

## Kiss The Girls And Make Them Die: The ‘Grimm’ Lives of Mencía and Serafina

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Georgie Porgie, Puddin’ and Pie,  
Kissed the girls and made them cry.  
When the boys came out to play,  
Georgie Porgie ran away.

(From: Traditional English Nursery Rhyme “Georgie Porgie” -  
c.1840.)

In the Preface to her study, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms’ Fairy Tales*, Maria Tatar, referencing George Bernard Shaw and C. S. Lewis, suggests that “advanced middle age appears to be a popular time for admitting interest in fairy tales” (xiii).<sup>1</sup> Apparently, this positive onset of a second childhood, or adult reappraisal of experiences from one’s formative years, is not limited to iconic literary figures. Tatar continues:

Compelling in their simplicity and poignant in their emotional appeal, fairy tales have the power to stir long-dormant childhood feelings and to quicken our sympathies for the downtrodden. (xiii)

The 1987 appearance of the Sondheim-Lapine Broadway musical *Into the Woods* (and its 2014 movie adaptation)<sup>2</sup> have certainly rekindled my interest in the tales. As I myself celebrate the aforementioned milestone, and as I revisit Calderon’s wife-murder dramas, *El médico de su honra* and *El pintor de su deshonra*, the more lugubrious features of the fairy tale genre resonate with enduring significance. *Into the Woods* is a sardonic and mature re-presentation of selected Grimms’ fairy tales. These are creatively fused into a single plot, featuring the concept of “I wish,” as revealed in the opening song.<sup>3</sup> Conventional, saccharine jingles are replaced by dissonant

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<sup>1</sup> Tatar reveals that at age fifty-five, Shaw still considered the Grimms to be the most entertaining of German authors, and that C.S. Lewis apparently confessed to reading fairy tales on the sly for years, acknowledging his addiction to the genre only after reaching fifty (xiii).

<sup>2</sup> The movie version of the Broadway play was released in the US on December 25, 2014, screenplay by James Lapine, directed by Rob Marshall, starring Meryl Streep, Anna Kendrick, James Corden, Emily Blunt, Chris Pine, and Johnny Depp. Some Internet bloggers regarded the adaptation as inferior to the stage version, and lacking the darkness, and original treatment of complex adult themes and emotions. See <http://io9.com/into-the-woods-sounds-bewitching-but-its-missing-that-1674841258/all>. I saw two matinee screenings of the movie, and in both venues the adults greatly outnumbered children, but both groups of spectators reveled in the darkness, wonder and familiarity of the plot lines. I too prefer the Broadway version, however, I believe that the movie retains much of the dark mischief of the original.

<sup>3</sup> Most readers are familiar with the sanitized versions of “Cinderella”, “The Baker and His Wife”, “Jack and the Beanstalk”, “Red Riding Hood”, “Rapunzel”, “Snow White and the Seven Dwarves” and “The Sleeping Beauty,” but Sondheim and Lapine followed the original, and darker versions. According to T.F. Crane, the elder Grimm brother Jacob wrote in an 1813 letter, “I did not write the story-book for children, although I rejoice that it is welcome to them;

melodies that accompany the characters into the menacing jungle, as they embark on a quest for happiness, or resolutions to their individual concerns. A similar menace attends the heroines of Calderón's plays. Mencía (*El médico*) and Serafina (*El pintor*) marry into the aristocracy. However, the joy that idyllically follows such celebrations is short-lived, or never materializes, and both heroines eventually die at the hands of their honor-bound "Princes." This study will use the fairy tale related concepts of "I wish"<sup>4</sup> and "happy-ever-after" as an optic for surveying the grim reality of the Spanish honor code.

In the musical *Into the Woods*, happiness, innocence and freedom are rare commodities. For example, Cinderella eventually abandons the glass palace that had rescued her from servitude, and Rapunzel, an abductee, turned child-abuse victim, ends up a suicidal and confused single mother. The journey to the interior, or a dark space where nightmares and repressed desires play themselves out, also presents the Princes in an unflattering light: Cinderella's Prince has affairs with the Baker's Wife and Snow White, while his brother, Rapunzel's Charming royal, has a dalliance with Sleeping Beauty. And as the play rushes to the opposite of a happy ending, a knife-brandishing Red-Riding Hood triumphantly dons a wolf-skin cape, the Witch unwittingly trades in her magical powers for youth and beauty, and Jack's mother, the Baker's Wife and Rapunzel are all killed by the avenging wife of the Beanstalk's dead Giant. The now powerless and heartbroken Witch urges caution to the company via the dirge, "Careful the wish you make."

Cinderella's wish comes true but she soon discovers that she is trapped in an unhappy marriage. She confesses to her errant Prince when he attempts reconciliation:

My father's house was a nightmare.  
Your house was a dream.  
Now I want something in-between. (128)

Nicolas Ruddick might have had such a scenario in mind when he suggested that "although the current popularity of the fantastic in literature and film is chiefly as a result of a society that yearns to embrace nostalgia and escape to a less complex world, ... the fantastic is a fundamentally deconstructive impulse" (xiii). Like the motherless young beauties of the tales, the wives in Calderón's uxoricide dramas seem to yearn for a degree of normality between the pressures of

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but I would not have worked over it with pleasure if I had not believed that it might appear and be important for poetry, mythology, and history to the most serious and elderly people as well as to myself" (589).

<sup>4</sup> The wish-fulfillment idea can be found in most fairy tales and cautionary stories throughout the ages. Typically, the characters are dissatisfied with their present circumstances, and attempt to change them by supernatural intervention, sheer luck, prayer, or a diabolical deal. The pervasiveness of this folk motif can be appreciated in the *Aarne-Thomson Encyclopedia*. While the cataloguing of the universal tales does not boast an "I wish" category, the Grimms tales referenced in this discussion appear in other numbered categories with an "A" added to cross-reference sub-categories. And while D.L. Ashliman's study summarizes and further categorizes the tales, the only sorting by "wish" list are those where wishes granted by supernatural agents are misused, and lead to misery or tragedy. Presumably, the idea of wish expression and fulfillment is so central to fairy tales that the Aarne-Thompson project did not identify such an individual index category.

their parents' homes, and the demands of their husbands' households.<sup>5</sup> Mencía (*El médico*) and Serafina (*El pintor*) are angelic beauties at the pinnacle of their social lives. In marrying eligible noblemen, they have fulfilled societal expectations, and can also congratulate themselves on retaining their virginity, as against taking refuge in a convent for having lost it, or resigning themselves to derided spinsterhood. The marriages are not staged, but we imagine them to be lavish, fairytale-inspired affairs, complete with the traditional promise of a happy-ever-after. Both the plays and the tales recognize the ageless, human propensity, or need, for fantasy. In the words of Jack Zipes, "As children, we all hear fairy tales and read our lives into them. But we also want to see and realize our lives as virtual fairy tales even as we grow older" (Zipes, 1997 xi). This is particularly relevant to the traditionally twinned concepts of love and marriage. However, fantasy morphs into reality after the personal or social wish is fulfilled, and it is discovered that getting married is not the same as being married.

In *El médico* and *El pintor*, the marital kiss, rather than inspiring happiness and love, rouses these beauties to the realization that they are merely repositories of their husbands' honor. These new wives resign themselves to their circumstances, but it is a precarious existence, since the slightest female indiscretion can occasion destruction. The concept of honor in its Renaissance incarnation combines elements from as far back as back as Antiquity, and as nearby as the Medieval period, including tenets precious to both Christianity and Islam. In his study on the meaning and origin of the concept of honor, and channeling Américo Castro, Jesús López-Peláez Casellas describes the husband-honor relationship:

... como el caballero, el hombre de honor ha de mantener su fama, siendo consciente de que el más mínimo malentendido puede destruirla; más importante que la vida, el hombre de honor será capaz de todo con tal de mantener su reputación. (61)<sup>6</sup>

P.N. Dunn, underscoring the delicacy and fragility of the concept and the women's role in this construct, describes it as "public respect, the good name in which a family is held, and which is most easily damaged by any scandal touching its women" (30). Matthew Stroud suggests some potential consequences of these fatal unions:

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<sup>5</sup> Mothers are notably absent from the wife-murder dramas. While they would have had little say, given their assigned roles at the time, this absence of maternal figures probably contributes to the tragedy that overtakes the daughters. In Grimms' fairy tales, the mother figures are absent, dead, or appear as wicked stepmothers and witches, thus reinforcing male hierarchical rule.

<sup>6</sup> López-Peláez Casellas lists the main characteristics of the Spanish honor code, as outlined by Castro: (a) el honor y la fama son idénticos; "(b) la pérdida del honor es igual a la pérdida de la vida; (c) hay que silenciar los actos que puedan producir mala reputación; (d) al perder la honra, se emplea la venganza física para recuperarla" (83). See "Algunas observaciones acerca del concepto de honor en los ss. XVI y XVII." *Revista de Filología Española* 3, 1916: 1-50. For an incisive and comprehensive summary of changing attitudes to and interpretations of the Spanish honor code, see also Jesús Pérez Magallón, "Introducción: tragedia de honor," *Pedro Calderón de la Barca: El médico de su honra*. (Madrid: Cátedra) 2012, 82-106

When marriages are not based on mutual commitment, the expectations of troubles are heightened; wives usually much younger than their husbands are unhappy, and easily tempted, and husbands are suspicious if not paranoid, about their wives dedication to them and the sanctity of the union. (39)

For Georgina Dopico Black, the wives bear not only the burden of the family honor, but also that of a patriarchal and religiously intolerant nation, where the woman's body in the honor tradition becomes a metaphor for the post-1492, Christian persecution of forcibly converted Jews and Muslims, with the suspicious husband representing the "overzealous inquisitor who reads (and more often writes, as a result of his inevitable misreadings) an illicit text on the innocent body" (113). While there is no overt connection to the consequences of the Reconquest in the plays, the purifying zeal with which the husbands pursue the protection of their honor does recall the Inquisition's sniffing for heretics, and condemning anyone regarded as a threat to Christian orthodoxy. In the plays, neither Mencía nor Serafina consciously pursue extra-marital involvements, and it is mostly their husbands' misreading of circumstantial evidence that leads to their destruction. The source of suspicion in each case is the unexpected reappearance of the women's respective ex-lovers, Prince Enrique and don Álvaro. These intruders succeed in gaining access to the objects of their affections, and as the women try to cope with this new reality, a moment of weakness or vulnerability on their part leads to murder by their husbands.

Doña Mencía is the married to nobleman don Gutierre Alfonso. The beginning of the play locates her in the tower of her mansion. Admiring the surrounding view, she "lets down her hair" for a moment. However, this brief respite from her restricted existence ends when she witnesses a man fall from his horse. The violence of the accident is captured in highly poetic language:

... de manera  
que lo que ave entonces era  
cuando en la tierra cayó  
fue rosa: y así en rigor  
imitó su lucimiento  
en Sol, cielo, tierra y viento,  
ave, bruto, estrella y flor. (179, I. 66-72)<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to the liling *redondilla* of the fragment, the misplaced elemental images have already signaled chaos and disaster. E.M. Wilson explains:

The elements, fire, air, earth and water, were fundamental in the conception of the mediaeval world. Their order was fixed, and it was their equilibrium alone which differentiated the established world from chaos. (34)

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<sup>7</sup>All citations for *El medico* are from: Pedro Calderón de la Barca: *El médico de su honra* ed., Jesus Perez Magallon, (Madrid: Cátedra), 2012.

Calderón deliberately misaligns the elemental attributes to tune us into Mencía's confused and helpless state. If we regard the tower as a conduit between earth and air, the idea of escape from a suffocating existence is underscored. Unfortunately, the climb also portends an eventual fall from grace. For, when she tries to "put her hair back up", or return to her ordered circumstances, she finds Prince Enrique, the hero of the riding accident and her ex-lover, stubbornly attached to her metaphorical tresses.

Enrique, even in his unconscious state, represents the reality of the inconvenient past, and as Mencía attempts to reconcile it with her present, she takes refuge in self-deception:

Perfecto  
 está el oro en el crisol,  
 el imán en el acero,  
 el diamante en el diamante,  
 los metales en el fuego  
 y así mi honor en sí mismo  
 se acrisola, cuando llegó  
 a vencerme; pues no fuera,  
 sin experiencias perfecto. (185-86, I. 144-52)

This idealistic show at resolve recalls Angel Valbuena Briones' suggestion that the characters in these two plays "se desenvuelven en una atmósfera fantástica en la que la realidad y ficción se mezclan en una hermosa gama de colores" (17). When Enrique regains consciousness, he is surprised to find himself in the home of a now married Mencía. His amazement leads to a futile, if petulant, case of jealousy, because, as Robert Ter Horst, puts it, "Enrique and Mencía cannot ever hope to marry because of disparity in rank" (198).<sup>8</sup> In fact, this may have been the reason for their separation in the first place. Royal privilege allows the Prince to enjoy romantic liaisons with impunity, but Mencía and women like her could not even imagine such freedom. Thus, when he insists on rekindling the amorous flame, a shocked (and probably flattered) Mencía makes a desperate appeal to his sense of honor:

Quien oyere a vuestra Alteza  
 quejas, agravios, desprecios,  
 podrá formar de mi honor  
 presunciones y conceptos,  
 indignos dél. (194, I. 277-81)

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<sup>8</sup> A similar situation occurs in *El pintor*. The Prince pursues Porcia, and to some extent, Serafina, but ends up marrying neither. When Serafina is killed, he quickly marries off Porcia to a suicidal Juan Roca.

Mencía's dilemma is that although she knows herself to be in danger, her now involuntarily resurrected feelings for the Prince weakens her defense. And although she commits no explicit act of adultery, hereafter she is accompanied by a suggestion of guilt that will eventually destroy her.

In the first garden scene, she tries to recover from the Enrique's jarring reappearance by listening to music, and soon drifts into sleep but, once again, her relief is short-lived. In exchange for the promise of freedom, Mencía's branded slave Jacinta leads the Prince to her sleeping mistress. Mencía is hysterical to be so brusquely awakened, but her roguish ex-lover claims to have acted upon a hint from her. This hint lies in an earlier conversation, where, in the presence of Gutierre, the Prince and Mencía had held a coded conversation about forgiveness between two "hypothetical" former lovers. She had declared, "que hay calidades de culpa / que no merecen castigo" (93, I. 413-14), and the scene had concluded with what appears to have been her requesting a chance to explain her position to the Prince:

Cuanto al amigo me confío  
que os he respondido ya;  
cuanto a la dama, *quizá*  
*fuerza, y no mudanza fue:*  
oídla vos, que yo sé  
que ella se disculpará. (203, I. 419-25; emphasis mine)

The text of *El medico* does not provide much information about Mencía's pre-Gutierre life, except her involvement with the Prince, and even that is vague. However, the italicized lines above suggest that the separation was not due to any change in her affections. In fact, "fuerza" makes the case that her father may have arranged her marriage to Gutierre, to avoid a royal scandal. Nevertheless, Enrique persists, describing her as the beautiful bullfinch that cannot help but attract the attention of the royal goshawk. Mencía sees no beauty or romance in the imagery; rather, she understands that she is being hunted for sport, as the regal predator closes in on its prey:

...que cuando de todos huye  
conoce al que ha de matarla;  
y así, antes que con el luce,  
el temor la hace que tiemple,  
se estremezca y se espeluce;  
[...]  
porque mi temor no ignore,  
porque mi espanto no dude  
que es quien ma ha de dar la muerte. (258-59, II. 1124-28; 1132-35)

Struggling, the entrapped victim tries to scream for help, but she is effectively silenced by the Prince's retort: "a ti misma te infamas" (260, II. 1139-40).

Meanwhile, Gutierre, who has been arrested for fighting with Arias in the presence of the king, is allowed to return home. When he arrives unexpectedly, Mencía hides Enrique in her bedroom, extinguishes the light to cover her guilt, and raises an alarm about a home invasion. The

Prince escapes, dropping his dagger on the way, and Gutierre recovers the object, and conceals it under his cape. When husband and wife embrace, Mencía sees the dagger, her guilty conscience assumes that vengeance is nigh, and she begs (not for the last time) for her life:

¡Tente, señor!  
 ¿Tú la daga para mi?  
 En mi vida te ofendí,  
 detén la mano al rigor,  
 detén... (277, II. 1377-80)

Once she realizes that she has misread the situation, she blames her bizarre behavior on a fleeting vision of her blood-covered corpse. Gutierre dismisses this as a case of extreme imagination, but he now knows that something suspicious is occurring. He keeps his counsel, and pursues less circumstantial proof of adultery by creeping up on his wife while she once more sleeps in the garden. This time, *he* extinguishes the light: "sin luz y sin razón, dos veces ciego" (327, II. 1911). The darkness also represents his blind jealousy and thoughts of violence, ironically corresponding to the dissembling wolf in the *Red Riding Hood* reference: "all the better to *see* you, my dear." Mistaking her husband for the Prince, she calls him "Your Highness." What happens next is that the sleeping beauty, kissed or intimated upon by her former or current Prince Charming, rather than awakening to love, enters the first stage of what is to become a permanent state of sleep.

*Don't Bet on the Prince* is the cautionary title of Jack Zipes's collection of contemporary feminist fairy tales. This title seems also apt for the present discussion, as nobody can bet on the philandering, princely brothers in *Into the Woods*, or on Prince Enrique in *El médico de su honra*. We cannot trust the King either, since he has managed to suppress the scandal of the dagger, while guaranteeing his brother's escape. When Mencía learns of this development, a self-serving Jacinta reminds her that only the offender can repair or restore a woman's lost honor. Mencía then further compromises herself by writing a note begging the Prince not to leave town, but before she can complete the note, her husband intercepts it, and condemns her to death. Still, Gutierre vacillates, going against a major tenet of the honor code, but the king is unyielding, for, as Américo Castro puts, "ante la deshonor no cabe discusión ni recurso crítico alguno" (27). Thus, the so-called "Physician of his Honor" hires an assassin to bleed his wife to death. There is no happy ending for Mencía, or Gutierre or, in fact, his formerly rejected doña Leonor, with whom he has now been forcibly reunited, also in accordance with the honor code.

The motif of the tragic beauty also appears in *El pintor de su deshonor*. Here too, the unhappily married, innocent woman is sacrificed on the altar of honor, due to the inflexibility of the code, and the rash, intrusive presence of an ex-lover. When don Álvaro is presumed to have drowned, Serafina is married off to her much older cousin, the painter Juan Roca. His wealth and nobility cancel out his advanced age and suggested impotence, thus, he is regarded as a great catch, and his wife has to participate in the farce. Robert Sloane proposes the following description of Serafina's character and self-esteem:

By attempting to conform utterly to the shape society has molded for her, Serafina is, in effect, trying to live out of a mirror, reducing herself to nothing more than her own image. This vision of herself as pure surface and mere object began far earlier, at least as far back as her acquaintance with Álvaro. (254)

If Sloane is correct, Serafina's "wish" consists of helping others to fulfill their desires, while conforming to societal expectations. In this case, she sacrifices rather than wishes, but as usual, there is no reward or happy ending.

The first hint of trouble in her makeshift paradise is, when visiting Álvaro's sister Porcia, she falls into a deep faint at the thought of her ex-fiancé, and, as if by magic, he appears:

Mas, ¡qué es lo que veo!  
 ¡En mi casa Serafina  
 tan sola, y rendida al sueño!  
 Poca dicha es de un ausente  
 hallar su dama durmiendo. (50, I. 578-82)<sup>9</sup>

This unexpected encounter suggests voyeurism, and before it becomes more disturbing, or romantic, the sleeping beauty regains consciousness. He does not get to deliver the "kiss of life," but reclamation of his ex-lover is to become a tragic obsession. Serafina is thoroughly traumatized to awaken to Álvaro's observing her, especially as he is supposed dead, and she is a married woman. Once she realizes that he is not a phantasm, she recovers her self-possession, and becomes unyieldingly logical:

Ya te entiendo,  
 y si en venganza me buscas  
 de que en tu fineza ofendo,  
 de que mi palabra rompo,  
 bastante disculpa tengo. (50. I. 594-98)

Álvaro is incredulous ("no es posible estar tu / casada, y no estar yo muerto" (52, I. 607-08). And even when her marriage is confirmed in the appearance of Roca, he cannot fathom it; instead he rails against fate, the inconstancy of women, and clutches at his broken heart. Unlike Mencía who shows unconscious signs of emotional attachment to the past, Serafina is unwavering in the face of Álvaro's attempted emotional blackmail:

Señor don Álvaro, puesto

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<sup>9</sup>All citations for *El pintor* are from: *Pedro Calderón de la Barca: The Painter of his Dishonour: El pintor se su deshonor*, Ed. AKG Paterson, (Warminster: Aris & Phillips) 1991. Paterson does not describe his text and translation as a critical edition, but, as explained on pages 17-18 of his Introduction, he did consult various existing versions of the play to facilitate coherent meaning and translation.



que satisfagáis la duda  
 que acaso tuve, os suplico  
 no prosigáis; que es injusta  
 penalidad oír la queja  
 quien no ha de dar la disculpa. (72, I. 961-66)

Still he persists, and when Porcia shrugs off their attempts to get her to take sides, Serafina finally loses her patience:

Don Álvaro, yo te amé  
 cuando imaginé ser tuya,  
 y pasando mi esperanza  
 desde perdida a difunta,  
 me casé: ahora soy quien soy. (74, I. 1017-21)

Act One of the play ends in painful deadlock between the ex-lovers, transitioning to Act Two, which opens with a scene of simmering discord between husband and wife. Like all “fairy tale” heroines, Serafina is superlatively beautiful. In fact, she so unnaturally gifted that Roca, a professional painter, fails to do her justice on his canvas:

De la gran naturaleza  
 son no más que imitadores  
 (vuelve un poco) los pintores;  
 y así cuando su destreza  
 forma una rara belleza  
 de perfección tan singular,  
 no es fácil de retratar; (80, II. 1101-07)

He quickly decamps from the scene of his failure, and his rival takes advantage of his absence to brazenly enter Serafina’s home under the pretext of delivering a letter from Porcia. As in *El médico*, the husband returns home unexpectedly, and the ex-lover has to be secreted. This action also has future dramatic implications because Álvaro overhears Roca’s invitation to the Masked Ball, and appears there in disguise in order to continue his campaign of repossession. Roca, totally oblivious to the dangers to his domestic felicity encourages Serafina to dance with the masked stranger, even after he notices that the latter is forcing his attentions on her.

At the end of Act Two, a fire breaks out at sea, and Serafina faints yet again. The hero of the hour is Juan Roca. He drags his wife’s unconscious body ashore and unwittingly thrusts her into the arms of a mariner, who is none other than a disguised don Álvaro. In the final Act, she awakens to the discovery of her indelible disgrace

de haber en un día perdido  
 esposo, casa y estado,

honor y reputación. (148, III. 2254-56)

Serafina soon realizes that Álvaro, with his “love conquers all” approach to the situation, cares nothing about the dishonor he has visited upon her. She refuses to be consoled and, falling in and out of consciousness, she warns him to keep his distance.

Marked for misfortune by her beauty, Serafina has already attracted the admiration of the Prince of Osorio. More playboy than Prince, he is courting Porcia, but it is his insistence in having a freshly painted picture of Serafina that leads Juan Roca to Álvaro’s hideout. Serafina awakens one final time, now from a hallucination of her murder by Roca. She screams, Álvaro rushes to comfort her, and in a state between sleep and wakefulness, she makes an admission that proves fatal:

... Haber  
visto entre sueños la imagen  
de mi muerte. Nunca fueron  
tus brazos más agradables. (194, III. 3066-69)

Roca, who has been observing the scene from his own hiding place, and whose jealousy and rage have premeditated precisely such a situation, shoots them both at point blank. It is at this point that his earlier patience and control is, like his marriage, revealed to be a masquerade. If his throwing down the paintbrushes in the painting scene represents his impotence, does the firing of his pistol. Felipe Pedraza Jiménez ties this thematic symbolism to Calderón’s dramatic technique:

Un disparo de pistol suena, con técnica efectista, en los momentos de tensión, como anuncio del desenlace, o como desmentido irónico de los buenos propósitos o las promesas de los personajes. (346)

Like Gutierre, Roca wishes to undo the deed, inviting punishment on his head, but neither the honor code, nor the royal figurehead, admits to such a prospect. As López-Peláez Casellas, explains,

... perder el honor es demostrar impotencia para defender lo suyo, y de esta manera el honor perdido y no recuperado personalmente indica que ya no se poseen aquellas cualidades que capacitaban para ostentar un lugar en la sociedad, siendo el deshonrado condenado al ostracismo. (86)

Serafina, named for the highest chorus of angels, is perfect by earthly standards. She has done nothing consciously or unconsciously to compromise her position, except that at the end she expresses gratitude for some much needed comfort. Unlike Mencía, she is the victim of abduction, but this is irrelevant. Since the honor code does not acknowledge subtleties or exceptions, both women have brought dishonor on their houses, and both must meet a bloody end. Even if Bruce Wardropper is correct in declaring that guilt can be signaled in unconscious thoughts or acts (“The

unconscious Mind” 285), these women are not really allowed the luxury of independent thoughts or actions. Rather, they seem to be surviving at the most basic level, passively responding to circumstantial stimuli. Physically and emotionally abandoned by their parents, these heroines are as exposed as the infants in the “Babes in the Woods” fairy tale.

With reference to a cartoon lampooning the Grimm brothers’ dependence on the “the woods” as the setting for their stories, Tatar states that, “For all their rich variety, fairy tales have a remarkable – and therefore predictable – structure” (xvi). The same may be said of the two companion plays under discussion, not only in terms of the theme of an inflexible honor code. Calderon is clearly following a well-established formula featuring the plot points relating to the marriages, the ex-lover complications, the contrived resolutions by bumbling royalty, and the potential for further off-stage tragedy. In respect of the fairy-tale tradition, Zipes writes that,

We appropriate assumptions because we have been taught that a certain popular tradition is not to be questioned but to be absorbed and appreciated. We lose sight, however, of the fact that the foundations of this tradition were created through particular human efforts and struggles at a particular time and place by humans seeking to inscribe themselves in history. (Zipes, 1997, 41)

The honor code is designed along similar paradigms to reflect and maintain the power of the patriarchy. Medieval and Early Modern Spain followed the traditional belief (going as far back as Eve) that women were weak (yet powerfully sexual), and genetically disposed to compromise the family honor. This fear of female sexuality, in the words of López-Peláez Casellas, “es la causa directa del empeño en contener, en mantener controladas a las mujeres por medio del recurso al buen nombre y la virtud” (90). The dramatist’s attention to the emotional and psychological states of the wives inspires pity for them, and outrage against a ludicrous, fairytale code with pretensions to legitimate mythology. He achieves this critique by creating expectations of comedy, in characters and spectators alike, and then frustrating them. Robert Ter Horst summarizes this technique, thus:

Calderon's great technical achievement [...] is to warp comedy into a vessel for tragedy. What is productive in the usual comedy becomes destructive in Calderon's alienated comedy, which is to say his tragedy. Time and conventional morality favor the standard *dama y galán*, who amount to an acceptable match and simply need to get by the obstacles which usually their elders, in their unwisdom, have put in their path. (198)

In the sanitized fantasy world of the fairy tale, women are placed on a pedestal, knights in shining armor come to the aid of damsels in distress, pumpkins turn into carriages at the wave of a wand, frogs and beasts turn into princes when kissed by beautiful maidens, unconscious or dead maidens are kissed by handsome princes into life, free of morning breath, and newly-married couples live happily ever after. Reacting against this fantasy world of innocence and happiness, the Sondheim-Lapine collaboration *Into the Woods* deliberately follows the increasingly macabre versions of the Grimms’ tales. The opening theme of “I wish” does give way to the possibility of

“happy ever after” but at the end of the musical and the movie none of the characters get their wishes, or experience happiness. In fact, the final words of the closing song are “I wish!” This futile circle of desire and expectation can also be appreciated in Calderón’s *El médico de su honra* and *El pintor de su deshonra*. The socially sanctioned marriages do not lead to scenes of bliss, or anything resembling peace of mind for the couples, and the “resolutions” are set up to initiate a new cycle of tragedy. Writing on *El médico*, William Blue comments that “the audience senses an “ominous situation” from the start, and when the play is over, real, nagging questions remain” (408). This intuition of darkness can also be sensed early in *El pintor*, as well as the moment when the fairy tale characters make the “Grimm” decision to plunge *Into the Woods*.

According to Ruddick, the role of fantasy is to be subversive, “seeking to undermine the status quo, to interrogate whatever is privileged by the name of “reality” by cultural powers that be ... to expose as ideology what is presented as eternal truth” (xiii). At moments of perceived intimacy, the legal or interloping Princes Charming in this study regress into Beasts, and the Beauties disappear or die shortly thereafter. After defending his position that *El pintor* is in fact a tragedy, A.K.G Paterson goes on to suggest that “comedy, too, can have its sense of fatality. Appreciating the comedic elements but ultimately agreeing to a draw in the matter of the plays “generic ambivalence”, he concludes that such a play “belongs to “a darker theatre that lies beyond comedy” (5). This is Calderón at his best, and in the true spirit of the Baroque, his work is sometimes too original to be permanently classified. Which is why Ignacio Arellano and Enrica Cancelliere pay homage to “la talla inmensa de Calderón, la complejidad de sus propuestas teatrales, la síntesis cultural enorme que manifiesta en sus obras” (9). It is this massive, talent of imagination that forges a connection between his honor dramas and the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm.

In *Into the Woods*, towers, beanstalks, fairy godmothers and good witches eventually fail to secure a happy ending, as do Calderón’s royal fountainheads of honor, and their *deus ex machina* theatrics. Ultimately, Mencía and Serafina never get a chance to experience that “something in-between” the homes of their fathers and those of their husbands. Living at a time when the options for female fulfillment were limited to the bridal veils of man, or of Christ, the women are victims of an unrealistic honor code and unfair, misogynistic social expectations. The girls of the plays and the tales do get “kissed” in one way or another, by unthinking ex-lovers, jealous husbands and corrupt royalty, but are invariably left for dead, while the perpetrators of female misery “run away” like that coward of nursery rhyme fame, Georgie Porgie

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