

**Accessories to Melancholy: Intersections between Gender, Race, and Mental Illness in
Calderón’s *El médico de su honra* and *Los cabellos de Absalón***

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“A esta negra endemoniada
¿no le bastará ser negra?”
Los cabellos de Absalón, 3.2042-43

Melancholy—both cultural phenomenon and encompassing term for what our modern society classifies as mental illness—abounded upon the early modern Spanish stage.¹ However, no playwright granted the condition as central of a role throughout their theatrical corpus as Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600-1681). For the playwright and priest, melancholy represented the societal ills contracted through the dominion of the emotional and material over reason and Catholic faith.² While melancholy and its consequences may afflict anyone within Calderón’s expansive body of *comedias* and *autos sacramentales*, the roles that his characters assume in the condition’s causation or curation vary according to the social norms and exclusions of seventeenth-century Spain. A wide variety of literary scholarship has detailed the significance of melancholy in Calderón’s theater, as well as the condition’s permutations according to social status.³ Continuing my work in “Notable melancolía,” which introduced Amerindian indigeneity to the discussion of female melancholy on the playwright’s stage, this study introduces black women into the discussion of mental illness in Calderón’s theater and early modern Spanish popular culture.

The present manuscript explores the intersections of gender and race in the development of melancholy on Calderón’s stage by comparing the domestic slave, Jacinta, from *El médico de su honra* (circa 1628-29) and the captive Ethiopian clairvoyant, Teuca, from *Los cabellos de Absalón* (circa 1633-35).⁴ While the settings and occupations of the two women vary, they are united by their shared chronological period within Calderón’s theatrical production, gender, race, and proximity to melancholy. The roles of these intersections in the performance of mental

¹ As Casey states in “Notable melancolía” (2024, 175fn60) and *The Fracturing of Melancholy* (2019, 5fn9): scholarship that explores melancholy as culture in early modern Spain and Europe includes Belén Atienza’s *El loco en el espejo*, Lawrence Babb’s *The Elizabethan Malady*, Roger Bartra’s *Cultura y melancolía*, Ricardo Castells’s *Fernando de Rojas and the Renaissance Vision*, Francoise Davione’s *Fighting Melancholia*, Laurinda S. Dixon’s *The Dark Side of Genius*, José María Ferri Coll’s *De la expresión melancólica*, Robert Folger’s *Escaping from the Prison of Love*, Felice Gambin’s *Azabache*, Angus Gowland’s *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy*, Raymond Klibansky et al.’s *Saturno y la melancolía*, Christine Orobítz’s *L’humeur noir*, Fernando Rodríguez de la Flor’s *Era melancólica*, and Teresa Scott Soufas’s in *Melancholy and the Secular Mind*. Another more recent publication that explores melancholy as discourse of early modern masculinity in Spanish lyric poetry is Felipe Valencia’s *The Melancholy Void*.

² See Scott Soufas (1990, ix).

³ See referenced in “Notable melancolía” (Casey 2024, 175-76): Casey’s *The Fracturing of Melancholy*, Isabel Hernando Morata’s “‘Este paso ya está hecho,’” Florencio L. Pérez Bautista’s “La medicina y los médicos,” Rodríguez de la Flor’s *Era melancólica*, and Scott Soufas’s “Calderón’s Joyless Jesters,” “Calderón’s Melancholy Wife Murderers,” *Melancholy and the Secular Mind*, and “Melancholy, the *Comedia*, and Early Modern Psychology.”

⁴ The estimated date of composition for *El médico de su honra* comes from Don W. Cruickshank’s *Don Pedro Calderón* (78, 358fn41). The date of composition for *Los cabellos de Absalón* comes from Evangelina Rodríguez Cuadros’s edition of the play (15).

illness on Calderón's stage resonate with Spanish cultural perceptions of blackness and the racial and gender biases influencing the etiology and expression of melancholy in seventeenth century Spain. To demonstrate these relationships, the manuscript has been organized as follows: an overview of the melancholy plots of the two plays and an analysis of the roles Jacinta and Teuca play in these plots, followed by evaluations of the impact gender, race, and the early modern science of mental illness have on the depictions and functions of the two women.

In both *El médico de su honra* and *Los cabellos de Absalón*, the diseases that afflict the plays' noble, male protagonists relate to kingly failings. In the former, the historical king Pedro I of Castile is depicted as an absent and cruel ruler, who, driven by his desire for frivolity and cowardice, fails to resolve the jealous tension building between his brother, the prince Enrique, and noble subject, Gutierre, before it reaches its tragic climax: the murder orchestrated by Gutierre of his wife, Mencía.⁵ In the latter, the biblical king David's covetous materialism and vanity blind him to the gravity of his sons' violent sexual desires (Amón) and narcissism (Absalón), resulting in the rape and social expulsion of his daughter, Tamar, and the deaths of both Amón and Absalón.⁶ In both plays, melancholy manifests as a jealous lovesickness of the male nobility: an "obsessive passion that impedes reason" with both depressive and violent symptoms (Casey 2019, 23).⁷ This condition infects the prince Amón of Judah and noble don Gutierre of Seville. The latter, upon finding a dagger belonging to the prince Enrique in his wife's chambers, becomes beset by a sexual jealousy that quickly shrouds his mind:

¿Celos dije? Celos dije;
pues basta, que cuando llega
un marido a saber que hay
celos, faltará la ciencia. (2.1707-12)

Finding the dagger embeds in Gutierre a jealous suspicion of his wife's infidelity, which consumes him throughout the play. Amón experiences a similarly overwhelming sexual reaction to his sister, Tamar, which leads him to ponder:

(*Aparte.*) ¿Cómo,
calladas pasiones mías,
a esta ocasión me reporto?
[...]
¿Qué es esto, cielos? ¿Yo mismo
el daño no reconozco?
¿Pues cómo al daño me entrego?
¿Vive en mí más que yo propio?

⁵ See Casey (2019, 101), Scott Soufas (1990, 98-99), and John Bryans's "Coquín's Conversion: Honor, Virtue, and Humour in *El médico de su honra*" (598-99) for discussions of Pedro's cruelty and its impact on the body and mind of the play's *gracioso*, Coquín.

⁶ See Casey (*The Fracturing of Melancholy* 2019, 34-37) and Victor Dixon's "Prediction and its Dramatic Function in *Los cabellos de Absalón*" for critical evaluations of David's responsibility for the play's tragedies.

⁷ For assessments of love melancholy's symptoms and roles in medieval and early modern Europe and Spanish literature, see Antonio Cortijo Ocaña's "La evolución genérica de la ficción sentimental de los siglos XV y XVI," Antonio Cortijo Ocaña and Roxana Recio's "Alfonso de Madrigal 'El Tostado': un portavoz único de la intelectualidad castellana del siglo XV," Robert Folger's *Escape from the Prison of Love*, and Mary Wack's *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*.

No. ¿Pues cómo manda en mí,
con tan grave imperio otro,
que me lleva donde yo
ir no quiero? (1.292-310)

In agreement with Casey, “Amón cannot prevent his desire from emerging as an uncontrollable force that dictates his mental and physical processes whenever he senses Tamar’s presence [...] his desire is a regent that overpowers and endangers him by steering his body toward her” (2019, 42). As a result of their love melancholies and in the absence of kingly intervention, both Gutierre and Amón inflict violence upon the women who are the objects of their desire. Gutierre arranges for Mencía to be assassinated by bloodletting after King Pedro takes no action to right his brother’s breach of Gutierre’s honor. Amón rapes Tamar after King David—who has himself previously fallen victim to love melancholy by arranging the death of Bathsheba’s husband to marry her—fails to appropriately interpret and respond to the signs of lovesickness in his son Amón.⁸

While the culpability for melancholy’s violent outcomes can be traced to the violence of the plays’ male nobility and negligence of their governing authorities, black women perform both pivotal and comedic roles in the melancholic developments of the two *comedias*. Although she doesn’t exhibit external symptoms of melancholy, the domestic servant Jacinta of *El médico de su honra* facilitates the breach of honor that triggers Gutierre’s melancholy by twice admitting Enrique into Gutierre’s home in his absence. When Enrique arrives injured, having fallen from his horse, Jacinta answers the door (1.73). Even if, as Don Diego states, Gutierre’s household is compelled by virtue of the prince’s status to shelter him as he recuperates (1.77-81), the moment both reignites Enrique’s lust for Mencía and foreshadows the servant’s later betrayal. Perceiving her mistress’s distress following her first encounter with Enrique, Jacinta urges Mencía’s trust—“Bien puedes fiar de mí”—leading her mistress to risk her “vida y honor” by confiding in the *criada* her star-crossed romantic history with the prince (1.561-64). Despite her assurances, Jacinta is next seen breaking her mistress’s trust by secretly admitting Enrique a second time during Gutierre’s imprisonment:

Este es el jardín y aquí
pues de la noche te encubre
el manto y pues don Gutierre
está preso, no hay que dudes
sino que conseguirás
Vitorias de amor tan dulces. (2.1023-28)

Calderón allows no plausible deniability for Jacinta: she knows the history between Mencía and Enrique, knows the danger Mencía faces, and knows Enrique’s adulterous intent; even so, she takes advantage of Gutierre’s absence to lead the prince to her mistress. The continuity that Calderón establishes within Jacinta’s plot between her moment of professed faithfulness and her deception heightens the audience’s sense of her betrayal. Even if the audience were to justify her betrayal as the price of freedom promised by Enrique (2.1029-30),

⁸ As observed by Casey, David initially interprets his son’s melancholy as a natural consequence of the human condition—“la natural pensión / deste nuestro humano polvo” (1.173-74)—and only after Amón’s rape of Tamar understands “the resemblance between his son’s behavior and his own previous adultery” (2019, 44).

Jacinta herself corrects this interpretation through twice acknowledging her crime. First, she remarks:

Ya; pues porque tanta ausencia
no me indice o no me culpe
de este delito, no quiero
faltar de allí. (2.1041-44)

Her initial acknowledgement of the “delito” she has committed is underscored by a second recognition of culpability addressed directly to the audience:

[() [...] ¡Oh criadas,
y cuántas honras ilustres
se han perdido por vosotras!). (2.1071-73)

The framing of Jacinta’s second admission of guilt as an aside intended for only the audience elevates its message, drawing the audience’s attention to the *criada*’s confession and granting it real-world significance. Through both actions and words, Calderón decisively establishes Jacinta’s role as a guilty party to the act that ignites Gutierre’s love melancholy.

Jacinta’s ensuing actions deepen Gutierre’s jealous descent. Following a confrontation between Enrique and Pedro regarding the dagger found in Gutierre’s home, in which the king mistakenly believes that the prince has made an attempt on his life, Enrique intends to flee the city. Reasoning that the prince’s flight would further damage Mencía’s honor, Jacinta advises her mistress to write Enrique, instructing him to remain in the city (3.2391-407). However, as observed by Jesús Pérez Magallón, her advice only worsens Mencía’s plight (368fn849). Gutierre arrives while Mencía is writing, and Jacinta’s movements—attempting to quickly alert her mistress to Gutierre’s return—awaken her master’s suspicions:

GUTIERRE. Tente Jacinta, espera.
¿Dónde corriendo vas desa manera?
JACINTA. Avisar pretendía
a mi señora de que ya venía
Tu persona.
GUTIERRE. ¡Oh criados!
En efeto, enemigos no excusados. (3.2431-36)

Again, through Gutierre, Calderón condemns the integrity of the servant woman, this time including her in a categorical judgement upon the serving class. Alerted to Mencía’s secret by his suspicions of Jacinta’s behavior, Gutierre dismisses all servants, surprises Mencía in the act of writing to Enrique, and makes the decision to kill her (3.2454-79). If Jacinta’s initial actions facilitate the awakening of Gutierre’s jealous melancholy, her later advice and behaviors facilitate its violent outcome: Mencía’s murder. While, even after his dismissal, the servant Coquín returns, attempting to save Mencía’s life by alerting King Pedro to his master’s assassination plot; Jacinta disappears after her dismissal. In the same way that Calderón includes verbal acknowledgements of guilt to condemn Jacinta for allowing Enrique’s entrance into Gutierre’s household, his omission of Jacinta from the play’s resolution denies her any

potentially redemptive arc. Even though Gutierre casts doubt upon the entire serving class, Calderón places the blame upon Jacinta.

The playwright again associates black femininity with melancholy in *Los cabellos de Absalón*, through the character of the clairvoyant Ethiopian woman, Teuca. Although *Los cabellos de Absalón* functions as Calderón's expansion and reshaping of his earlier collaborative play with Tirso de Molina, *La venganza de Tamar*, Teuca is a character unique to Calderón (165fn747), added specifically to facilitate the tragic outcome of *Los cabellos de Absalón*.⁹ While not a domestic slave, Teuca begins as a captive, a prize of war for King David brought from the general Semey:

mas de todos los despojos,
que te traigo, te encarezco
esta divina etiopisa,
en cuyo bárbaro acento
un espíritu anticipa
sucesos malos o buenos. (1.713-18)

Like Jacinta, Teuca's words and deeds contribute to the play's murderous melancholy outcomes. Teuca's forecasts are dangerous and accompanied by the mood swings characteristic of melancholy. Calderón foreshadows the risks of Teuca's clairvoyance through the repeated assertion of demonic influence over the character, beginning with King David:

Un gusto y un pesar juntos,
Semey, me has dado a un tiempo:
el gusto de tu venida,
[...]
el pesar de tu ignorancia,
pues, has pensado que puedo
tener por grandeza yo
en mi palacio agoreros.
Dios habla por sus profetas:
el demonio, como opuesto
a las verdades de Dios,
habla apoderado en pechos
tiranamente oprimidos:
y así, destierra al momento
esta torpe fitonisa
de mi corte. (1.719-34)

⁹ For an analysis of *La venganza de Tamar* as the collaborative production of Tirso and Calderón, see Alfredo Rodríguez López-Vásquez's "*La venganza de Tamar: colaboración entre Tirso y Calderón.*" As noted by V. Dixon, Teuca not only replaces *La venganza de Tamar*'s Laureta, but expands what "Tirso wrote for Laureta" (305), with several major modifications. While both women deliver prophetic utterances, Laureta is a *serrana* that has "commerce with the Devil," who does not appear onstage until act 3; whereas Teuca is an Ethiopian black woman "possessed by an evil spirit" and present throughout the play (307). In other words, Calderón enhances and expands Teuca's corruption as opposed to Laureta's.

In his reproach of Semey's gift, David contrasts divine prophecy in service of the Judeo-Christian God with demonic intervention and sorcery, identifying Teuca with the latter and expelling her from his court. Mirroring Jacinta's verbal acknowledgement of guilt, Teuca affirms the king's interpretation of her clairvoyance:

Aunque responder quisiera
al Rey, no he podido, ¡cielos!,
que está espíritu más noble
aposentado en su pecho
que en el mío; y como al verle,
mudo quedó el que yo tengo,
en mí se venga, a pedazos
el corazón deshaciendo.
¡Ay de mí! rabiando vivo.
¡Ay de mí!, rabiando muero. (1.747-56)

Teuca recognizes the inferiority of the spirit speaking through her to the spirit within the king and is struck dumb. Her recognition is immediately followed by the onset of melancholic symptoms: extreme and violent emotional distress that Absalón characterizes as both "frenesí" and "letargo" (1.757). The pairing of Teuca's acknowledgment with her sickness confirms David's assertion of demonic influence over her and thereby warns Calderón's Catholic audience against the character.

Having established the danger Teuca poses, Calderón next introduces her as an agent of revenge. Teuca only reappears in the play once Amón's melancholy has culminated in violence, and he forcibly rapes Tamar. As demonstrated by Casey (2019, 54-55), Amón's rape infects Tamar with his disease, leading her to remark: "Todo es tristeza y pesar" (2.1609). It is in this vulnerable state—melancholic and stripped of her social identity—in which Tamar befriends Teuca (2.1632). Coupled with earlier warnings of Teuca's demonic nature, the context of her encounter with Tamar associates the clairvoyant with the princess's illness; the relationship between clairvoyant and princess is only possible in a society where melancholy's violence has triumphed over reason. In her new role as Tamar's friend, Teuca encourages the melancholic princess toward violence: "¡Que presto te has de vengar!" (2.1634), and delivers forecasts that result in death. Posing as a *serrana*, she gives Amón a forecast coded in flowers that condemns the prince for his crime and anticipates Tamar's revenge:

Yo sé que olerla os agrada;
pero no la deshojéis,
que la espadaña que véis
tiene la forma de espada:
y aquesos granillos de oro,
[...]
manchan si los manosean,
porque estriba su tesoro
en ser intactos: dejaos,
Amón, de deshojar flor
con espadañas de amor,

y si la ofendéis, guardaos. (2.1706-17)

Giving Amón the “azucena” (Madonna lily) and “espadaña” (cattail), symbols of death and the crime Amón has committed (215fn1708-14), while warning the prince that handling them roughly will leave a stain anticipates Tamar’s revenge and indicates that Teuca knows and is complicit in the princess’s assassination plot.¹⁰ Shortly after, Absalón stabs Amón to death during a dinner on Tamar’s behalf (2.1830-33). While Teuca is not directly responsible for Amón’s death, she acts as an accomplice to the melancholic violence that causes it. Correspondingly, as with Jacinta in *El médico de su honra*, Calderón ensures that Teuca expresses a verbal declaration of her guilt in the play’s tragedies:

Y yo también desde hoy
en su ley seguirla quiero;
que es grande Dios el que sabe
medir castigos y premios. (3.3194-97)

Teuca determines to follow Tamar to her living tomb, framing the decision as an acceptance of divine punishment for her role in the death of Amón and, later, Absalón.¹¹ By providing this final punishment of and closure to Teuca’s arc, Calderón confirms his audience’s distrust of her character.

The roles Jacinta and Teuca play reflect the possibilities for women in the early modern science of melancholy. In the classical philosophies that inform the early modern science of melancholy, women are discussed in two capacities. As stated by the Aristotelian “Problem XXX, 1” (circa 4th-3rd centuries BCE) of Theophrastus, women may have the variety of melancholy in which “se eleven las sibilas y los adivinos y cuantos están inspirados por los dioses” (in Klibansky et al. 48); or, as evidenced by Ovid’s (43 BCE-CE 17/18) *Remedia Amoris* and recognized by Juliana Schiesari in *The Gendering of Melancholia*, they may cause *amor heroes*, love melancholy (105). In agreement with Schiesari, as well as Teresa Scott Soufas in “The Gendered Context of Melancholy for Spanish Golden Age Women Writers,” women’s limitations within the discourse of melancholy are built into the scientific framework of humorism from ancient Greece through the early modern period. Aristotelian theory justifies the inferiority of women’s intellect by classifying their humoral composition as colder, which “seems to limit them to the ‘cold’ version of melancholia, to the symptoms of torpor, despondency and fear” (Schiesari 107-108). In Calderón’s Spain, as observed by Casey (2016, 579fn17), this theory is perpetuated by Juan Huarte de San Juan’s *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias* (1575, 1594), which argues:

Porque pensar que la mujer puede ser caliente y seca, ni tener el ingenio y habilidad que sigue a estas dos calidades, es muy grande error; porque si la simiente de que se formó

¹⁰ Laureta delivers the same threat through flowers in Tirso’s *La venganza de Tamar*. However, while Teuca remains throughout the ensuing assassination of Amón and death of Absalón, Laureta disappears from the play upon delivering her floral warnings.

¹¹ As recognized by Rodríguez López-Vásquez and V. Dixon, Act 3 of *La venganza de Tamar* is only Act 2 of *Los cabellos de Absalón*. Tirso’s play ends with Tamar triumphant upon Amón’s death; with her honor restored and now able to return to society, she has no need for the *serrana* Laureta. In contrast, and in agreement with V. Dixon (311) and Marcía L. Welles in “The Anxiety of Gender” (361), Calderón’s *comedia* ends in the tragedy of Absalón’s death and the condemnation and exile of Tamar and Teuca.

fuera caliente y seca a predominio, saliera varón y no hembra; y por ser fría y húmida, nació hembra y no varón [...] La verdad desta doctrina parece claramente considerando el ingenio de la primera mujer que hubo en el mundo: que con haberla hecho Dios con sus propias manos, y tan acertada y perfecta en su sexo, es conclusión averiguada que sabía mucho menos que Adán [...] Luego la razón de tener la primera mujer no tanto ingenio le nació de haberla hecho Dios fría y húmida, que es el temperamento necesario para ser fecunda y paridera, y el que contradice al saber; y si la sacara templada como Adán, fuera sapientísima, pero no pudiera parir ni venirle la regla si no fuera por vía sobrenatural. (614-5; ch. 17-22)¹²

In Huarte's words, women suffer a deficiency of intellect due to the coldness of the seed that forms them, as opposed to the heat that forms men, which dichotomy traces back to Eve and Adam and exists so that women may bear children and men, intellectual fruit. From ancient Greece to early modern Spain, women's melancholic potential is limited by the philosophical and scientific limitations placed upon their intellect, and these limitations are felt and reflected by early modern authors. For example, Calderón's contemporary, María de Zayas y Sotomayor, demonstrates her awareness of this theory in the prologue, "Al que leyere," to *Las novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (1637).¹³ Within this gendered theory of melancholy, the purposes Calderón grants Jacinta and Teuca in the melancholic progression of *El médico de su honra* and *Los cabellos de Absalón* are among the only options available to them; they may worsen love melancholy and exhibit clairvoyance, but melancholy's intellectual agency rests with their plays' male protagonists.¹⁴

In addition to the limitations of women's melancholic roles, they are also often considered contagious or demonic within early modern medical and religious understandings. Regarding contagion, women were not only perceived as capable of causing lovesickness but also as capable of spreading their own melancholic disease to others.¹⁵ This capability was paired with a concern for demonic intervention through women's melancholy. In agreement with Sabine MacCormack's "Calderón's *La aurora en Copacabana*," early modern Christian theology maintained that demons could know the future and both articulate and manipulate Christian truths through oracles" (1982, 461). MacCormack adds, in "Demons, Imagination, and the Incas," that for Thomas Aquinas, specifically, "divine visions were recognizable by virtue of communicating a theological truth, while visions induced by a sorcerer or by demons deluded the visionary with misleading appearances, images that had no true substance" (1993, 103-104). Given the supposed weakness of women's minds and their predisposition for clairvoyant varieties of melancholy, the Christian fear of demonic intervention through women's mental

¹² All chapter numbers for Huarte's *Examen* come from the 1594 edition of the text.

¹³ See Casey: "'Al que leyere' begins by acknowledging the popular, contemporary correlation of women's (lack of) intellect to the physical disparities between male and female bodies: 'habrá muchos que atribuyan a locura esta virtuosa osadía de sacar a luz mis borrones, siendo mujer, que en opinión de algunos necios es lo mismo que una cosa incapaz'" (2016, 579).

¹⁴ Prior literary criticism has recognized the limited potential for melancholic women in Calderón's theater. Speaking specifically of *La aurora en Copacabana*'s Guacolda, Esther Fernández in "Envisioning Guacolda, from Lyrical Creation to Ideological Manipulation" observes that the female protagonist experiences a grief that "turns her into a pastoral heroine, purely ornamental and devoid of any psychological or ideological complexity" (151). Speaking broadly of women in Calderón's *comedia*, "Isabel Hernando Morata interprets melancholic woman as a trope of Calderón's theater in "'Este paso ya está hecho', otra vez la dama triste o melancólica en Calderón'" (Casey 2019, 19fn13).

¹⁵ See Jennifer Radden's "Melancholia in the Writing of a Sixteenth-Century Spanish Nun."

illness was widespread among early modern religious authors and, particularly, in the works of Teresa of Ávila: *Libro de la vida* (1562-65), *Libro de las fundaciones* (1573-82), and her collaborative text with Jerónimo Gracian *El cerro o tratado de la melancolía* (1582). For instance, writing of her concerns for melancholic nuns in the *Libro de las fundaciones*, Teresa states: “Yo he miedo que el demonio, debajo del color de este humor, como he dicho, quiere ganar muchas almas” (96-97; ch. 7, sec.7).¹⁶ The condemnation of Teuca’s clairvoyance as demonic and culpability of both Jacinta and Teuca in furthering love melancholy’s violence reflects the scientific and religious contexts for melancholic women’s infectious and demonic potential in Calderón’s Spain. However, the relationships of Jacinta and Teuca to the melancholies of their plays cannot be explained by gender alone. Despite similar “love-murder” plots (Scott Soufas 1990, ix), the female servants of plays such as *A secreto agravio, secreta venganza* (1637), *El mayor monstruo del mundo* (ca. 1635)/*El mayo monstruo los celos* (1667/1672), and *El pintor de su deshonor* (1645) do not exhibit the same culpability for the melancholic murders of their mistresses.¹⁷

Alongside gender, the performances of Jacinta and Teuca are informed by the medical and social discourses of race in early modern Spain. The early modern audience would recognize Jacinta and Teuca as black through physical and verbal markers together with the social context of servitude in seventeenth-century Spain. As signaled by Pérez Magallón, Jacinta is “esclava herrada” (1.stage direction to v. 45), meaning that she bears a visible identifier of her slavery (178fn24).¹⁸ Jacinta’s physical marker of status aligns with the historical context of slavery in Spain and the city of Seville, the setting of *El médico de su honra*. Alessandro Stella in *Histories D’Esclaves dans la Péninsule Ibérique* and Tamar Herzog in “How Did Early Modern Slaves in Spain Disappear” both acknowledge the prevalence of slavery in early modern Spain, and, particularly, in Seville (Stella 28, 76; Herzog 2).¹⁹ In agreement with Luis Méndez Rodríguez in “La esclavitud femenina,” as a port city, Seville acted as a hub of slavery in early modern Spain, and slaves in the city were overwhelmingly black, with the majority of female slaves working in domestic service (34-36).²⁰ Therefore, although there is not explicit mention of Jacinta’s race,

¹⁶ As stated by Casey (2019, 51fn77), for critical analyses of female melancholy and demonic interference in Teresa de Ávila’s works, see Radden (294) and Mònica Balltandre Pla’s “Encuentros entre Dios y la melancolía” (199-200).

¹⁷ For the date of publication of the first edition (1635) of *El mayor monstruo*, see Harry Warren Hilborn’s *A Chronology of the Plays of D. Pedro Calderón de Barca* (26). For the dates of the second edition (1667/1672), see María J. Caamaño Rojo’s “*El mayor monstruo del mundo* de Calderón: reescritura y tradición textual” (140). Dates for *A secreto agravio, secreta venganza* and *El pintor de su deshonor* come Calderón’s *obras completas*, edited by Ángel Valbuena Briones and Ángel Valbuena Prat. While Scott Soufas’s discussion of “love-murder” plays encompasses those set in historical Spanish contexts, I include *El mayor monstruo* under the signifier given that Mariene’s death is, like the female protagonists of the other two works, the result of jealous lovesickness.

¹⁸ Pérez Magallón’s interpretation of “herrada” is confirmed by the definition of “HERRAR” in Sebastián de Covarrubias’s *Tesoro de la lengua castellana* (1611), which makes multiple references to the marking of slaves, especially “fugitivos e incorregibles” (fol. 467v), which aligns with the nature of Jacinta’s betrayal in Calderón’s play.

¹⁹ For other accounts of slavery in early modern Spain and Seville, see Antonio Dominguez Ortiz’s *La esclavitud en Castilla durante la Edad Moderna y otros estudios de marginados*, Alfonso Franco Silva’s *La esclavitud en Sevilla y su tierra a fines de la Edad Media*, and Antonio Collantes de Terán Sánchez’s “Contribución al estudio de los esclavos en la Sevilla medieval.”

²⁰ Méndez Rodríguez acknowledges a variety of designations for blackness present in early modern record-keeping of slaves’ skin color in Seville: “La mayoría de estos esclavos eran negros, aunque por aquellos años los calificativos que emplean las autoridades son muy explícitos. A cada variación del color corresponde un título distinto en los documentos oficiales de compraventa, aunque ciertamente los más usuales fueron los de morenos o

her physical mark and status coupled with the historical context of slavery in Seville make her blackness apparent for Calderón's audience. With Teuca, Calderón embeds multiple, explicit references to the character's skin color. In addition to the servant Jonadab calling Teuca a "negra endemoniada" (3.2042), in early modern Spain the term "etiopisa" (1.715) is not only an identifier of nationality, but also, in agreement with Baltasar Fra-Molinero's *La imagen de los negros*, of race: "Términos como etíope, del griego aithiops ('cara quemada') designaban a todos los hombres y mujeres de piel oscura y no sólo a los que vivían al sur de Egipto" (Snowden 7 in Fra-Molinero 2fn1).²¹ Jacinta's blackness is established by her social status in Seville; Teuca's, by verbal acknowledgment and nationality.

As black women in early modern Spain, Jacinta and Teuca are exposed not only to melancholy's gendered associations, but also to its racial discourse. Beginning with Aristotelian theory, darker skin tones are associated with undesirable varieties of melancholy: "no todos [son] oscuros, sino únicamente aquellos que contienen humores particularmente insanos" (Theophrastus qtd. in Klibansky et al. 46). The association between race and melancholy is developed by early modern medical theorists, including Huarte, who links specific "imaginative" or adust melancholic occupations to geographies and occupations traditionally inhabited and worked by black people.²² Speaking of Egypt, Huarte describes the region as "la cual convida al hombre a ser hechicero, supersticioso, mago, embaidor, quiromántico, judiciario y adivinador" (503; ch. 14).²³ While his description refers to one nation, the arid, sterile qualities of the region (509; ch. 14)—to which he ascribes its propensity to produce these occupations—also apply to Ethiopia and, subsequently, Huarte compares the mental qualities that Jewish peoples inherited from their time in Egypt to the inherited blackness of those of Ethiopian descent (522-23; ch. 14). In addition to geographic determinants, Huarte elaborates that specific occupations, namely servitude, can inspire certain manifestations of melancholy: "Porque los que viven en servidumbre, en tristeza, en aflicción y tierras ajenas, engendran mucha cólera requemada por no tener libertad de hablar ni vengarse de sus injurias; y este humor, estando tostado, es el instrumento de la astucia, solercia y malicia" (508; ch. 14). In other words, slavery results in a shrewd and malignant "cólera requemada" or adust melancholy. Accordingly, as noted by Méndez Rodríguez, "vice" commonly dominates reason for black characters in Spanish literature (47).

In the same way that gender affiliates them with love melancholy and clairvoyance, race affiliates Jacinta and Teuca with melancholic occupations and assures their malign influence. Teuca's occupation as a "divina etiopisa" results not only from the contemporary limitations placed upon female expressions of melancholy, but also from her identity as a black Ethiopian

prietos, empleados para referirse al color negro. Otras veces los calificaban de pardos, como sinónimo de mulatos, y aún más preciso fue el de loros, con el que se indicaba su color amulatado o el de un moreno que tiraba a negro" (34). See also, the words of the "municipal council meeting of September 18, 1461" of Seville: "se parecían a los trebejos del ajedrez tanto prietos como blancos, por los muchos esclavos que hay en la ciudad" (qtd. by Collantes de Terán Sánchez 121 in Herzog 3).

²¹ Fra-Molinero's assertion reflects Covarrubias's definition of "ETHIOPIA," which states both that "etiopisa" is the term for a woman from Ethiopia and that Ethiopia is named, in part, for the fact that the sun blackens skin in the nation (fol. 390r).

²² For a study of melancholy's relationship to race in early modern England, see Mary Floyd-Wilson's *English Ethnicity & Race In Early Modern Drama*.

²³ One literary application of the socio-medical theory relating geography to mental characteristics that pre-dates both Huarte's *Examen* and Calderón is Francisco Delicado's *La Lozana andaluza* (1529), which says, of the Jewish Lozana: "tiene el mejor ver y judiciar que jamás se vido, porque bebió y pasó el río Nilo [...] Es parienta del Ropero, conterrana de Séneca, Lucano, Marcial y Avicena. La tierra lo lleva" (222; Mamotreto 36).

woman, and both Jacinta and Teuca are limited to malignant melancholic influence not only by their gender but also by their enslaved status. This additional limitation illuminates why, even when contrary to their intent, their counsel leads to death. For example, in addition to Jacinta's doomed advice to Mencía to write Enrique, Teuca seeks, unsuccessfully, to broker peace between Absalón and David, after the former has killed Amón.²⁴ Reflecting the inherent malignance of her melancholy, Teuca demonstrates incredulity that her interference will have its desired effect:

(Si el espíritu grande, que ha vivido
 en mí, espíritu de odio y de ira ha sido,
 ¿cómo viene de hacer esta concordia
 de Absalón y David?)
 [...]
 (¿Yo instrumento de hacer dos amistades?
 ¿Yo unir dos tan discordes voluntades?
 Mas sí, que ya vendrán a iras atroces.) (3.2376-84)

As Teuca fears, she cannot prevent the coming tragedy of Absalón's betrayal and death because she is not prophetic-inspired by God—but demonically influenced (V. Dixon 307). Teuca, like Jacinta, is fated by the melancholic associations of her gender and race to negatively impact those within her sphere of contact.

While Jacinta and Teuca ultimately serve as agents of melancholic violence, they become sources of humor along the way. This secondary role is again facilitated by race. As recognized by José Moreno Villa's *Locos, enanos, negros y niños palaciegos*, Carolina Santamaría Delgado's "Negrillas, negros y guineos y la representación musical de lo africano," and Méndez Rodríguez (41), black slaves and characters were commonly employed as instruments of laughter in the musical and theatrical performances of early modern Spain and the colonial Americas. Mirroring this broader context, the relationships between Jacinta and Teuca to melancholy in *El médico de su honra* and *Los cabellos de Absalón* are, at times, comic. In *El médico de su honra*, Jacinta participates in an interaction with Coquín, who mockingly conflates hypochondria—a flatulent variety of melancholy—with noble love melancholy²⁵:

JACINTA ¿Qué tienes estos días,
 Coquín, que andas tan triste? No solías
 ser alegre? ¿Qué efeto

²⁴ Another instance in which Teuca attempts, but fails, to avoid tragedy through her foresight is by cautioning Absalón against his self-love through the metaphor of his hair: "Cortaos esos hilos bellos, / que si los dejáis crecer / os habréis presto de ver / en lo alto por los cabellos" (2.1754-57). However, Absalón immediately misinterprets Teuca's warning, declaring: "Teuca, advierte que sí en alto / por los cabellos me veo, / yo premiaré tu deseo, / y a Israel daré un asalto" (2.1758-61). Teuca's warning inspires Absalón to incite a military coup against his father, leading to his death. In contrast, while Laureta gives the same warning to Absalón in *La venganza de Tamar*, the play ends before tragedy befalls him.

²⁵ Regarding medical portrayals of hypochondriac melancholy's lower bodily symptoms, see Casey: "According to such physicians as Gordonio, Murillo y Velarde, and Santa Cruz, hypochondria begins in organs including the intestines, liver, spleen, stomach, and uterus. The infirm lower body then produces malign vapors that spread through the body to the brain, where they instigate all of melancholy's classic symptoms. The exhalations also produce an acute pain in the upper part of the abdomen in the area of the lower ribs (the hypochondria, which give the condition its name) and digestive discomfort, typically, flatulence" (2019, 94-95).

te tiene así?
 COQUÍN Metime a ser discreto
 por mi mal y hame dado
 tan grande hipocondría en este lado
 que me muero.
 Jacinta ¿Y qué es hipocondría?
 Coquín Es una enfermedad que no la había
 habría dos años, ni en el mundo era.
 Usose poco ha y de manera
 lo que se usa, amiga, no se excusa,
 que una dama, sabiendo que se usa,
 le dijo a su galán muy triste un día:
 “tráigame un poco uced de hipocondría”. (3.2415-28)

As observed by Ana Armendáriz Aramendía in her edition of *El médico de su honra* (462fn2425), Casey (2019, 110-11), and Scott Soufas (1982, 205), the scene parodies the contemporary popularity of hypochondria among the female elite of early modern Spain. By drawing attention to the condition's lower bodily symptoms (“hipocondría en este lado,” in the side) and by staging the conversation between two servants rather than a “galán” and his “dama,” the conversation debases the noble trend. For an audience accustomed to viewing blackness as a source of entertainment, and for whom love between black servant characters was a common trope to inspire laughter (Méndez Rodríguez 46), Jacinta's race would have made the parody all the more amusing.

In *Los cabellos de Absalón*, Teuca is likewise subjected to racially-motivated ridicule related to her melancholic visions by the *gracioso*-type servant, Jonadab. The aside, “(A esta negra endemoniada / ¿no le bastará ser negra?)” (3.2042-43), indicates that to Calderón's early modern audience Teuca's black femininity alone would be a source of scorn, and is made especially ridiculous when paired with the demonic nature of her melancholy. Jonadab continues to mock Teuca for her blackness and demonism throughout the time he accompanies her at Semey's command:

JONADAB. [(*Aparte.*)]
 (Bien alabarme puedo
 de haber tenido a ratos lindo miedo:
 que como el de agora,
 yendo con esta antípoda de aurora,
 jamás le he de tener ni le he tenido.)
 TEUCA. ¿En qué vas, Jonadab, tan divertido?
 JONADAB. ¿Yo divertido? En nada...
 [(*Aparte.*)]
 (Pues es ir con el diablo a camarada.)
 [...]
 (Consigo viene hablando.
 Mas ¿qué se va el demonio endemoniando?)
 [...]
 (Entre sí habla:

el diablo me parece que se endiabló.) (3.2362-81)

Throughout the above exchange, Jonadab speaks in asides such that only Calderón's audience may hear him. The intended humor of his tone is made apparent by Teuca's remark that Jonadab seems "divertido" or amused. Within these side conversations, Jonadab mocks Teuca for her race, calling her the "antípoda de aurora," and for the demonic associations of her clairvoyance, calling her "el diablo" and "el demonio endemoniado." Jonadab and the audience are laughing at the expense of Teuca's racially demarcated and gendered melancholy.

The exaggerated degree to which Teuca is ridiculed in comparison to Jacinta correlates to the differing settings of the two plays. Demonic intervention and prophecy are more suited to a biblical play than a historical *comedia* set in fourteenth-century Spain. However, both women demonstrate how race and gender together influence the melancholic potential of black women in early modern Spanish theater. Their gender enables them to meddle in the love melancholies of their noble masters and mistresses, while their race and corresponding social status results in laughter at their expense. Finally, race and gender together impact the women with intellectual faults that limit Teuca to a clairvoyant melancholy prone to demonic interference and both women to innately harmful melancholic interactions. Due to contemporary social and medical biases against their race and gender, black women become accessories to melancholy on Calderón's stage.

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