

Recuperating Ruíz de Alarcón: Los empeños de un engaño as Source Text for Calderón de la Barca and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz

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Recuperating Ruíz de Alarcón: *Los empeños de un engaño* as Source Text for Calderón de la Barca and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz

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Abstract:

This paper considers a little-studied play, *Los empeños de un engaño* by Juan Ruíz de Alarcón, as a possible source text for both Calderón de la Barca's *Los empeños de un acaso* and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's *Los empeños de una casa*. The phonetic similarities of the latter two titles have relegated Ruíz de Alarcón's unique drama to obscurity. However, the unusual details of both the Alarcón and Sor Juana pieces demonstrate the relative freedom the two New World authors had in composing unique versions of the *capa y espada* genre, particularly when compared to their peninsular counterpart. Although all three plays are similar in title, plot, and even character names, they are ultimately unique pieces that speak to the specific conditions under which each of their authors composed and staged their work. It is also the author's wish that this paper, along with the recent discovery that the play *La monja alférez* was penned by Alarcón and not Pérez de Montalbán (Vega García-Luengos, 2021), will inspire more scholars to consider the Mexican dramaturg's oeuvre beyond his better-known pieces such as *La verdad sospechosa* or *Las paredes oyen*.

Keywords:

Sor Juana, Calderón, Alarcón, comedia, empeños

Compliance with Ethical Standards:

There has been no funding involved in this research, nor are there any financial or non-financial conflicts of interest. There is no research involving human or animal participants.

The titles alone—*Los empeños de un engaño*, *Los empeños de un acaso*, and *Los empeños de una casa*—would give one enough material to start mentally linking these three plays by Juan Ruíz Alarcón, Pedro Calderón de la Barca, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, respectively. A deeper dive into the materials, however, extracts far more links than titles alone might suggest. In this paper I will argue that it is Alarcón's *Engaño* (1634)¹ which serves as a potential source text for the subsequent plays by Calderón (*Acaso*, 1639-40?) and Sor Juana (*Casa*, 1683). In comparing the three texts, we find that although similar in plot, characterizations, and denouement, the two

¹ Nota bene: from here on out the plays will be referred to by the one differing word in the respective titles for clarity.

texts penned by our New World writers contain elements that differ significantly from that of their peninsular counterpart.

As Sor Juana's writing career begins much later than the other two dramatists, she is automatically removed from the running as the first to use the theme and character names; we know for certain that Alarcón's version was written in or prior to 1634 due to its inclusion in the *Parte segvnda de las Comedias del licenciado Don Ivan Rvysz de Alarcon y Mendoça*, printed in that year,² while Calderón's *Acaso* is perhaps the most difficult to date. His was first published posthumously, which does not help with the date of composition. However, the critical edition of *Acaso* presented by Manuel Sebastian Galofaro for his doctoral thesis aggregates all the previous data on potential dating and attribution of the text, all of which points to its composition in the late 1630s or even 1640 (2011), meaning that it would have been written some five years after Alarcón's version appeared in print. It is thus that I believe this to be one of the first plays not only to make the transition from one conceptual side of the Atlantic to another,³ but then to return back again: from colonial subject to imperial court writer, back to marginalized subject

² In fact, we can assert that it was written prior to April 1633, the date given in the *Aprobación y censura* that appears at the beginning of that volume. In a thesis written for the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, Aehécatl Muñoz González states "Sobre esta comedia se desconoce su presentación y, como la gran mayoría de las comedias alarconianas, es imposible precisar cuándo fue escrita, sin embargo, se ha considerado que fue antes de 1618" (2015), but does not give any indication as to where that has been said. Either way, the play was certainly the first of the three.

³ Arguably, "conceptual" is doing some heavy lifting here. It is well known that Alarcón spent a significant portion of his adult life in Spain and that *Engaño* was most likely written during his second stint in Spain, which lasted from 1613 until his death in 1639. Still, this time was spent in constant contact with the Americas; from 1625 onwards he worked as a *relator* in the Consejo de Indias and, as José Juan Arrom tells us, "nace, se educa, viaja, brega, se afana, aspira y obtiene merced como indiano, y como indiano, entre amistades casi todas indianas, transcurre el resto de sus días hasta su sosegado fin" (1967). Given his close personal and professional ties to the colonies even in this later stage of life, I would argue that even while in Spain his work is that of a colonial subject first and foremost. In fact, Arrom outlines the ways in which his colonial roots make his work stand apart from the more nationalistic writings of his Spanish counterparts (1967). Likewise, José Estrada argues that Alarcón himself uses his background as a strategy to compete with his peninsular counterparts (2019).

(arguably the least powerful of the three in identity as a woman, nun, and colonial resident); each putting their own mark on the piece.

The connections between these plays have been studied piecemeal previously, but never as a whole series. In *Juan Ruíz de Alarcón en el tiempo*, Rodolfo Usigli's notes on *Engaño* simply read "¿Influencia calderoniana? Computar fechas" (1967). With the first part, "influencia calderoniana," Usigli insinuates that Calderón influenced Alarcón, but as far as I have been able to discern neither Usigli nor other scholars have followed through on the imperative of the second phrase to check the dates. Although many scholars would likely consider Calderón the more significant playwright and thus obvious direct influence on other playwrights such as Sor Juana or Alarcón—as we will see has happened over the last century or so of scholarship—Menéndez Pelayo often proclaimed the philosopher poet was not as original as many believe, which Borja Rodríguez Gutiérrez recently reminded us in his talk at the Association for Hispanic Classical Theater's symposium in Almagro, Spain: "Menéndez Pelayo y la asfixia del mundo de la comedia barroca" (2022). Given the dates that I have been able to find, clearly Alarcón's piece came first. Still, James A. Castañeda draws obvious phonetic conclusions about the similarities between *Acaso* and *Casa* in his article "*Los empeños de un acaso y Los empeños de una casa*: Calderón y Sor Juana— La diferencia de un fonema;" before him, José Juan Arrom noted that "*Los empeños de una casa* es... una comedia digna de figurar entre las mejores escritas por los continuadores de la escuela calderoniana... Calderón tiene una pieza titulada *Los empeños de un acaso*; Sor Juana, con ingenio travieso, transforma *un acaso* en *una casa*" (1967). Arrom makes the comparison between the two New World born authors through their shared heritage, albeit does not connect *Engaño* and *Casa* directly: "Sor Juana, como el otro Juan de México, Alarcón, acepta en buena hora el plan general impuesto —la fórmula— y con mano de orfebre mexicano

imprime el rasgo innovador en los detalles de la ejecución” (1967).⁴ Returning to Calderón and Sor Juana, I have also previously alluded to the similarities at least in title, albeit ultimately opting to compare *Casa* with another Calderonian title (Cowling, 2020). Carl Good mentions not only *Acaso* but also *La dama duende* and *Casa con dos puertas* as possible comparisons to Sor Juana’s work, with the latter as the most directly comparable. Good’s basis for comparison, however, is more grounded in the sibling relationships, rather than plot development (1999).

Castañeda provides a schematic to tie *Acaso* and *Casa* together beyond the similarities in title, consisting of the following comparisons:

- 1) Galan A festeja a Dama A, que se llama Leonor en las dos obras.
- 2) Galan B, que se llama Juan en las dos obras, festeja a Dama B, que es hermana de Galan C.
- 3) Este, que designamos Galan C, festeja a Dama A. Es, en muchos sentidos, una figura ridícula, y cuando se alinean las parejas y se anuncian las bodas inminentes en el desenlace, el pobre hermano es el único que recibe calabazas.
- 4) En las dos obras figura el padre de Dama A. (1967)

Aside from the above similarities, Castañeda also notes the existence of a *criado* named Hernando in both (1967). He also remarks on instances in the Sor Juana text where she refers to Calderón himself, as well as her subtle suggestions of Calderón’s title as relevant to the actions of her characters (1967). Although he suggests that it is ultimately a rewrite of *Acaso*, Sor

⁴ Arrom does not even include *Engaño* in his list of known Alarcón plays. Although he states that the twenty-four known Alarcón plays do not come close to the hundreds and perhaps even thousands of many of his counterparts such as Lope, Tirso, and Calderón, “Alarcón ensayó... casi toda la gama temática de la comedia de su época” (1967). Of the twenty-four, Arrom lists sixteen under various subtitles, including *El semejante a sí mismo*, *La industria y la suerte* and *Todo es ventura* under the category “simples comedias de enredo” (1967). He never mentions *Los empeños de un engaño*, despite making the comparison between Alarcón and Sor Juana directly after the first mention of *Casa*.

Juana's ingeniously original comicity is recognized: "En la forma externa y en las pasiones que estallan, Sor Juana no se ha desviado mucho del enfoque de la comedia de Calderón. Sin embargo, es facilísimo ver en los detalles y en el tono general la gran originalidad de Sor Juana" (1967). Despite all these surface similarities, the two plays differ significantly in the ways in which they unfold the crisis and come to their ultimate "happily ever after." Likewise, Castañeda ignores the Alarcón version, *Engaño*, other than a quick reference to Arrom's quote about the two compatriots, cited above.

Echoing Castañeda's comparison, let us consider more similarities found in *Engaño*:

- 1) There is a Galan (A = El marqués) who courts one of the women (also named Leonor as in the other two plays, or Dama A) from afar.
- 2) Galan B, who is also named Juan, also wishes to court Dama A, and is the brother of Dama B (Teodora).
- 3) Galan C (Diego) is in love with Dama B, who reciprocates his sentiment, but is seen from afar by Dama A, who attempts to trick him into marriage.
- 4) The father figure is non-existent in this version, but both Damas have brothers (Dama B & Galan B are related, Dama A and a fourth Galan, D/Sancho in this case, are brother and sister. Both brothers hope to court the other's sister and have a plan for a double wedding). One is left ridiculed at the end, as in the other two versions. As brothers often stand in for the absent father in Golden Age Dramas, we can assume that one of these brothers (at least) is taking on that protective role.

Aside from these similarities between all three plays, we also find even some surface connections between the different pairings of *Engaño-Casa* and *Engaño-Acaso*:

- 1) Both *Casa* and *Engaño* have *graciosos* with names that allude to their nature; Castaño and Campana, respectively. Campana “rings” constantly, causing successively more difficult problems with his loose lips. Castaño’s name can refer to a chestnut tree, but it is also a colour used to describe body parts by the time the *Diccionario de autoridades* was printed.⁵ Castaño tells us that he was born in the Indies, and that his skin is “morena” (2005), making it clear that Sor Juana is using his name to underscore his racial background as either Indigenous or mixed-race.
- 2) *Engaño* and *Acaso* both have servants belonging to their respective Leonors named Inés. They also both include a *galán* named Diego who is an outsider.
- 3) In *Engaño* and *Casa*, one set of siblings has recently moved to a new place, which in turn requires the absence of the brother to attend to business elsewhere, leaving the sister to her own devices and therefore open to dishonor.

In all three there are even more similarities that tie the plays together. For example, there is always an outsider whose presence causes strife between previously paired off couples (in *Engaño* Diego is loved by both Teodora and Leonor, he loves Teodora even though he is tricked into a brief engagement to Leonor, ultimately winning Teodora’s hand over her previous promise to Sancho, Leonor’s brother; in *Acaso* Diego loves Leonor and hopes to win her over from her already declared betrothal to Félix but is defeated in the end, albeit able to secure a marriage for his sister; and in *Casa* Carlos and Leonor are in love and triumph over the attempts of Ana and Pedro (siblings) to manipulate them out of their relationship). All three end in double pairings

⁵ In the *Tesoro de la lengua castellana* (1674) by Covarrubias, we find a definition that specifies *castaño* as a colour to describe animals, but by 1729 the *Diccionario de Autoridades* has an updated entry that includes human features: “El color que semeja a la cáscara de la castaña quitada del herízo. Dividese en castaño claro y castaño obscuro. Latín. Castaneus, a, um. ESPIN. Escud. fol. 5. Tenía ojos negros y grandes, pestáña larga, cabello castaño.” Fina García Marruz agrees that the name is an indication of the colour of his skin: “La complicidad es evidente.... Castaño recuerda el color de la raza indígena...” (1976).

(*Engaño* has Diego-Teodora and Juan-Leonor; *Acaso*, Félix-Leonor and Juan-Elvira; and *Casa*, Carlos-Leonor, and Juan-Ana) that leave one male character—always a brother of one of the paired-off women—alone, rejected, and humiliated to some degree.

With all these similarities, one might assume that these are very simple *refundiciones* in the most pejorative sense of the word, that is, basic copying without any originality.⁶ And yet, the plays, in terms of plot, characterization, and even outcome differs in significant ways in each version. It is also extremely important to establish the timeline of composition and publication, as Sor Juana's version has been praised as a clever updating to Calderón's text, while ignoring the influence that Alarcón's play had on both subsequent dramatists. To that end, we will now dive deep into some of the major differing points to discuss the originality and impact of each of the pieces.

Starting chronologically with Alarcón's *Engaño*—also the least discussed of the three in previous scholarship—we find our Dama A, whose name is always Leonor, to be the more deceptive of the two female protagonists. In the subsequent dramas, Leonor is the “good girl,” faithful and perhaps somewhat naïve, but ultimately loyal to the man she desires to marry from the opening of the play, while another female character plays the more deceptive role. This switch happens in *Acaso* and is carried over to *Casa*. Thus, despite there being a Leonor in all three versions, it is only in the first that she is conniving, attempting to manipulate the outsider Diego into marriage with her. Her plan is facilitated by a duel between her brother, Sancho, and

⁶ Carol Bingham Kirby theorizes that *refundiciones* in the seventeenth century had to be “reworked” or “rehashed” texts in very specific ways, which maintain a significant portion of the verses of the original (1994). In the case of the *Empeños* texts, this would preclude us from making the comparisons. It might better serve our purposes to call the subsequent plays adaptations of the original, following the definition of Linda Hutcheon: “Adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication” (2012). Although some of the plot points and characters are similar, demonstrating repetition, there are enough differences to make these plays unique, particularly in versification, to consider them adaptations and not “replications”.

Diego over Teodora, whom both are courting. Sancho, having made an agreement with Teodora's brother, Juan, to essentially trade sisters in marriage, believes that she is supposed to marry him. Teodora, however, is in love with Diego, but forces him to keep their love a secret since he is an outsider who may not be accepted by her brother. Campana, living up to his name, comes up with a plan to trick Leonor (who lives in the same building) into believing Diego loves her, so that Diego has an excuse to visit Teodora. Leonor is also loved by Juan (Teodora's brother) and the Marqués, Don Fadrique, a former military companion of Diego in Flanders.

This love hexagon—which, do not forget, includes two pairs of siblings—is bound to cause problems. It is far more complicated than the subsequent Calderonian plot, which has four possible pairings and only one set of siblings, as does Sor Juana's version. All of which excludes the servant pairings, whom are only in danger of getting mixed in with the upper-class rivalries in *Casa*, and there only due to mistaken identity, as will be discussed below. Alarcón's ability to have his complicated and numerous cast members perform an intricate dance that, while complex, does not overly confuse or frustrate the audience is a feat unrivaled. He is also willing to allow his female characters, particularly his Leonor, to be aggressive and active in their desires, something Calderón must reign-in in his version. Alarcón also permits female sexual forwardness without reproach. Although this Leonor is ultimately denied her object of desire—Diego—she is still able to regain control over her narrative and marry a suitable partner.

The play ends with Diego and Teodora paired off and Leonor reluctantly giving her hand to Juan. Her brother, Sancho, and the Marqués are left to their own devices. Notably, Leonor does not give much consideration to the Marqués despite his declared feelings for her; although a noble, he is another outsider and not one that has caught her eye. In fact, she seems to blame him at least in part for her loss of Diego:

LEONOR: *Aparte* (Del Marqués me he de vengar

que a don Juan he de pagar

a sus ojos su cuidado.)

En este efeto, don Juan,

y en que la mano os ofrezco,

veréis ya que no merezco

el título que me dan

vuestros labios de engañosa. (1999)⁷

She also sees this marriage as a way to repair her damaged honor; she claims as much in the above passage, stating that if he accepts her word and hand, her previous offences will be erased. Since she has had a man (Diego) living in her home as her husband under false pretences, whose desperation to escape her led to him jumping from her balcony, and who is now married to another woman from within her own building, her only salvation is a legitimate marriage. Any one of those blemishes on her reputation would be enough to make her a social pariah in the early modern period. Perhaps in the most surprising twist of the play, Juan overlooks all of these issues and accepts her as his bride, much to the satisfaction of her brother, even as he loses his own potential wife.

Some five years later, Calderón composes *Acaso*. In this version, the action begins outside of Leonor's house, with another duel, this time between Felix, Leonor's beloved, and Diego, an outsider who has set his eyes on the lovely lady of the house. Although Felix blames the fight on gambling to save face in front of Leonor's father, he later admits it is jealousy and

⁷ The version of *Engaño* that I am citing from *Cervantesvirtual.com* is based on *Obras Completas*. T. II, Valencia, Albatros Hispanofila, 1990, and maintains older spellings which I have updated for this article. For example, from this citation I have amended luan to Juan and vereys to veréis, among others. I have also removed the "h" from "Theodora." Finally, I added brackets to clearly indicate the *aparte*.

accuses Leonor of cheating on him. Although Leonor righteously denies it, her servant, Inés admits that she is working with Diego to sway Leonor's affections. Meanwhile, Elvira, Diego's sister, and her servant, Juana, are followed by Juan, who attempts to find out her identity, currently hidden under a veil. Diego arrives but does not recognize his sister. Juan is entrusted by Elvira to distract Diego so she can escape unnoticed, not dissimilar to the beginning of a much more famous Caleronian piece, *La dama duende*. Calderón's rewrite condenses the character entanglements from six to four possible relationships and follows the traditional forms of mistaken identity through the use of *tapadas*,⁸ as well as the trope of jealousy between lovers that could easily be resolved through a quick conversation but instead is dragged out from beginning to end of the play. Calderón's reliance on the convention of mistrusting lovers leads to a marriage built on rocky ground. The problem for women who submit to marriages with men who distrust them, however, is that they may find that the second act of their lives is more tragedy than comedy, as in Calderón's infamous wife-murder plays, *El médico de su honra*, *El pinto de su deshonor*, and *A secreto agravio, secreta venganza*. Mencía, in *El médico* stands as the most prominent symbol of the fate of innocent women whose husbands believe their eyes over their wife's word and loyalty.⁹

Finally, forty years later, we return to Mexico City to find *Casa* by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. In some ways, this is the most studied of the three pieces, particularly in its relation to the

⁸ Although the *tapadas* do initially cause confusion and inspire lust for the unseen woman as they do in other contemporary plays, Calderón does break from the convention in the final scenes: Elvira, Diego's sister, is sent out in a veil to fool Félix into believing he has recovered his beloved Leonor. Elvira, however, decides to reveal the truth to Félix immediately instead of letting the misidentifications continue. This is likely a device employed by Calderón to bring the play to a close. Another round of misunderstandings would have required yet another act to resolve, and the *comedia* is at the point that it should be entering into the denouement.

⁹ Almost all Calderón's comedic brides have the potential to turn into the wives of his tragedies. By setting them up for failure during courtship, there is little chance that they will survive long enough in their marriages to die of natural causes.

Calderón piece and the inclusion of some autobiographical elements. There is also much discussion of the near perfection of this piece, surprising some in that it is one of only two surviving plays by a writer better known for her poetry and theological/philosophical writings.¹⁰ Castañeda recognizes that Sor Juana rightly earned her title as *décima musa* but is still shocked that she is able to provide such a highly polished example of the *comedia*: “Posiblemente lo que más llame la atención después de haber leído esta deliciosa comedia de Sor Juana es el sorprendente dominio que muestra del género de la comedia de capa y espada. Es sorprendente porque Sor Juana... ha escrito solamente una comedia más, *Fortuna [sic] es más laberinto*” (1967). This ignores, however, that we still have the entirety of the festivities that would have surrounded *Casa*, including the *festejo*, *loa*, *canciones*, *sainetes*, and *sarao*, as well as the auto sacramental *El divino Narciso*.¹¹ All of these shorter pieces that introduced, interluded, and concluded a three-act play are often lost or separated from their intended performance, but in the case of *Casa* we have eight extant pieces external to the three acts, and in *Amor es más laberinto* (erroneously cited in Castañeda as *Fortuna*), we have the introductory *loa* “a los años del excelentísimo señor conde de Galve.” This means that yes, we have only two surviving *comedias* from the hand of the *criolla* nun,¹² but her ability to also compose *teatro breve* demonstrates even further her familiarity and ability with the genre.

¹⁰ I use the word surviving here purposefully. We know that Sor Juana gave up much of her library towards the end of her life and dedicated herself to caring for her sick sisters (Jiménez Rueda, 1977). Between the sale of her goods and a death brought on during a plague (which often meant that the deceased’s possessions would be burnt or otherwise disposed of), we cannot know for certain if any of her pieces were lost or misplaced. It is not outside the realm of possibility that Sor Juana wrote many more *comedias* for which we no longer have copies or record.

¹¹ In fact, as Arrom notes, that is not all we have, but rather her theatrical repertoire consists of “dieciocho loas, tres autos, dos comedias, dos sainetes y un sarao o fin de fiesta” which he calls “relativamente abundante para una pluma americana” (1967).

¹² Arrom does claim that *Amor* is not entirely from Sor Juana’s pen: “la jornada segunda la compuso el licenciado Juan de Guevara, primo de la autora” (1967), although he does not leave a citation as to where that information originated. Guillermo Schmidhuber de la Mora, however indicates that the first edition of the play does include the shared authorship: “fue por primera vez editada en 1692 con la adjudicación autoral de sor Juana de la primera y tercera jornadas, y de Juan de Guevara, la segunda jornada” (2013). Still, as Schmidhuber de la Mora points out,

Arrom compares the intricacies of Sor Juana's text with "esas leves filigranas de plata que se fabrican en Taxco" (1967). Her Carlos and Leonor vary greatly from their counterparts Félix and Leonor in *Acaso*, in that they always believe in the faithfulness of the other, even as the siblings Ana and Pedro attempt to present them with evidence of each other's alleged betrayals. Sor Juana's Ana is more closely aligned to the character by the name Leonor in the Alarcón version, in that she attempts to convince the outsider character that theirs would be the better match, financially and otherwise, against his own desires for his more loyal and loving current interest. She also keeps him inside her house semi-against his will. Much like the Alarcón version, the outsider stays inside the house as he knows his true love is also residing there and hopes to be able to find a way out for both of them that ends in marriage, in spite of the odds stacked against them. Ana never claims Carlos to be her husband, however, unless one counts the denouement, in which she proclaims Juan to be her husband, mistakenly thinking he is Carlos.

As the play progresses, almost all the characters become entrapped in Ana and Pedro's home, even as they attempt to use well-known tropes of Golden Age theatre—namely the use of a veil to conceal identity and allow for freedom of movement—to escape. In the end, there are three pairings, two (or rather, four and possibly three if you count the servants) of which stick: Ana must marry Juan, for she publicly (and accidentally) declares him her husband and reveals his presence in her most private of spaces; Carlos and Leonor's loyalties are rewarded and her father approves of the match; and in a cross-dressed misunderstanding, Pedro is accidentally betrothed, albeit briefly, to Carlos's servant, Castaño, who dresses in Leonor's clothing, including veil and gloves. Mistakenly identifying the male servant as his desired Leonor, Pedro promises to protect and never harm "her," if she will accept his proposal. Castaño, seeing a

this does not detract from Sor Juana's capabilities: "Cabe notar que la capacidad de versificación de sor Juana era superior a la de Guevara y su experiencia como dramaturga aún mayor" (2013).

loophole, is willing to go through with the marriage even when his identity is revealed, forcing Pedro to accept it as a crude joke for which he cannot extract revenge.

As previously mentioned, Sor Juana's version is often compared to the Calderón text, but Alarcón's influence on both has been largely ignored. It is true that Castaño, in his extended monologue during his transformation from servant into a beautiful, veiled lady, references Calderón, indicating that he needs a trick as good as one that the philosopher poet might write to get out of the trap set by Ana and Pedro:

¡Oh tú, cualquiera que has sido;
oh tú, cualquiera que seas,
bien esgrimas abanico,
o bien arrastres contera,
inspírame alguna traza
que de Calderón parezca,
con que salir de este empeño! (2005)

The direct reference to the author, and many surface details that have led critics to see *Acaso* as the sole influence on *Casa*. However, treating the Calderonian text as indispensable for the understanding of Sor Juana's, can tarnish the shine of *Casa* as a *comedia* written as well as any by Lope, Calderón, or any other Golden Age playwright, and one that easily stands on its own, as well as erasing Alarcón's original version from the record.

Returning to the possible influence of Alarcón on Sor Juana, first we must talk about the servant/*gracioso* figures of the three plays. As previously mentioned, both Alarcón and Sor Juana include highly developed *gracioso* characters whose names give us clues as to an important part of their personality or background. In Alarcón, Campana's constant noisemaking

gets his *amo* into deeper and deeper trouble, until eventually he undoes his mistakes and fixes the broken relationship between Diego and the Marqués. Sor Juana's *gracioso*, on the other hand, tells the audience of his New World origin, incorporating Sor Juana's identity as colonial outsider into the play. In Calderón's *Acaso*, however, the male servant primarily fulfills a very surface function—that of an actual servant, rather than *gracioso*/companion.¹³ The greater comparison here between all three texts is that of the female servants. In both the Calderón and Sor Juana pieces we find a female servant who has worked behind her mistress's back to allow a male suitor to gain access to the house that he otherwise should and would not have. In Alarcón the female servant works in conjunction with her *ama* to bring the suitor into their private sphere.¹⁴ Likewise, both Calderón and Alarcón use the name Inés for this character, and in both she serves a Leonor, albeit in very different ways.

The key piece of the puzzle that unites *Engaño* and *Casa* is found in the denouement of the later play. In Sor Juana's version, the characters find themselves increasingly unable to escape the house of the scheming siblings, Pedro and Ana. While there are some minor echoes of this scene in Calderón's piece, there the women quickly undo the machinations of the men to keep them silent and hidden. In the case of *Casa*, however, every attempt to escape is thwarted: Castaño's attempt to dress in Leonor's unwanted clothing to disguise himself and deliver a message outside the home's walls is blocked by Pedro, who falls in love with the cross-dressed

¹³ María Esther Pérez considers the servant named Hernando in *Acaso* to be a *gracioso*: "Hernando es el tipo de gracioso que encarna la contrafigura del galán su amo, Juan; de las diligencias encargadas por su amo sale Hernando, según palabras propias, 'descalabrado'" (1975). Hernando's comicality, however, is centered on his interactions with his female counterpart. Other than delivering a letter as per Juan's direction, he does not intervene or scheme to help out his *amo* in any way. Compared to Campana and Castaño, however, his part is minor and not on par with the scene-stealing *graciosos* we find in other *comedias de capa y espada*.

¹⁴ Interestingly, the servant in *Casa* works both for and against her *ama*, Ana. Celia simultaneously gives Juan access to the house behind Ana's back while simultaneously helping Ana in her plots to destroy Carlos and Leonor's relationship. Thus, Sor Juana combines both versions of the *criada* into one character.

servant; Leonor tries to slip out similarly disguised, only to be delivered back to her dishonour by her own father and beloved, who both assume her to be Ana. In *Acaso*, both Elvira and Leonor quickly discard their veils to reveal the truth and are freed from the house-trap, while Leonor and Castaño of *Casa* maintain their disguises to the last minute, keeping them entrapped within the house. In *Engaño*, however, Alarcón similarly entraps his characters in the house, just with the gender rolls reversed. Whereas Sor Juana's female protagonist is the one trapped by her potential dishonour, in Alarcón it is the male characters who are imprisoned by the possible reputational stain. Diego, once injured and declared her husband, cannot leave Leonor's apartments without dishonouring her. In the end, all characters return to the same interior space to resolve the multiple love triangles. In both *Engaño* and *Casa*, one pair of outsider male and loyal female protagonists are paired up, while the other woman must settle for her original suitor (named Juan in both cases) despite her boredom with him and all her attempts to convince the outsider trapped in her home to turn his gaze in her direction. In Calderón, on the other hand, the action plays out far more in the streets, meaning that any social faux pas will be on display for all, and the brief scenes that take place inside quickly move back to the public sphere.

One major point of divergence in *Casa* from either of the first two plays, is the loyalty shown by the main couple. In both *Engaño* and *Acaso*, the male dramaturgs portray the lovers as jealous and petty, often furthering the crisis—not because they must be apart, but because they believe the other to be disloyal based on false visual evidence as opposed to trusting each other fully. Sor Juana, however, demonstrates that two people who choose to be together will trust and love each other no matter what stands in their way. Both independently confirm that they cannot feel suspicious of the other for being in a house that does not belong to them. In the first act,

Leonor runs into Carlos in a hidden chamber early on, but in the dark, they are both unsure to whom they are speaking:

LEONOR: ¡Cielos! ¿En aquesta casa

Carlos, cuando amante yo

en la prisión le lloraba?

¿En una cuadra escondido,

y a mí, pensando que hablaba

con otra, decirme amores?

Sin duda que de esta dama

es amante. Pero ¿cómo?

¿Si es ilusión lo que pasa

por mí? ¡Si a él llevaron preso

y quedé depositada

yo! Toda soy un abismo

de penas. (2005)

Although at first she thinks she hears her beloved declare his love for another woman, she quickly realizes this is impossible and more than likely her depressed state causing her imagination to run wild. In the second act, when Carlos and Castaño visually confirm that Leonor is indeed staying in Pedro's house while they are presumably imprisoned, Castaño insinuates that this should be enough to cause Carlos to fly into a jealous rage and denounce her:

CASTAÑO. ¿Y de que esté no te enojas?

CARLOS. No, hasta saber cómo vino;

que si yo en la casa propia

estoy, sin estar culpado,
¿cómo quieres que suponga
culpa en Leonor? Antes juzgo
que la fortuna piadosa
la condujo adonde estoy. (2005)

Instead of jumping to conclusions like the typical early modern *galán* as modeled in *Acaso*, Carlos is measured and understanding in his assessment of Leonor's misfortune. He recognizes that he has had a hand in getting them to where they are both currently being held against their will, and that it does not have any bearing on their feelings or loyalty towards one another. The forces keeping Leonor and Carlos apart in *Casa* are entirely external, demonstrating that theirs is a relationship built on mutual trust and respect, a seeming impossibility in the portrayals of love by the *dramaturga*'s masculine counterparts.

As we have seen, Alarcón's *Engaño* almost certainly had to have been known by Calderón before the composition of *Acaso*, and it would not be surprising to find that Sor Juana would have been aware of her compatriot's version as well. The three texts are each original in their own right but have so many points of similarity that it would be highly unlikely that the latter two were unaware of the first. The Calderonian version's most unique element is Elvira's refusal to follow the rules of the *dama tapada* by instantly revealing herself and therefore unveiling the *engaño* being played on the leading man. In almost every other way it follows the plot of a *comedia de enredo*, with mistaken identities, distrust between the plays main love interests, and ultimately the *desengaño* and (presumably) happily-ever-after of the married couples. Alarcon's piece, as the least well-known today, is highly amusing and surprising in its inclusion of an ingenious *dama* who sequesters the *galán* in her home against his will, and, not

only that, but who is also able to escape permanent dishonour despite her atemporally aggressive—and ultimately unsuccessful—courting of the outsider. Sor Juana’s version is equally innovative in her reversal of two major plot points: that of the entrapped woman (theorized by Fred de Armas as the “invisible mistress” in his book of the same title (1976)) and the gender-bending disguise. In normal portrayals of the entrapped woman, the plots generally start with the female characters imprisoned in the homes of their male caregivers; here the female protagonists begin the play with what would have been considered too much freedom for their time. As the play progresses, the women become increasingly blocked from their previous freedom of movement, until all the characters, even the male *gracioso* are unable to escape. The evermore claustrophobic journey continues as both Leonor and Castaño-as-Leonor are unable to remove the clothes that cover their identities, and Ana and the rest of the characters are left literally in the dark as the lights have been extinguished. It is only in this reduced space that the *desengaño* can come to pass; Ana, mistaking her previous lover for her desired husband, inadvertently declares herself married to the man she has seen and been seen with in the streets; Pedro and Carlos fight over the “real” Leonor, who reveals herself and declares her desire to marry Carlos, which her father accepts as a legitimate match; Pedro, confused as to whom he is left with under a veil, is made the real fool as the *gracioso* unveils himself and offers to follow through on their engagement. For Viviana Díaz Balsera, “Sor Juana exacerba la complicación del modelo de la comedia de capa y espada, al punto de... vaciarlo de sentido y mostrar la necesidad de trascender los valores en que dicho modelo se funda” (1994).

The use of a disguise to mask a male character’s gender identity is Sor Juana’s second revolutionary twist. Although it does happen on occasion in other early modern plays, this is far less likely for a male character than the *mujer vestida de hombre* trope which allows female

characters more freedom to move about in public spaces. Although Castaño dons the costume fashioned out of Leonor's belongings to move out of the house and back into the street, for Matthew Stroud his transition goes beyond a simple disguise. Citing his use of the diminutive, his enthusiasm for the quality of Leonor's clothes and his own beauty bound to attract "cuatro mil lindos" (2005), as well as his self-aware reference to the metatheatricality of the scene, Stroud calls his gender-bending performance "camp... thus underscoring the obvious homosexuality of his assertion; and the additional irony of the servant's playing a lady" (2007). Whether a simple disguise or a deep-seated desire finally coming to the surface, on him the ruse becomes a trap. He is first trapped in an engagement with Pedro, next trapped in the house and then in a room by Pedro, and ultimately worries he will become potentially trapped in death once Pedro realizes the servant's true identity. He only escapes his fate by turning Pedro into a ridiculous figure who must accept a man as his marital partner or laugh at his own misfortune and save face. He chooses the latter and is left as the only unpaired-off character at the end of the play, as Castaño offers a proposal of marriage to Celia once his engagement to Pedro is broken.

Although Calderon's function as inspiration for Sor Juana is clear in both the similarity of the titles and her frequent references to him and his work, we have seen that Ruíz de Alarcón cannot be discounted as an important and highly unique dramaturg whose work must have been known to both subsequent playwrights. As Díaz Balsera states in her study of *Casa*: "el sujeto colonial no siempre emula o meramente imita los modelos consagrados. También se apropia de ellos para así legitimar y consolidar sus posiciones. La apropiación es un modo velado, cuasi picaresco de subversión" (1994). Both colonial figures work highly unique elements into their versions of *Empeños* that demonstrate their ingenuity and a perspective perhaps inaccessible to their peninsular counterparts. Sor Juana, particularly, as a woman and one confined to an

extremely private space, can fully comprehend and demonstrate how women are not usually enclosed in their youth and freed by marriage as frequently portrayed on the early modern stage, but rather that they more likely start out with (some) freedom and become increasingly entrapped by the expectations of their male family members and suitors and a society that does not value them for their full selves.

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