interesting comparatist point of departure for how portraiture functioned not just as a vehicle for changing notions of identity across time, but also as a stabilizing tool of integration (through emulation) into the place of the newly empowered. In the wake of the Dutch revolt, Woodall demonstrates, the burghers—associated historically with the rise of the bourgeoisie—did not demolish aristocratic models of court portraiture, even though their wealth could have easily afforded them the opportunity to do so (78). Instead, “burgerliik virtue” was “reconcile[d] with ‘aristocratic’ visual codes” (96). Assuming social and political power through visual media was, by Woodall’s estimation, partly an act of assimilation (of the premise that certain virtues made a social class exclusive and superior to the masses) and partly one of

6 Woodall avoids the characterization of the proto-bourgeois Burgher elite as entirely divorced from aristocratic precepts of power: “I suggest, rather, that their portraits were initially conceived and comprehended with reference to traditional concepts of portraiture, inherited and adapted from the aristocratic ideology which predominated before the revolt. Portraiture remained a claim to an elevated, autonomous identity within interlinked social, political and spiritual hierarchies, although the content of that identity was responsive to citizens’ different circumstances” (78).
renegotiation (of precisely what those virtues comprised). With the diminishment of the Spanish monarchy’s power, the Dutch “citizen ruler” might still don the tall hat associated with Hapsburg court fashions but dispense with the nobleman’s sword, defining political skill instead as a question of “intelligence and wisdom” over military prowess (87). Likewise, whereas noblemen of the ancien régime invoked the “genealogical principle” of portraiture as a matter of blood and virtue’s being indissolubly bound together (i.e., nobles and monarchs literally struck the same poses in paintings as their ancestors had as a testament to the continuation of a same set of innate, immutable character traits), burgher elites might claim “visual genealogies,” with ancestors in a more flexible sense as both strict blood relationships and role-based identification with illustrious persons.\(^7\) One’s intellectual abilities might be exalted, for instance, in portraits that accentuate the “head and the hands of the non-aristocratic body” as opposed to the “trunk and genital area which conventionally characterized nobility of blood” (4). The de-emphasis of blood more accurately reflects the mercantilist origins of the burgher class as newly enriched traders. The naturalist claims of portraiture to portray people as they actually are stays the same, but the picture’s “content” is modified to project the evolving notions of the self entailed in the burghers’ rise to power (78). Mazo’s own familia, as we shall see, similarly engages the (sometimes subtle) distinction between intellectual and genealogical likeness with exemplary predecessors—whether “ancestors” in the biological sense or not.

New conceptions of burgher family identity in painting were not conceived of as pertaining to an “independent” private sphere; rather, family painting, as it had in the age

\(^7\) See Woodall’s use of the term “visual genealogy” in her introduction to Portraiture (2–3).
of monarchy, directly engaged the question of the citizen’s relationship to the state. In
fact, scholars of the Dutch tradition such as Woodall, David Smith, and Ann Adams
frequently draw parallels between family painting and the political and cultural character
of the nascent Dutch republic in the seventeenth century. Adams observes that “the idea
of the family as a little state circulated widely in the Dutch Republic” and that the
“culture” of the Netherlands “transferred its collective anxiety about a society and a state,
which it could neither control or hardly conceptualize, to the family, which it felt it could
to some extent control” (113, 116–17). Catholic Reformation Spain, as the discussion of
conduct manuals, plays, and novellas in the introduction and first and second chapters of
this project has shown, also looked to the family as a locus of societal renewal, as a
discursive space in which overlapping (and sometimes competing) moral, political, and
economic discourses might find ideal sublimation in the face of rapid urbanization and
imperial decline. The ties between family and statehood in painting, in other words, are
as self-evident in Spain as in other European traditions.

Different articulations of family within painting reflected the divergent paths of
nascent European states. Spanish donor paintings, with their emphasis on religious
orthodoxy and emulation of the Virgin and saints as a guide to moral conduct within
family and society, epitomized reconquest Spain’s stress on ethno-cultural
homogenization as a precondition and reflection of political unification. The same visual
template of the donor portrait that began in the late medieval period was readily
transferrable to the perceived erosion of social categories entailed in court life and to
Spain’s renewed religious struggle against the heresy of European Protestants. The
striking iconographic similarities between the Virgen de los Reyes Católicos of 1493 (fig.
and the previously mentioned donor portrait within a patent of nobility (fig. 5) remind us of as much.

Simultaneous to—and not mutually exclusive from—the continuation of donor painting as a genre, secular family portraits, including those of Velázquez and Mazo, demonstrated the necessity of the monarch’s patronage to solidify public identities at court. These newer identities included the professional classes (e.g., painters and their families) as well as the hypothetically “older” ones of the courtierized nobility. Of course, as we shall see in our discussion of Velázquez and Mazo, the king’s patronage was not a strictly top-down phenomenon of royal authority and his subjects’ dependency. Rather, his sponsorship also exposed his reliance upon the skills of the subject-sitter in question—in this case, painters and their families. Court artists and other elite but nonroyal or non-noble subjects were granted the flexibility to fashion their identities, but within a world that was still recognizably of the monarch’s making. The presence, or allusion to the presence, of the monarch within the domestic interiors of the Galdós family or Mazo’s family of the artist, remind us of the (seeming) paradox that enabled expansive and alternative subjectivities to flourish in painting: the closer to the monarch you were—in life as in paint—the freer you were to fashion ideal persons and families. But the source of that uniquely early modern variant of creative liberty—the freedom to self-fashion—was recognized as emanating from the sovereign. This flexibility in the construction of self and family identities was necessarily different from—but not more or less “restrictive” than—its Dutch counterpart, for instance, which had jettisoned the image of the king as a source of social empowerment.
In Protestant Europe the fluidity between the private space of the family and its public presentation in visual media remained, but under the aegis of a new social and political order. A patent of nobility illustration, like that of the Velasco family (fig. 5), for instance, would have been anachronistic, if not heretical, in Calvinist and probably in Lutheran Europe.\(^8\) Whereas the presentation of devotion in the nobility patent centers on the veneration of an image of the Virgin Mother, Protestant family piety generally shunned image-centered devotion in favor of the reading of scripture. Besides an alternative understanding of the family’s religiosity vis-à-vis its Catholic counterparts, the secular concerns of Protestant visual culture also differed from those of their Hapsburg Spanish counterpart in that Protestants had no monarch or court from which to seek endorsement within their portraits. With the elimination of the interpolating referents of (Catholic) God and Crown, family painting in Protestant Europe did indeed look to itself for its own legitimation in way that would have been highly problematic in early modern Spain. The dual authority of the husband-pastor, both marital and spiritual head of household, for instance, gave the painted Protestant family a feeling of self-enclosure and autonomy not afforded to family painting in Spain. In the words of David Smith, “the [Dutch] family was turning in upon itself” to “develop a more private sociability than that of medieval society” (10). Marriage and fatherhood in themselves even came to stand as potent symbols of moral authority for the ruling elites of Dutch cities. As Woodall points out in reference to burgher marriage portraits, the presumed

---

\(^8\) Marcia Hall offers an insightful reading of the differing Protestant stances on religious images. Calvin and Zwingli banned them outright in churches; Luther tolerated them to a certain degree while still sharing with the other two a general lack of enthusiasm for religious art. See chapter 1, “Protestants and Catholics in Dialogue on Images,” in Marcia Hall’s *The Sacred Image in the Age of Art* (2011).
selflessness of the husband in deciding to marry, as well as the “paternal and conjugal love” that sustained the bonds of husband and wife and father and child, came to be considered a rite of passage—a character-building formative process—that presupposed assuming public office (“Sovereign Bodies” 90). Love of wife and children then, translated into the public asset of fitness for leadership.9

Seventeenth-century northern European family painting such as Rubens’s *Portrait of a Family* (fig. 9) registers this newfound valorization of affective ties comparatively lacking in Spanish painting. In Velázquez’s companion portraits of Don Diego Corral, wife Antonia, and son Luis, the lack of affective ties between them—their gazes are stern, the hands of mother and son do not touch—probably signals the impetus to portray each family member as the holder of an important role at court instead of lesser members of a greater whole, the family unit. Relatively little can be deduced of the relationships between sitters, beside the obvious fact that they are blood relations. In Rubens’s *Portrait of a Family*, by contrast, the husband’s jutting right elbow clearly indicates his role as family protector, while the wife’s calm, assured gaze from the background space evinces both a firm belief in his ability to watch over the family and acceptance of her subordinate role within it. The hands that parents place on their child—her right hand on the son’s shoulder, his left hand holding the son’s hand—show the mutual affection of husband and wife for their child as well as the partnered responsibility assumed in rearing him. The grapes in the boy’s hand, a symbol of chastity, serve as a reminder to restrain

9 My reading of conduct manuals by Luisa Padilla and Juan Costa in Chapter 1 demonstrates that arbitristas of Catholic Spain also placed a premium on the successful administration of the home as a precondition for public leadership.
the excesses of sexual appetite, which husband and wife presumably do—an allusion to self-restraint unseen in extant contemporaneous Spanish examples of family painting.

Aside from emotional relationships between sitters, the material identity of the persons in Rubens’s painting, as constructed by clothing and prop objects, also differs substantively from that of Don Diego and kin. Rubens’s family, like Don Diego’s, is finely dressed, attesting to an elevated social standing. The ruffed lace collars of husband and wife would not have been an unfamiliar sight at the Hapsburg court. But the similarities stop there. No insignia of a military order adorns the husband’s chest. Nor does any overt reference to professional identity tie husband and wife to a court, a crown, or to another form of hierarchical group affiliation, as is the case with Don Diego’s military order insignia or the chair that indicates Antonia’s service to Prince Baltasar. The absence of a noble insignia also indicates that Rubens’s family does not avail itself of illustrious ancestry in its self-presentation. In this instance, the genealogical principle of portraiture, which binds the living and the dead in an eternal communion of virtuous sitters, is muted. In the early modern Spanish tradition, individual and especially individual bust-length portraits might let physiognomy alone speak for the subject’s character and social standing, but for a group painting—whether of a noble or royal family—not to contain recognizable references to king, church, or noble ancestry would have been rare. Thus, Rubens’s family stands alone, in a way that it probably could not have at the Spanish court. By this measure—a lack of the interpolating social referents of blood, church, and crown—the Karlsruhe family is indeed more “autonomous” than that portrayed by Velázquez.
While Spanish donor portraits and secular family painting of the early and mid-seventeenth century lack the affective depth of northern European family painting, Spanish religious art, by contrast, does register a newfound ideal of family as an emotionally bound, self-sustaining affective unit. Prominent art historians such as Charlene Villaseñor Black, Javier Portús, and María Cruz de Carlos Varona argue persuasively that Counterreformation Spain took the offensive with regard to Protestantism’s promise of a more intimate relationship with God rooted in the familial piety of the home. Villaseñor Black proposes that across Spain and its Spanish American imperial holdings, hagiographers and painters undertook a concerted effort to de-emphasize the “extended tribe” of holy persons that surrounded Jesus, parsing a broad Holy Family—which sometimes included St. John the Baptist, Joachim, or St. Anne and Mary’s “sisters” by the former’s successive marriages—into a “nuclear Holy Family” (62–65). The stepfather of Jesus, Saint Joseph, was, theologically speaking, a minor player in the holy family—one always subordinate to the Virgin until, at the turn of the seventeenth century, his role as the nurturing father comes into play, “reaffirming the sanctity of marriage, family and procreation” (69). In a complementary argument, Portús posits that the inherent “populism” of Counterreformation religious art—which aimed to provide accessible religious models to be emulated irrespective of social class—and the widespread interest of the faithful in exploring “la vena más emotiva de la religiosidad” is reflected in artists such as Murillo, Zurbarán, and Juan Sánchez Cotán, all of whom convey a new sense of family intimacy within the domestic space (38–40). Finally, Carlos Varona notes that in images such as Pantoja de la Cruz’s El nacimiento de la Virgen (fig. 10), the material culture of early modern birthing practice meets sacred
history, at once sanctifying the experience of childbirth and making the miraculous—the Immaculate Conception of Mary’s birth to an aged, barren St. Anne—an accessible (devotional) template for the physical and emotional stewardship of a successful pregnancy. If secular family painting could not do without the social empowerment of reference to king and court and in donor painting family piety remained contingent on the presupposition of blood purity (noble ancestry), religious painting offered a less strictly hierarchical, more universalist, articulation of the Holy Family—or the families of saints—as a bastion of emotional stability, protection, and in some instances even delight and happiness.

Murillo’s *Sagrada familia del pajarito* (fig. 11) is a paramount example of the affection and emotional substance of which Spanish religious painting was capable, even if such traits are lacking in Hapsburg court painting and donor portraits in general. Joseph, the nurturing stepfather, supports the young—but not infant—Jesus against his thigh, watchful that his stepson should not fall. Jesus, tenderly rendered with pink cheeks and curly golden locks of hair, smiles as he holds a bird above a dog, whose uplifted paw indicates his desire to go after the animal. Mary, gazing directly at her child, seems content watching her son play. The pleasure of seeing him playfully tease the dog is such that she momentarily turns away from the loom. Joseph’s workbench and tools, like Mary’s loom, remind the viewer of the ideal—often evinced by conduct manuals such as Fray Luis’s *La perfecta casada*—that the home space bear material, not just emotional, fruit. By intertwining physical toil and family bonds within a domestic space, theological reformers and writers of economic treatises meet upon the site of the home as ideally being a place of harmonious material and biological reproduction—for, even if Joseph
was not Jesus’s biological father, he is still, according to Villaseñor Black, a model of “virtuous masculinity” for male heads of household (16). Thus, Murillo’s Holy Family, with its division of domestic labor and espousal of the joys of maternity and paternity as mutually reinforcing tasks of emotional commitment undertaken in support of one’s child, offers clear messages on family sociability—irrespective of an elite or nonelite viewership.

Murillo’s *Sagrada familia*, while not a portrait, still makes for an informative comparison to Rubens’s Karlsruhe portrait, as far as an autonomous family is concerned. Yes, Christ is God and Mary and Joseph are, respectively, the Queen of Heaven and a Saint, but the painting’s obvious spiritual hierarchy—which makes faith-driven reverence and practicable emulation difficult to distinguish in the eyes of the viewer—must be juxtaposed with its detachment from the social hierarchies implied by blood purity (donor painting) and proximity to the monarch (secular court painting). Spanish religious painting of the Holy Family, then, offers the promises of affectivity, mutual support, and a compassionate home environment that Rubens’s Karlsruhe family portends. Ultimately, some of the tenderness of family evinced in Spanish religious painting would make its way into the secular court portraits of Velázquez and Mazo, even if traditional symbols of the social hierarchy—namely, the proclamation of noble ancestry and identification with the monarch—would still remain.

3.2 Velázquez’s Family: *Las meninas*

According the Sevillan artist and theorist Francisco Pacheco, on a self-promoting trip to court in 1623, Pacheco’s son-in-law and apprentice, Diego de Velázquez, painted an image of the king in a single day that so marveled the Count-Duke of Olivares that he
insisted the artist immediately occupy the post of pintor de cámara. Velázquez took the job, permanently leaving behind his native Seville. Tanya Tiffany argues that Velázquez’s trip to Madrid was a highly calculated decision. Velázquez, Tiffany proposes, knew the strategies of the self-fashioning courtier laid out in Castiglione’s Il cortegiano. Seeking to emulate the success of painters like Titian, Velázquez understood that the freedom to paint in multiple genres would depend in large degree upon his ability to “render . . . the king’s image” (126). Becoming a court artist—a feat impossible anywhere but in Madrid—was a question not simply of artistic talent but of what subjects one painted, where they were painted, and for whom they were painted. Raw and even harnessed talent, then—the tool of the artist—was necessarily partnered with the social skills of the courtier, always ready to present himself as effortlessly successful and unwittingly indispensable to those who might need to make use of his abilities, if only he would not slip away from their lives as easily as he had slipped into them. Tiffany suggests that Velázquez’s sober image of Philip IV now at the Meadow Museum in Dallas reflects the right choices of a willfully self-fashioning artist: the right genre (portraiture), the right place (the Madrid court, which was progressively siphoning the best talent from Velázquez’s native Seville), and the right patron (the king). These right choices gave Velázquez’s career the boost it would need for him to pursue his artistic talents and social aspirations to their fullest realization.

Thirty years later, when Velázquez completed Las meninas, he was a new man: he had traveled twice to Italy at the king’s behest, decorated the Alcázar and played an active role in Philip IV’s acquisition of one of early modern Europe’s foremost art collections, and scaled the palace hierarchy from ujiér de cámara to the highly sought-
after *apostentador de palacio*. Despite all these achievements, Velázquez still had higher ambitions. The drive of the self-fashioning courtier was still there, visible, to the historian’s eye, in his ceaseless pursuit of a knighthood that eluded him almost until his death and was not granted until after the completion of *Las meninas*. In 1623, Velázquez shrewdly chose a bust-length image of the king as the vehicle of the artist’s own self-fashioning. The bust’s meticulous attention to physiognomic detail, or “intense realism,” rendered the restrained but formidable image of kingship Philip IV and the Count-Duke wished to concoct (Tiffany 130). By 1656, the master of the Spanish baroque chose—just as shrewdly as before—to make a portrait of the king’s family, to further a new set of social aspirations.

While the question of whether Philip IV commissioned *Las meninas* remains unanswered (though we know it hung in a viewing room of the royal palace), the painting’s very generic classification nonetheless informs us of the high degree of intentionality with which Velázquez sought to fuse his multifaceted role within the private life of the Hapsburg monarchs with a public identity as an influential artist-courtier. Simply stated, the painting is a group family portrait in a royal domestic space. By the eighteenth century, such a categorization had become unexceptional—scenes of family life in elaborate regal interiors had found a place in court painting. The same

---

10 See Brown’s *Velázquez, Painter and Courtier* (1986) for a detailed account of his ascent of the palace hierarchy and his responsibilities therein.

11 See for instance the *Familia de Felipe V* of Jean Ranc (1723) and the painting of the same title by Louis Michel van Loo (1743). Both evidence a paradigm shift in royal portraiture toward festive, sumptuous domestic scenes and a growing taste for French fashions, which were considerably more ostentatious than those of Hapsburg Spain. At the turn of the century, Goya too would master the royal domestic interior in such images as *La familia de Carlos IV* (1800).
cannot be said of the seventeenth century. Indeed, Velázquez’s portraits of the royal family were almost always paintings of a single person—whether companion portraits such as *Philip IV and Queen Isabella on Horseback* or single images such as those of Felipe Próspero, the young Prince Baltasar, or the Infanta Margarita. The prevailing norm was to portray the sovereign’s innate capacity for leadership in relation to well-established visual prototypes, or perhaps, in a glorifying juxtaposition, to a marginalized other such as a dwarf.\(^{12}\) Painting of groups, by contrast, was largely reserved for history painting, assigned in the hierarchy of genres to the place of storytelling and narrative depth.

Velázquez’s family painting in a royal domestic interior makes history—history of the artist and of the family to which he belongs, the royal family—where previously none had been written, or, in this case, painted.\(^{13}\) Set in the galería del cuarto bajo del Príncipe, formerly the apartment of the now deceased Prince Baltasar Carlos, *Las meninas* portrays an (apparently) informal moment of palace life. Presumably watching from the viewer’s space, the king and queen gaze upon their cherished daughter, the Infanta Margarita. While one *menina* tends the child, another curtseys in a show of deference to the monarchs. One dwarf plays with a dog while the other looks toward king and queen but does not bow, perhaps demonstrating her slow-wittedness, as reflected in her protruding, swollen cheeks and deeply recessed eye sockets. While a nun and

\(^{12}\) A classic example is Alonso Sánchez Coello’s *The Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia and Magdalena Ruiz* (1585–88).

\(^{13}\) Emily Umberger trenchantly reads *Las meninas* as an elevation of the “lesser genres” of “portraiture and genre painting to the level of learned history” (115). By adding narrative depth to these less prestigious genres, Velázquez, according to Umberger, sought to vindicate his own artistic output.
chaperon converse in the middle ground, the queen’s *apostentador* waits for the queen to pass through the room, having just opened the door in accordance with his duties. After the infanta, it is arguably Velázquez himself who most catches the viewer’s eye, standing upright and not bowed, staring (as the infanta does) directly at the viewer. Though he holds a brush in his hand, he is not at this precise moment engaged in the actual labor of painting. Rather, he contemplates his environment, with a degree of self-composure unmatched by the rest of the servants that compose Philip IV’s nonbiological *familia*.

Velázquez, like Apelles or more recently Titian and Coello—all of whom were said to have received visits from the monarch while they were painting—has very literally created the scene before him, in which an artist’s act of painting both occasions and preserves bonds of family. To judge by his assured and slightly pensive gaze—the pensiveness indicated by the brush suspended in hand—his role within the royal family, as one who brings it together in a moment of enjoyment and seeming insouciance, is a deep source of pride. The red cross, painted a posteriori on Velázquez’s chest once he’d been awarded his knighthood, is reminiscent of the noble order insignia of Don Diego Corral (fig. 6) and the emphasis on blood purity exhibited in the *cartas ejecutorias* (fig. 5). It suggests not so much that painters can become nobles, but that nobles sometimes paint, an activity one might undertake, in the words of Fernando Marías, “sólo por distracción personal y para contentar el gusto del monaraca” (271). Velázquez’s sense of self, then—his identity as he wished to see it and as he wished it to be seen by others—

---

14 Fernando Marías and Jonathan Brown both emphasize the point that Velázquez constantly draws himself out—“destacarse,” in Marías’s words—from the other palatial dependents who serve the royal family (257).
consisted of an ideal role within the king’s family, a family he could not do without and a family that could not do without him.

3.3 Mazo’s Family: *La familia del pintor*

Juan Bautista Martínez del Mazo married Velázquez’s daughter, Francisca Velázquez, in 1633. Mazo was Velázquez’s apprentice, and the marriage followed an established pattern among artists: Velázquez himself married the daughter of his master, the Sevillan artist Francisco Pacheco. In 1634, Mazo inherited the palace post of *újier de cámara* from his father-in-law. By 1646 he was named *profesor de pintura y dibujo del príncipe Baltasar Carlos*, and in 1657 *ayuda de la furriera*, a post that had many duties similar to those of Velázquez as *apostentador de palacio*. That same year, the king granted him a trip to Italy, just as Philip IV had done for his father in law. By 1661, after Velázquez’s death, Mazo inherited the former’s post as *pintor de cámara* (Orpesa y Solano 75). He died in 1667. Despite comparable biographical trajectories, Mazo’s legacy is eclipsed in many respects by the overwhelming fame of his predecessor. Yet the artists bear several similarities. Both successfully scaled the palace hierarchy, securing for themselves a degree of social and economic security not solely dependent on their labors as painters. Both painted multiple secular portraits of the royal family. Finally, both painted self-portraits within a secular family portrait (figs. 2, 3)—a rarity within a genre that, as we have discussed, was already a rarity.

Because of its setting in a royal domestic interior (the Alcázar) lined with portraits, its portrayal of a painter in the act of painting, and its foregrounding of members of a family, Mazo’s *La familia del pintor* is widely considered to be in direct, dialogic relationship with Velázquez’s *Las meninas*. Painted only about ten years after
Las meninas by an artist who, like his father-in-law, could look back at a successful career at court, Mazo’s picture nevertheless encompasses an important shift from its model: Mazo portrays his own family as subjects, not the royal family. By portraying his own family, Mazo sheds light on how early modern professional elites of Madrid shaped courtly identities. Like family paintings previously discussed, whether donor portraits, secular family paintings, or even Las meninas, Mazo’s familia fashions an ideal family as a means of social empowerment within a competitive, hierarchical court culture—one that, despite its outward appearances of fixed social categorization, afforded the opportunity for enterprising professionals, artists among them, to claim (pictorially, at least) privileges typically associated with royals and the landed aristocracy.

Mazo’s own claim, for himself and for his progeny, of a dynasty of the artist’s family that garners respect and admiration just as the families of royals and distinguished nobles do, begins, in the upper left of the portrait, with the red curtain and the now faded coat of arms imprinted on it. As Velázquez’s companion portraits of Don Diego and family as well as cartas ejecutorias and donor portraits can attest, both curtains and coats of arms were commonplace signs of social distinction in early modern visual culture. Indeed, the tied-back or slightly waving curtain was also a staple of paintings of royals. Mazo, then, like Don Diego, lays claim to the distinction of high nobility and royals that the curtain denoted, while his family shield complements the insignia of the military order that adorns the chests of Don Diego and also Velázquez in his Meninas. While a coat of arms and an insignia of a military order both made claims of pride in bloodlines, the shield, in being detachment from the body of a person and imprinted on the curtain,
sets the painting’s distinctively collective tone, one that privileges the advancement of the family as a whole before the distinct interests of individual sitters.

Whereas in *Las meninas* the separation of figures, their diffusion across multiple spatial planes, and the clear division of domestic labor make the individuation of subjects and distribution of the family hierarchy readily apparent, it is precisely the picture’s depiction of a collective group—the assemblage of nine figures in close proximity to one another who consciously pose instead of carrying out family duties—that makes the painting so unprecedented in the early modern Spanish canon. The fact that nine sitters share prominence across an immediate foreground that rests much closer to the viewer’s eye than the foreground figures of *Las meninas* suggests a stronger sense of group identification among sitters than its predecessor. Yet, the divergent ages and color schemes of the older and taller sitters on the left—three males, one female, all dressed in the courtier’s gray—from the younger sitters and infant–mother pair, who are placed in the center and right sides of the painting and touched with the sharper colors of blue and red, creates a clear partition between subgroups in the foreground grouping.

According to Raquel Novero Plaza, the four elder sitters (fig. 12) are the sons and daughter from Mazo’s first marriage to Francisca, and thus grandchildren of Velázquez, who had died about five years prior to the painting’s completion. The woman sitting in the chair, Novero Plaza posits, is Mazo’s second wife, Francisca de la Vega, surrounded by their children. Interestingly, by distinguishing sitters based on their respective mothers, Mazo visually acknowledges, and hence conceptually accords, respective maternal spheres of influence as opposed to the sole legacy of a dominant patriarch and family name. One might argue that even after remarrying, Mazo wished to honor the
memory of his deceased wife, and in doing so honor the memory—and of course the
blood—of Velázquez that ran through the veins of some, but not all, of his progeny. The
almost funereal solemnity that imbues the four elder sitters seems to indicate a state of
mourning for that generation of the family’s lost mother. The young woman’s pensive
clasping of her brooch—an heirloom likely left to her by Francisca Velázquez herself—
could constitute an act of remembrance for her dead mother; the practice of displaying
bequeathed jewelry in court paintings dates to the royal portraits of Sánchez Coello, but
spread, particularly in mid- and late seventeenth-century Madrid, to the upper echelons of
the court, in which nobles wore them as a sign of status at court functions. The
downward gaze of the man above and behind her to the left evinces a similar sense of
august remembrance. The tallest of Francisca Velázquez’s children, whom we see only in
profile, seem almost to guard over the four, perhaps the typical role assigned to an eldest
son. The way his ruffled, barely visible sleeves, along with the rest of his person, fade
into the general color palette and crowding of convergent sitters lends his face an almost
ghostly, ephemeral quality. Francisca Velázquez died in 1665, the same year Mazo
presumably painted his portrait, suggesting the possibility that the Velázquez’s heirs are
all dressed in clothes of mourning.

See Muller’s Jewels in Spain, 1500–1800 and Bernis’s (1972) “La moda en la
España de Felipe II a través del retrato de corte” (1990). In chapter 4 of her book, Muller
explains the paradox of Spain’s obsession with jewelry at a time of both economic crisis
and, particularly in the early seventeenth century, sartorial restrictions against
ostentatious fashions. Muller sees a turning point in the “mid-century” spike in the use of
jewels (108). Mazo’s daughter bears witness to evident importance of jewelry as a sign of
status. Bernis’s article is divided into subsections on men’s, women’s and children’s
fashions at court. While Mazo’s portrait eschews the elaborate embroidery patterns of
feminine dress in portraits of the late sixteenth-century Spanish court, the brooch itself is
reminiscent—especially because of its placement at the center of the bosom—of the joyel
rico first worn by royal women in that earlier era.
The youngest and shortest of these four sitters, by virtue of his confident gaze aimed directly at the viewer, the gloved hand and papers he clasps, and his knee-high socks, contrasts sharply with the rueful, elegiac aura of his brothers and sister, with whom he nonetheless shares a common color scheme. His comfortable, assured pose and, above all, his clothing are strongly evocative of court portraits, in particular the young statesman prince seen in Velázquez’s portraits of Baltasar Carlos. While the painting is not as grandiose as the prince’s equestrian portraits, the presence of gloves and papers are both overt references to leadership and administrative duties reserved for the high nobility and the royal family, and the knee-high socks that rise to meet Mazo’s son’s breeches are strikingly similar attire to that seen in Velázquez’s *Prince Baltasar Carlos*, now housed in Vienna. Equally instructive as a comparison is Don Diego’s son Luis from the companion portraits, discussed in the previous section of this chapter, whose clothing and upright posture are strikingly similar to the royal exemplar of the young Felipe Prospero (figs. 7–8). Mazo’s own child, the child of a court artist, could strive to inhabit and emulate the subject-position of royals, just as young Luis does. In other words, the power of portraiture to naturalize elite subject positions extends, at least in this select instance, from sitters typically of the royalty and high nobility, not just to the aspirant courtier-artist (as in *Las meninas*) but now to courtier-artist’s (Mazo’s) son—that is, to a non-noble who, unlike Mazo or his father-in-law, had yet to demonstrate his worth to king and court.16 Such a claim to elite status is all the more telling given that Mazo, unlike his father-in-law, was never knighted. Mazo’s coat of arms, in fact, confers membership only to the lowest rank of the nobility, the *hidalgúa.*

---

16 According to Novero Plaza, Melchor is thirteen years old in the picture.
The portrayal of Mazo’s son as a nobleman in the making indicates one of two things, or, more plausibly, a mixture of both: one, by virtue of his and without a doubt his father-in-law’s acumen at court, Mazo had managed to reinvest the social and artistic capital conferred upon his person as both artist and palace servant back into his own family, securing his progeny’s place within Madrid’s burgeoning administrative class that arose with the expansion of the centralized state; and two, wishing to secure the still reversible gains of a successful court artist, Mazo, who had come from humble means in Cuenca and was not born into royal favor, portrayed his family as established courtiers to convince himself and others, through the persuasive powers of the portrait, that his gains were not transitory. In other words, just as family portraits of nobles and royals projected a combination of stability (effortlessly assumed poses that their ancestors had occupied in portraits past) and continuity (the promise, embodied by progeny, that the family’s social importance would endure uncontested in future generations), so too did Mazo look to codify and embed into the painting a visual language of unassailable privilege that could at once solidify an incipient social type and project its interests into the unknown future.

Recently uncovered archival evidence indicates that posterity rewarded Mazo’s portrayal of his heirs by Francisca Velázquez as elegant, able courtiers. That is, the gains of royal favor, hard-earned by Mazo, were—as the artist surely would have hoped—not lost in subsequent generations. Rather, his efforts paid dividends for his progeny in the form of the relative prosperity and social prestige to be had in service to the king’s household and government. As Novero Plaza points out, all three sons of Francisca Velázquez and, indirectly, their daughter benefited from royal patronage: Gaspar (in the far left, twenty-six years old) by inheriting his father’s post as *ujier de cámara*, then
moving on to the role of *conserje* of the palace at Aranjuez; Baltasar (twenty-two, standing next to Gaspar) in the Alcázar’s kitchen as a *mozo de frutería, veedor de viandas* (overseer of foodstuffs), and finally *jefe de cerería*; and Melchor (standing in front of his two brothers) as a seminarian at El Escorial, a prestigious position in a clergy-heavy society that must have benefited from a royal endorsement. In the case of María de Teresa (the woman who clutches her brooch), her son (Mazo’s grandson) became a foreign ambassador, another position that arguably was awarded at least in part because of the recognition of the Mazo-Velázquez family name in royal service (182–83). A family of the artist, then, became a family of elite court professionals, each of whom, thanks to the inroads of their father and grandfather, was afforded a range of enviable career choices.

A clear partition, based both on the left-to-right “reading” of the portrait and on the height, older age, and uniform color schemes of the four elder sitters, divides what is likely Mazo’s family by Francisca Velázquez from the younger generation born of Mazo’s second wife, Francisca de la Vega. Mazo’s daughter’s hand resting on top of the boy dressed in boots seems to be a gesture of affection that unites the two branches of the family, that of half-sisters and -brothers, in a show of unity, solidarity, and mutual identification within the same line of patrilineal inheritance; thus, the hereditary and age gap encompassed by respective maternal spheres of influence is bridged, as the coat of arms above all the children’s heads reminds us.¹⁷ Raquel Novero Plaza posits that the three standing boys, all sons of Mazo’s second marriage, may have been dressed festively

¹⁷ Countess Luisa Padilla’s conduct manual *Nobleza virtuosa* (1637) advises young women to love their stepmothers as well as half-brothers and -sisters, “regalando mucho los hermanos que della tengays, sin diferenciarlos de los primeros” (262).
for the celebration of a saint’s day (185). The dove in the hands of the boy on the far right of the portrait and the orange that the shorter boy holds out toward his brother, who places his hand on the former’s chest, may be tokens of love reminiscent of Northern family portraiture, which sometimes displayed animals and fruit to communicate familial happiness.\textsuperscript{18} \textit{La familia del pintor}, then, at once retains elements of the Hapsburg visual tradition and adapts visual iconography—shows of familial intimacy, whether through body language or bird and still-life objects—from other artistic schools.

The woman seated with a child on her lap—Mazo’s second wife—glances down at the infant, whose blue dress and white lace further offset the dark colors worn by Mazo’s children from his first marriage. The mother sits with her body open and facing slightly to her left, as opposed to directly toward the viewer, echoing the pose of Mazo’s standing daughter who touches her pendant, and even the brothers behind her. All of them create a descending space that points naturally to the two youngest sitters at the painting’s foreground right (fig. 13). The viewer’s lowering gaze, which follows from left to right in a downward slope of face and shoulder lines, lingers almost naturally on the vivid blues and reds of the mother’s and infant’s dress, and on the tender motherly affection she shows her daughter. The way the infant is supported on her mother’s lap conveys a sense of parental affection for children more akin to Spanish religious painting like Murillo’s \textit{Sagrada familia} (fig. 11) than to the emotionally reserved court portraits.\textsuperscript{19} The mother’s left hand wraps around her daughter’s shoulder, while three of her daughter’s fingers rest, slightly curled, between the mother’s right index and middle

\textsuperscript{18} See Jordaens’s \textit{La familia del pintor} (1622), housed at the Museo del Prado. The painter’s wife holds a basket of fruit, and a colorful parrot perches behind her.

\textsuperscript{19} For a discussion of Murillo’s painting, see p. 142 of this chapter.
fingers (fig. 14). Whether a show of trust, an infant’s caprice as she sits impatiently, or a
game the mother is playing with her daughter, this slight detail of interlocking hands is
part of the air of greater informality and affectivity than that found in the artists’
depiction of his heirs by Francisca Velázquez. Indeed, Mazo’s varying portrayal of
austerely dressed adolescent and young adult courtiers and festively attired, overtly
affectionate younger half-siblings may indicate a subset of differing agendas: the impetus
to portray accomplished and promising court citizens as they enter professional and
marital lives, on the one hand, and reverence for the joys of infancy and early childhood
on the other.

While the show of mother–daughter affection and less formal court attire of
Mazo’s children by his second wife distinguished the artist’s younger family from the
prototype of the austere, reserved royal or noble, an important distinction exists between
the glimpse-of-life instantaneity of Velázquez’s Meninas and the more overtly
commemorative function of Mazo’s Familia. According to Jonathan Brown’s
interpretation of the sitters of the Hapsburg family in “On the Meaning of Las meninas,”
palace servants, the infanta, and Velázquez himself are caught off guard by an
unexpected visit of the king and queen to the painter’s workshop, and so a familial
hierarchy and figuration of private family life are naturally and spontaneously “captured.”
Mazo’s family, arranged in a more or less straight line across the foreground, convey a
degree of intentional self-representation that Velázquez’s extemporaneously “surprised”
sitters do not. That is, as sitters, Mazo’s family appear more aware that through the
medium of portraiture they seek to define themselves both collectively, as a family, and
to a perhaps lesser degree as individuals within that family.
Mazo’s eldest and tallest son, seen in profile, crowns a foreground united horizontally by shoulder lines that, instead of squarely facing the viewer, point across and downward, toward the youngest of Mazo’s progeny—an unequivocal statement of the unity and integrity of the family body. Velázquez’s palace servants, captured in a moment of surprise, make for a more spatially—and hence conceptually—complex picture, but they do not convey the same degree of affinity and group identity between sitters; rather, they are separate individuals with distinct roles. Hence, while the seventeenth-century definition of family encompassed both blood relations and the dependents of a household, Mazo’s divergent portrayal of siblings and mother as unified across the foreground plane suggest that the distinction between bonds of blood and those of household service was substantive. Loyalties and obligations of brothers to sisters, and of both to a (step)mother, lack the complexity—at the level of representation—of Velázquez’s palace family not because Mazo was an inferior painter (although by most scholarly accounts he was) but because bonds of blood were intuited by the master’s son-in-law as being simpler: less bedeviled by rivalry, competition, and the drive for self-distinction as a means of individual advancement. While Mazo’s heirs might have been future courtiers in the eyes of the king, to each other they were to be (ideally) a source of unconditional love and enduring mutual support.

Mazo’s painting is indubitably inferior to Velázquez’s Meninas as far as the category of perspective is concerned. The painter and two onlookers in the background are far too big in relationship to the foreground sitters. Susann Waldmann accounts for the (perspectively) unconvincing foreground–background relationship by positing that the recessed background space could itself be a painting within a painting (137). My
inclination concerning this apparent sloppiness on Mazo’s part is to view it as a sign that
the picture was probably done in Mazo’s spare time without benefit of a patron
commissioning it. The need to prioritize commissioned portraits for pecuniary reasons
may have impeded a more careful completion of the picture. Given his evident ability to
portray background space more convincingly than he does here—in paintings such as
Queen Mariana of Spain in Mourning (1666) at the London National Gallery and La
emperatriz Margarita de Austria (1666) at the Museo del Prado—the artist may have
made a conscious decision to dedicate himself first to the task of portraying his
descendants. The foreground group, rendered in great vivacity and detail—that is, Mazo’s
unitary familia—is, in any case, the painting’s most singular attribute. Royal portrait halls
and painters in the act of painting had all been painted before—in Las meninas, for
instance—but no known picture from the extant Spanish canon portrays so many
members of the same family within a single frame.

Mazo’s assertion of the indivisibility and collective outlook of family, one that
unites full and half-brothers and -sisters, old and young, corroborates the accounts of
historians and contemporary writers of conduct manuals. Social scientists such as James
Casey and Charles Jago both stress the “clan”-based ideology of family, cemented by the
entailment system, as a particular concern of the aristocratic class. Jago points out that
legal restrictions limiting the selling or mortgaging of land were designed to preserve
aristocratic estates in perpetuity, thus curbing individual greed and preserving the
family’s social status down the generations (90). Countess Doña Luisa de de Padilla of

Aragon confirms the importance of family solidarity in *Nobleza virtuosa* (1637), writing that adult children must put the interest of the family above the pernicious “ambición de heredar” (39). With regard specifically to the firstborn son (“primogénito”), typically privileged by the entailment system to inherit the bulk of the family’s wealth, Padilla reminds him that the privilege comes with heavy responsibility (60). First, the eldest son was expected to look after his younger siblings as a supportive father figure (“hazerles siempre oficio de Padre y amparo”) (60). Further, Padilla tells the privileged primogeniture that because of his station, it behooves him to distribute the family’s inheritance among his siblings fairly (“Partid libremente con ellos la hazienda que Dios os diere”) and assure that his sisters marry well (60–63).

The pose of Mazo’s eldest son, the only sibling painted in full profile and hence the only one who directly faces the entirety of his family as opposed to the partial profile and full-body-length portrayal of his brothers and sisters, might very well speak to the solemn ideal of the eldest son as protector over all. Likewise, his position as the family’s keeper suggested by his height (he is the tallest of the sitters), his location at the left of the portrait—the “first” according to the left-to-right visual “reading” of a portrait—and the framing of his body as facing the family, not the spectator, corroborates the early modern aristocratic ideal of a patriarch who watches over the whole of the family without granting particular favor to one sibling at the expense of others. Such a concern may have been on Mazo’s mind as he approached old age (he would die two years after the completion of the portrait) and wished to secure the emotional and financial well-being of his progeny.
Behind Mazo’s foregrounded family, a wall of paintings—most visibly that of an aged Philip IV by Velázquez and identified with the picture now housed in London’s National Gallery—and a Roman bust, both inventoried at the Alcázar, create the pinnacle link between Mazo’s and Velázquez’s respective familias (figs. 15, 16): the singular setting of family within a royal domestic interior. By choosing such a distinguished background, as opposed to a nondescript space, Mazo, like Velázquez in Las meninas or Don Galdós and family in their companion portraits, yokes a sense of self to professional identity, to service at the court. The portrait of Philip IV would have instantly invoked the title of pintor de cámara—sole painter of the king’s image—for a sophisticated courtly viewership, fusing, in a sense, the separate persons of Velázquez and Mazo into a single family of royal artists, united by bonds of profession as well as marriage. The king’s hallowed image would have conferred nobility upon all the painting’s subjects, not just the author of his image. Thus, Mazo’s own sons and daughters, like the nobleman or the courtier-artist, are ennobled by the king’s presence.

Whereas in a physically existing portrait hall the artist might have hoped to have a self-portrait placed alongside images of monarchs and their ancestors, here the pictorially recreated portrait hall frames that question of the artist’s—and the artist’s family’s—place within the sovereign’s family body. From the beginning of royal portrait collecting, the king’s portrait hall was meant to serve as a visual metaphor of the king’s body politic. In Mazo’s case, like Velázquez or even Titian and Antonis Mor before him, the artist’s

---

21 Mazo’s *Queen Mariana of Spain in Mourning* and *La emperatriz Margarita de Austria* also fall under the category of royal family portraits within a royal domestic interior. Because of their portrayal of sovereigns accompanied by a retinue of palace servants, they bear strong resemblance—in terms of their iconographic structure—to *Las meninas*. 
place within the king’s family bestows “honorary,” if not strictly hereditary (blood-based), nobility. Such a claim of ennoblement by the artist for himself and his family through identification with the king’s portrait would have reinforced, or even aggrandized, the comparatively lowly status of an hidalgo indicated by the coat of arms on the curtain. But that call for ennoblement also puts into play the binary between what Joanna Woodall describes in her article on Flemish artist Antonis Mor and his complex relationship with Philip II as “[t]he inherent nobility of genius” and the “hereditary nobility of titled aristocracy” (77). The former could be acknowledged by the king and even reflect his capabilities as a discerning patron but by the same token had to be carefully guarded against the destabilization of a social hierarchy still predicated (in theory, at least) on blood purity—that is, on inherited, not inherent, social privilege.

Not entirely unlike the burghers of Dutch portraiture discussed in a previous section of this chapter, Mazo, as an elite professional but non-noble, had to strike a careful balance, in a portrait of his own family, between the assimilation of the aristocratic and regal precepts of portraiture and their renegotiation in an effort to distinguish and legitimate a new social type.22 Beyond bending the strictures of hereditary nobility to reconcile a quotidian coat of arms with the illustrious exemplar of Philip IV—rarely painted at all in his later years—Mazo further elevates his family’s social status through the creation of a new “visual genealogy” of the court artist to accompany the well-established pictorial blueprint of the image of sovereign. According to Woodall’s theory of the “visual genealogy,” early modern artists, when painting renowned figures such as a king or pope, used a “recognizable iconographic type” to

22 See pp. 134-45 of this chapter for a discussion of burgher family painting.
place their sitter within a familiar pictorial context of greatness—hence, the
commonalities, across hundreds of years, in modes of portrayal established for monarchs,
clerics, intellect-scholars, and so on (2–3). Much newer was a visual genealogy of the
court artist and, more specifically, the Spanish court artist.23

According to Francisco Almech Iñiguez and the critical consensus that has taken
shape around his argument, the recessed background space where a silhouetted artist goes
about his task indicates the painting’s setting in the Casa del Tesoro, an annex of the
royal palace that housed distinguished guests and served as the painter’s workshop from
as far back as the reign of Philip II. “Sánchez Coello, Becerra, Pantoja y Velázquez” and
later “Mazo y Herrera Barnuevo”—all of them would paint there (Almech Iñiguez 660).24
This coterie of highly skilled artists would establish and strengthen an autonomous
tradition of the Spanish court portrait to rival those of other European capitals, an
important advent for Europe’s most powerful monarchies. The painting that Mazo
himself is presumably painting—his back turned to us, his figure mysteriously
illuminated by an unrevealed source of light—while a woman and young child,
potentially Mazo’s own, look on, is presumed to be an image of the Infanta Margarita
(fig. 17). Velázquez and Mazo both painted the infanta on multiple occasions, most
notably, in Velázquez’s case, in Las meninas and in the painting of her in blue now at the

23 Self- and family portraits by Rubens such as his The Artist and His Wife in the
Honeysuckle (1610) provide an interesting case study in that the painter never seems to
have painted himself with the tools of his trade, preferring, or so it appears, to assume
aristocratic identity at the expense of painterly identity.

24 Iñiguez proposes that Velázquez’s Las Hilanderas (1657) depicts the same
background space of the Casa del Tesoro (660).
Kunsthistorisches in Vienna. Mazo thus provides another nexus between father and son-in-law, as well as another link to the role of court painter.

Mazo’s self-portrayal—he could be any or all of the artists who occupied the Casa del Tesoro and painted the royal family—literally effaces the painter’s own visage (so compellingly rendered by Velázquez in *Las meninas*) in favor of the reification of the court artist. The artist is now awarded his own visual genealogy—that is, his own “authoritative prototype” that binds Spanish court painters of past, present, and future together. Such an ideal communion recasts, or even subverts, the genealogical principle of dynastic continuity by which royals and nobles claimed both pictorial and blood-based likeness with exalted predecessors. Of course, the blood of Velázquez does pump through the veins of his grandchildren in the painting’s left foreground, but the mutual inheritance that Velázquez, Mazo, Coello, Pantoja de la Cruz, and the rest all share as court artists is defined by professional accomplishment, not a common genetic code. Whereas *Las meninas* leaves in its wake a residual antagonism between an abstract claim “for the nobility of the artist” and “a personal claim for the nobility of Velázquez himself” (Brown “On The Meaning” 72), Mazo’s more mediated, less personalized sense of self sublimates the conflict in ideal fashion. Undoubtedly profiting from the inroads in prestige and social power garnered by his father-in-law, the painter’s choice of physiognomic self-erasure into the person of the court artist, as well as into his biological family and the sovereign’s body politic, should be intuited as nothing less than a tremendous display of confidence: confidence that the court artist was and long had been a permanent fixture of court life; confidence that his own artistic output, like that of his predecessors, would be remembered and cherished; and confidence that from his
celebrated profession would trickle down, in the same way that life begets life, the privilege of royal favor to his many heirs.

Conclusion

From the mythical founding of modern Spain under the Catholic Monarchs (fig. 4) to the families of the artist in *Las meninas* and *La familia del pintor*, family clearly mattered in the early modern period. The family portrait was both an extension of the self and a way to define oneself intrinsically, an inter- and intra-subjective process in which the categories of “inter-” (between sitters) and “intra-” (within a specific sitter) are not wholly separable. The logic of hereditary nobility, of blood-based social distinction embodied by a coat of arms or patent of nobility, like displays of religious piety in donor painting, were powerful tools in the shaping of the early modern visual imaginary of family, in both the Renaissance and late baroque periods. And yet by the time Mazo’s *familia* was painted, one could pay service to these forces of traditionalism without becoming their handmaiden. Mazo, taking a cue from his father-in-law, clearly understood that the expansion of the king’s family was tantamount to the expansion of his (social) body politic.

Whereas Velázquez’s *Las meninas* seems to imply a growing recognition of emerging professional identities at court, Mazo paints where his father-in-law insinuates. By portraying both his own biological family and a prototype of the king’s painter in the background—one that could just as easily be Velázquez, Mazo, Coello, and so on—Mazo converts Velázquez’s exception into the rule: the court artist and his gains, as well as the aspirations of his family, are here to stay. Just as, according to Richard Helgerson, the peasant honor dramas of Lope and Calderon “gave new dignity and new affective power to
peasant homes, marriages, and families,” so too did Mazo’s *La familia del pintor* confer family pride and enhanced social prestige on a nonaristocratic family that sought and ultimately secured a place for itself at court (130). *La familia del pintor*, then, shows that the forces of social dynamism were indeed at work, even if selectively, in early modern Madrid—that king and court could accommodate the creative talents and social and economic ambitions of the artist that flourished elsewhere in Europe.
Conclusion

The cultural objects studied herein form a chronological arc that spans the greater breadth of Philip IV’s long reign (1605–65). In 1635, the year Reinar was likely first performed, Cardinal Richelieu’s France declared war on Spain. At the same time that Philip IV’s favorite, the Count-Duke of Olivares, professed a zealous belief in an exalted image of kingship as a means to restore and grow royal authority in turbulent times, many at court had begun to suspect that the Count-Duke himself undermined, rather than strengthened, Philip IV’s kingship. Vélez de Guevara was probably among them. His queen-wife, beautiful and virtuous Inés, is, through her steadfast loyalty and soundness of character, an exalted image of queenship. Unlike the Count-Duke, who was disgracefully exiled from court early in 1643, Philip IV’s wife, Queen Isabel of Bourbon death’s was mourned, according to Lisis, the frame narrator of Zayas’s Desengaños, as the greatest loss Spain had ever incurred (“la mayor pérdida que ha tenido España”) (506). Vélez’s juxtaposition of a theologically valid marriage and the un-Christian logic of “reason of state” promulgated by royal favorites (privados), especially in light of the play’s Renaissance and early baroque precursors, suggests an attempt to reorient the institution in favor of free will and spousal companionship. The core theme of Vélez’s play is whether marriage was merely a reflection of the broader institution of kingship or itself the wellspring of true Christian kingship in the Spanish Hapsburg tradition, a question that would have utterly intrigued court audiences in the lead-up to the Count-Duke’s ouster.
Twelve years after Vélez’s play first appeared, the kingdoms of Portugal and Catalonia were in open revolt. These were twin affronts to Philip IV’s hereditary (dynastic) claims. By virtue of their proximity to Madrid, these rebellions must have heightened the sense, especially at the seat of his power in Madrid, that Philip IV’s patrimonio—his own dynastic house (Casa de . . .)—was in a state of severe disarray. Zayas’s troubled homes—the royal household in Flanders, the treachery a king’s libidinous servant invites in Lisbon, and the dominance a seductress exerts over the purported patrimony of another—all tie back to the question that Lisis asks of her fledgling noblemen peers: How can you bear that the enemy is inside Spain (“que sufrís que estén los enemigos dentro de España”) (505)? By 1665, the year of Philip IV’s death and of the painting of Mazo’s Familia, Spain had come undone as a major European power. She no longer had any enemies “within” because a new European order had been defined from without and had in the process defined exactly where “outside” Imperial Spain lay. The Dutch Netherlands and Portugal, the settings of two of Zayas’s novelas, were surrendered in 1648 and 1668, respectively. Spain’s imperial house had, according to the standards of Zayas’s pervasive pessimism in the Desengaños regarding Philip IV’s religious and dynastic wars, necessarily been swept clean. Two generations after Philip IV died, the Spanish Hapsburg royal bloodline was eviscerated, with Bourbon Spain acting as the puppet power of Louis XIV’s France during the War of Spanish Succession.

Mazo’s family portrait was inherently less polemical than the literary projects of Vélez and Zayas. The latter two took up quintessential court polemics of their day: ideal kingship and Imperial Spain’s foreign policy. Vélez’s Inés provided the saving feminine grace and sobriety that function to draw out the ideal manhood of the king. Zayas’s wives
are murdered abroad, and the men and women who mercifully outlive them to return to Castile, marry fellow Castilians, and tell their story, are the substance of a cautionary tale against foreign entanglements and in favor of a shoring-up of the home front—of a Spanish national family. Whereas Vélez and Zayas’s court families carry the aura of palatial intrigue—of family politics gone wrong and kingdoms thrown into tumult—Mazo’s sitters are urbane and composed. The painter’s house within the royal palace (Casa del Tesoro) is not of a kind with the conjugal bliss of the arbitristas or the latent sexual deviance of Zayas. Social privilege, refined artistic tastes, and the physical labor that sustains them—these are pillars of a niche court identity that Mazo reveals to the viewer. Where Vélez and Zayas’s royal and noble families suffer the bitter and violent demise that court audiences of Philip IV’s Spain may have feared for themselves as war pressed itself along Castile’s flanks (in Portugal and Catalonia), Mazo’s self-fashioning through overlapping royal, personal, and professional dynasties comes as a surprising source of optimism.

Mazo’s show of dynastic pride and privileged patronage evokes a court family determined to retain and build upon its hard-won status at court. His aims were to visually enshrine the prestige of being pintor de cámara and through that title of court service secure a foothold for his heirs within the extensive networks of royal patronage that were the economic lifeblood of Madrid. As archival evidence demonstrates, Mazo’s ambitions were realized, with a number of his children entering court service. Mazo’s painting may seem modern in its eagerness to carve out something like a bourgeois identity, an identity based not on landed wealth but on what was designated a “trade” (oficio vil) in Golden Age Spain. But his carefully placed image of the sovereign, the
patriarch who, in Covarrubias’s words, sustains all under his roof (“la gente que un señor sustenta dentro de su casa”) reminds us that early modern Europe had yet to champion the “individual” as it would come to most explicitly with the onset of the political philosophy of liberalism and bourgeois modernity. Mazo’s grand sum of nine foreground sitters, half of them heirs of Velázquez, are more a clan with a common cause than they are individuals with distinct aspirations. As was the case in Velázquez’s Las meninas, Philip IV’s presence did not merely elevate the status of the sitters but also reminded the viewer that their dignity and grace was a product of the monarch’s magnanimity. So it was that in early modern Spain a more nuanced articulation of the family as a unit of (somewhat) differentiated sitters, of varying age and stations in life, could coexist alongside the clan- and patronage-based connotations of the same term.

The image of the court family that this dissertation affords demonstrates that the early modern family was by no means a static construct meant to serve rigid cultural and historical agendas. This interdisciplinary project shows instead that the family was a subject of indisputable depth and richness of representation. A royal family could be mobilized to frame debates concerning ideal kingship; a noble family, to interrogate dynastic and imperial foreign policy ambitions in Philip IV’s European theaters of war; and an artist’s family, to establish the economic stability and social recognition of a nascent professional class. If, as I propose this dissertation irrefutably shows, the court family constitutes a topos of literary and artistic production in its own right, and if, as I also contend, the interdisciplinary nature of this project illuminates just how the family as a theme and methodological framework both links and distinguishes a variety of cultural objects of the early modern era, one question remains: Where is this project headed from
In writing these three chapters, I have attempted to be as rigorous and thorough in my scholarship as the confines of a dissertation project can allow. But this study certainly is, as the wise adage of the academic goes, my last work as a student, not my first as an academic. To transform *The Family at Court* into a book-length monograph, I need to address some of the court families that did not quite make it into these chapters. Ruiz de Alarcón’s play *La verdad sospechosa*, for instance, tells the tale of another court family, one whose patriarch is tormented by the loss of his firstborn son and forced to confront the waywardness of a *segundón*. Quevdo’s *El Buscón*, whose eponymous protagonist is exposed to repeated public ridicule and shaming for attempts to dissemble his new Christian ancestry and in turn despises his own family origins, presents yet another image of court family that is worthy of study. On the painting front, Murillo’s famous self-portrait contains a Latin inscription in which he explains that the painting was made according to his children’s wishes. And so again the painter’s identity and family identity intersect. The painter’s outright bawdy *Four Figures on a Step*, with its references to heterosexual and pedophilic prostitution, has itself been regarded as a parodic inversion of Golden Age ideals of family life, further confirming the breach between positive and negative exemplarity I have sought to draw out in these chapters. Finally, Mazo’s later works such as *Queen Mariana of Spain in Mourning* and *La emperatriz Margarita de Austria* both reproduce royal domestic scenes with an array of palace family present—blood relations and servants. These portraits illustrate a visual iconography inherited from *Las meninas* that deserves to be examined in light of Mazo’s noteworthy yet under-studied career as a painter of families.
Appendix

Fig. 1. Velázquez. *Las meninas, o la familia de Felipe IV*. 1656. Museo del Prado.
Fig. 2. Rubens. The Artist and His Wife in the Honeysuckle. 1610. Alte Pinakothek.
Fig. 3. Mazo. *La familia del pintor*. 1665. Kunsthistorisches Museum.
Fig. 4. Anonymous. *Maestro de la Virgen de los Reyes Católicos*. 1491–1493. Museo del Prado.

Fig. 5. Anonymous. *Patent of Nobility of the Family of Captain Domingo de Castañeda Velasco, Resident of Valladolid*. 1628. Hispanic Society of America.
Fig. 6 and Fig. 7. Velázquez. Companion portraits Don Diego Corral y Arellano and Antonia de Ipeñarrieta y Galdós and her son Luis. 1631–1632. Museo del Prado.

Fig. 8. Velázquez. *Felipe Próspero*. 1660. Kunsthistorisches Museum.
Fig. 9. Rubens. *Portrait of a Family*. Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle.
Fig. 10. Pantoja de la Cruz. Nacimiento de la Virgen. 1603. Museo del Prado.
Fig. 11. Murillo. *Sagrada familia del pajarito*. 1650. Museo del Prado.
Fig. 12. The four eldest sitters of Mazo’s *familia*.
Fig. 13. The interrelated body language of the sitters.
Fig 14. Mazo’s second wife holds her daughter’s hand in hers.
Fig. 15 and Fig. 16. The monarchs in the backgrounds of La familia del pintor and Las meninas.
Fig. 17. Velázquez and Mazo. *Infanta Margarita*. 1665. Museo del Prado.
Bibliography


---. *Nobleza virtuosa.* Zaragoza: Iuan de Lanaja, 1637. Print.


Ribadeneira Pedro de. *Tratado de la religión y virtudes que deve tener el Principe Cristiano, para governar y conservar sus estados. Contra lo que Nicolas Machiavelo y los Politicos deste tiempo enseñan*. Madrid: Iuan de Montoya, 1585.


Smith, David R. *Masks of Wedlock: Seventeenth-Century Dutch Marriage Portraiture.*

Stradling, R. A. *Philip IV and the Government of Spain, 1621–1665.* Cambridge:

Sullivan, Henry W. “Vélez de Guevara’s *Reinar después de morir* as a Model of
Classical Spanish Tragedy.” *Antigüedad y actualidad de Luis Vélez de Guevara:

Thompson, I. A. A. “Castile, Spain and the Monarchy: The Political Community from
*Patria Natural* to *Patria Nacional.*” *Spain, Europe and the Atlantic World:

Tiffany, Tanya J. *Diego Velázquez’s Early Paintings and the Culture of Seventeenth-

Triwedi, Mitchell D. Introduction. *Primeras tragedias españolas.* By Jerónimo

Usunáriz, Jesús M. “El matrimonio como ejercicio de libertad en la España del siglo de
oro.” *El matrimonio en Europa y el mundo hispánico, Siglos XVI y XVII.* Ed.

Valladares, Rafael. *La rebelión de Portugal: Guerra, conflicto y poderes en la


