GUILLÉN DE CASTRO Y BELLVÍS

THE FORCE OF HABIT

Translated by the UCLA Working Group on the *Comedia* in Translation and Performance:

Paul Cella
Nitzaira Delgado-García
Barbara Fuchs
Mar Gómez Glez
Laura Muñoz
Juan Jesús Payán
Payton Phillips Quintanilla
Kathryn Renton
Veronica Wilson
Table of Contents

The Comedia in Context

A Note on the Playwright

Introduction—Laura Muñoz and Payton Phillips Quintanilla

Pronunciation Key

The Force of Habit

Characters

Act I

Act II

Act III
The Comedia in Context

The “Golden Age” of Spain offers one of the most vibrant theatrical repertoires ever produced. At the same time that England saw the flourishing of Shakespeare on the Elizabethan stage, Spain produced prodigious talents such as Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, and Calderón de la Barca. Although those names may not resonate with the force of the Bard in the Anglophone world, the hundreds of entertaining, complex plays they wrote, and the stage tradition they helped develop, deserve to be better known.

The Diversifying the Classics project at UCLA brings these plays to the public by offering English versions of Hispanic classical theater. Our translations are designed to make this rich tradition accessible to students, teachers, and theater professionals. This brief introduction to the comedia in its context suggests what we might discover and create when we begin to look beyond Shakespeare.

Comedia at a Glance

The Spanish comedia developed in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As Madrid grew into a sophisticated imperial capital, the theater provided a space to perform the customs, concerns, desires, and anxieties of its citizens. Though the form was influenced by the Italian troupes that brought commedia dell’arte to Spain in the sixteenth century, the expansive corpus of the Spanish comedia includes not only comic plays, but also histories, tragedies, and tragicomedies. The varied dramatic template of the comedia is as diverse as the contemporary social sphere it reflects.
While the plays offer a range of dramatic scenarios and theatrical effects, they share structural and linguistic similarities. Roughly three thousand lines, they are usually divided into three different *jornadas*, or acts. Plots move quickly across time and space, without much regard for the Aristotelian unities of action, time, and place. The plays are written in verse, and employ different forms for different characters and situations: a lover may deliver an ornate sonnet in honor of the beloved, while a servant offers a shaggy-dog story in rhymed couplets. The plays’ language is designed for the ear rather than the eye, with the objective of pleasing an audience.

The *comedia* was performed in rectangular courtyard spaces known as *corrales*. Built between houses of two or three stories, the *corral* offered seating based on social position, including space for the nobles in the balconies, women in the *cazuela*, or stewpot, and *mosqueteros*, or groundlings, on patio benches. This cross-section of society enjoyed a truly popular art, which reflected onstage their varied social positions. A *comedia* performance would have included the play as well as songs, dances, and *entremeses*, or short comic interludes, before, after, and between the acts. As the first real commercial theater, the *corral* was the place where a diverse urban society found its dramatic entertainment.

What’s at Stake on the *Comedia* Stage?

*Comedias* offer a range of possibilities for the twenty-first-century reader, actor, and audience. The plays often envision the social ambitions and conflicts of the rapidly-growing cities where they were performed, allowing a community to simultaneously witness and create a collective culture. In many *comedias*, the anonymity and wealth that the city affords allows the clever to transcend their social position, while wit, rather than force, frequently carries the day,
creating an urban theater that itself performs urbanity. An important subset of *comedias* deal with topics from national history, exploring violence, state power, the role of the nobility, and religious and racial difference.

The *comedia* often examines social hierarchies that may be less rigid than they first appear. Whether the dominant mode of the play is comic, tragic, historical, or a mixture, its dramatic progression often depends on a balancing act of order and liberty, authority and transgression, stasis and transformation. The title of Lope de Vega’s recently rediscovered *Women and Servants*, in which two sisters scheme to marry the servant-men they love rather than the noblemen who woo them, makes explicit its concerns with gender and class and provides a view of what is at stake in many of the plays. Individuals disadvantaged by class or gender often challenge the social hierarchy and patriarchy by way of their own cleverness. The *gracioso* (comic sidekick), the *barba* (older male blocking figure), and the lovers appear repeatedly in these plays, and yet are often much more than stock types. At their most remarkable, they reflect larger cultural possibilities. The *comedia* stages the conflicting demands of desire and reputation, dramatizing the tension between our identities as they are and as we wish them to be.

Among the many forms of passion and aspiration present in the *comedia*, female desire and agency are central. In contrast to its English counterpart, the Spanish stage permitted actresses to play female roles, thus giving playwrights the opportunity to develop a variety of characters for them. While actresses became famous, the powerful roles they played onstage often portrayed the force of female desire. In Lope’s *The Widow of Valencia*, for example, the beautiful young widow Leonarda brings a masked lover into her home so as not to reveal her identity and risk her reputation or independence.
The presence of actresses, however, did not diminish the appeal of the cross-dressing plot. One of Tirso’s most famous plays, *Don Gil of the Green Breeches*, features Doña Juana assuming a false identity and dressing as a man in order to foil the plans of her former lover, who is also in disguise. Dizzying deceptions and the performance of identity are both dramatic techniques and thematic concerns in these plays. Gender, like class, becomes part of the structure the *comedia* examines and dismantles, offering a powerful reflection on how we come to be who we are.

Remaking Plays in Our Time

In Lope’s witty manifesto, the *New Art of Making Plays in Our Time*, he advises playwrights to stick to what works onstage, including plots of honor and love, strong subplots, and—whenever possible—cross-dressing. For Lope, the delight of the audience drives the process of composition, and there is little sense in a craft that does not entertain the public. Lope’s contemporaries followed this formula, developing dramas that simultaneously explore the dynamics of their society and produce spectacle. For this reason, early modern Hispanic drama remains an engaging, suspenseful, often comic—and new—art to audiences even four hundred years later.

The *Diversifying the Classics* project at UCLA, engaged in translation, adaptation, and outreach to promote the *comedia* tradition, aims to bring the entertaining spirit of Lope and his contemporaries to our work. Rather than strictly adhering to the verse forms of the plays, we seek to render the power of their language in a modern idiom; rather than limiting the drama as a historical or cultural artifact, we hope to bring out what remains vibrant for our contemporary
society. Given that these vital texts merit a place onstage, we have sought to facilitate production by carefully noting entrances, exits, and asides, and by adding locations for scenes whenever possible. Although we have translated every line, we assume directors will cut as appropriate for their own productions. We hope that actors, directors, and readers will translate our work further into new productions, bringing both the social inquiry and theatrical delight of the *comedia* to future generations of audiences.

A Note on the Playwright

Guillén de Castro y Bellvís (1569–1631) was a Valencian playwright whose theatrical oeuvre developed right alongside the *comedia* itself. He was highly involved with the literary world of Valencia, and at age 23 joined the *Academia de los Nocturnos* under the pseudonym *Secreto*. Castro submitted works of prose and poetry to the group, discovering his voice as part of one of the most renowned literary gatherings in Spain. The *Nocturnos* maintained Valencia’s position as a highly influential city in the changing literary and intellectual landscape at the turn of the seventeenth century, and Castro’s theater owes much to his years in the *Academia*. Like many of his contemporaries, Castro was a military man as well as a poet; in addition to serving as a captain in the Valencian coast guard in 1593, he also had a brief governorship of a district of Naples. Little is known about his time in Italy, although during his absence two of his plays, *El caballero bobo* and *El amor constante*, were published in a collection of *comedias* by Valencian dramatists. After failing to revive the literary circles of his youth with the short-lived *Academia de los montañeses del Parnaso*, Castro decided, like so many of his contemporaries, to try his luck in the capital city of Madrid. In preparation for his move, Castro published a collection of
his plays with the last of his money, pinning all his hopes on selling these volumes to get him out of debt. The gamble paid off, allowing him to enter a thriving community in which poets, playwrights, and novelists jostled for fame. The care he took to publish his own creations and adaptations of some of the most popular works of the period, including Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, present us with a playwright who was not only interested in developing his craft but also deeply invested in succeeding in the emerging commercial theatrical market. He published a second volume of plays in 1625, and remained active in literary circles in Madrid until his death in 1631.

Although only twenty-six of his plays were published in his lifetime, most scholars agree that the total number of works produced by Castro is closer to thirty-five. His plays vary in genre, from the mythological to the urban, and yet across Castro’s works there are certain characteristics that signal the influences of a Valencian tradition existing alongside the developing *comedia* as well as dramatic techniques, themes, and characters that are unique to his theater. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Castro was not afraid to tackle subjects that were thought to be highly taboo in Spanish society on the stage, in particular regicide, bigamy, and sexuality. The major themes explored across Castro’s works include the formation of identity, including gender; power and authority, especially between rulers and their subjects; the troubled domestic relationships of husbands and wives; and center and periphery, examining the social dynamics between Valencia and Castile, and Valencia and its Mediterranean neighbors.

Like many of his Valencian contemporaries, much of Castro’s theater portrays the dramatic lives of the high-born, and often uses legendary figures from Iberian history and ballads, adapting them to the stage as in his best-known play, *Las mocedades del Cid*. Castro’s
works also tend toward the tragic, and even his urban plays, like *Los mal casados de Valencia*, are full of dark humor. His works show a playwright fully engaged with his contemporaries across literary genres, and his skill in adapting popular stories, like the ballad of the Cid or Don Quijote’s exploits, and unflinching presentation of urban life make him one of the most interesting playwrights of Spanish *comedia*.

**Introduction**

Laura Muñoz and Payton Phillips Quintanilla

Guillén de Castro’s *The Force of Habit* (*La fuerza de la costumbre*, c. 1610) is singular among *comedias* in that it takes the popular device of cross-dressed characters a step further, daring to ask whether gender is something that can be learned and unlearned, or if it is a fact of nature. The protagonists, a brother and sister separated at birth and raised apart, become the center of a discussion about nature versus nurture: Félix, brought up by his mother to speak softly, fear thunder and stitch with the women of the house, and Hipólita, raised with her father in a war zone to wield a sword like a soldier, horrify their parents and amuse onlookers with their complete reversal of feminine and masculine attributes. When the family is reunited, the father insists on making the siblings conform to traditional gender roles. While Félix teaches his sister how to wear high heels and Hipólita shows him how to use a weapon, the question of gender roles is complicated by the tangles of love. Castro thus uses the siblings to explore essential questions about the nature of identity and the limitations of a system in which the correct performance of gender is key to being accepted by family and friends alike.
The Plot

*The Force of Habit* is a fast-paced play, structured around the siblings Hipólita and Félix as each undertakes a complete change of character based on traditional gender lines.

Act I opens with Félix’s father, Pedro, finally returning home after a long separation from his family. Félix’s mother, Costanza, explains how she and Don Pedro met, married, and had a daughter in secret—Félix’s sister, Hipólita. When Costanza’s brother and father discovered them, Pedro narrowly escaped with his life and the baby girl, leaving Costanza alone and pregnant with Félix. Following the recent death of Costanza’s father, Pedro can finally return home to them after serving as a soldier in Flanders for the past twenty years.

Pedro arrives with Hipólita, who is dressed in men’s clothing, and finds Félix dressed in less-than-masculine attire. The parents are chagrined to realize that they have each raised their children in the habits and customs of the opposite gender, and decide that they must immediately rectify both son and daughter by forcing them to perform socially acceptable gender roles. Félix is hesitant and unsure of himself when told he must change his ways, while Hipólita adamantly refuses, fighting the process every step of the way. After initial and unsuccessful lessons in appropriate dress and deportment, the family is interrupted by the sound of a sword fight. Félix hides with his mother, as Hipólita takes back the sword she had just been forced to give up and fights the offender, a handsome young man named Luis.

When things settle down, Luis and his sister, Leonor, explain that they ran into Pedro’s men on the street, where a misunderstanding caused them to fight. The first act closes with the parents hoping that love will be the motivation to change their children. The pairings are already set in motion: Félix with Leonor, and Hipólita with Luis.
Act II introduces Otavio and Marcelo, gentlemen of good standing who will present a challenge to both Luis and Félix in their pursuits of love. These two, along with Luis, see the Moncada family leaving church and note how the siblings still seem very uncomfortable in their new roles. Still, Marcelo falls in love with Hipólita, and Otavio with Leonor.

Back at the family home, Hipólita continues to resist her training in ladylike behavior, and Félix begins his sword-fighting lessons with equally disastrous results. When Hipólita cannot resist demonstrating how to use a sword correctly, she is chastised and told to leave men’s things to men. Félix, meanwhile, is humiliated by his father for not fulfilling the expectations of a male heir. Pedro and Galván, his servant, concoct a plan to cure Félix of his constant fear.

Later, while Félix anxiously stands guard in the street, his father comes out in disguise and attacks him; Félix, scared at first, finally begins to fight back as his father runs away. Leonor, awakened by all the noise, calls out to Félix and the two exchange sweet words. Félix excitedly tells his father about the fight and how Leonor saw him in his moment of bravery.

The next day, Marcelo and Otavio come to the house to court Hipólita and Leonor, and are met by Luis and Félix. Leonor comments on Hipólita’s growing interest in Luis, which Hipólita vehemently denies. The four suitors begin to fight over favors that Hipólita and Leonor drop from the balcony. Marcelo runs off with Hipólita’s cuff and is followed by Luis, while Otavio wins Leonor’s glove. Leonor expresses her disappointment in Félix’s failure to retrieve the token and breaks off their courtship, calling Félix a coward. Pedro, apprised of the situation, swears he would rather kill Félix than let his son continue to dishonor the family name. Hipólita, feeling insulted, is ready to go after her cuff herself, but when Galván refuses to give her his sword, she punches him in the nose. Luis returns with the cuff, stained with Marcelo’s blood.
Hipólita thanks him profusely and doubts herself for the first time in the play. Félix swears he will avenge himself and restore his honor.

In Act III, the siblings’ training is put to the test. The men discuss the best way for Félix to restore his honor and decide that he must do it alone, out of sight of the local constables who might interfere. Pedro asks one of his captains to keep an eye on his son, and come to his rescue if necessary. Once again, Luis declares his love for Hipólita, and she finally admits that she loves him, too. Galván seizes an opportunity to get back at Hipólita for punching him in the nose and tells her that Luis is already married to Marcelo’s sister. Hipólita, jealous, angry, and hurt, goes off to look for Luis and avenge herself. Otavio calls at Leonor’s balcony. Disappointed that the wrong suitor has come, she decides to make Félix jealous to motivate him to fight Otavio. The two suitors argue, then go off to find a private place to settle their differences, with the Captain following closely behind. Hipólita, dressed as a man again, finds Luis and reveals herself, furiously challenging him to fight, but Luis explains that she has been tricked. Hipólita is embarrassed and tries to save face, and Luis uses this to his advantage, convincing her to meet him in a grove of trees to settle their argument. Hipólita is aware that Luis has no intention of fighting and every intention of wooing her, but follows his lead. In the meantime, the Captain has followed Félix and Otavio and hides behind a wall, the only witness to their fight. When Otavio appears, injured and defeated, Félix shows mercy and lets him run away. Alerted by the noise, some bailiffs appear and try to apprehend Félix, who fights them off successfully until the Captain can jump into the fray.

Costanza is worrying about her children when Hipólita comes in, clearly upset. Prompted by her mother’s anxious questioning, Hipólita describes her encounter with Luis. She speaks of
the loss of her manly bravery and strength of character due to the ambiguous fight with Luis, during which some kind of physical sexual encounter has occurred, and ends her speech with a declaration of love that identifies her weakness as a womanly quality. Before Costanza can console her daughter, Leonor enters and inquires about Félix’s whereabouts. Pedro, filled with worry, vows to avenge his son if he has been killed. The Captain walks in and describes the fight between Félix and Otavio. When Félix and Luis enter shortly thereafter, Félix has clearly been changed by his experience. He approaches Leonor with full confidence, and Pedro declares that he has earned Leonor’s hand in marriage. Costanza takes the opportunity to subtly command Luis to do the same for Hipólita, since he has already defeated her in another “challenge.”

The play ends with the two siblings having conformed to the expectations of their genders, and with the promise of marriage for both. Their father is happy to declare that his children have returned to their natures, seemingly unaware of the loss Hipólita has suffered, and proud of the violent actions of his son.

Performing Gender and Violence, Then and Now

Modern audiences may be surprised, even disappointed, by how Guillén de Castro ends his play: heterosexual love and marriage allegedly cure the siblings of their gender-bending ills by conquering habit and restoring nature. This tidy conclusion may feel forced, incomplete, or unsatisfactory after three acts that brazenly challenge traditional presentations of gender and genre, and that assert at nearly every turn the supremacy of habit (nurture) over biology (nature), despite the parents’ hopes to the contrary. In the Spanish comedia, “happy” endings of this type —where all is made “right” and any unsettling or unsavory aspects of plot or character are swept
away—are conventional, almost a requirement. For this reason, *comedia* scholar Kathleen Jeffs asks readers and audiences to focus on the body of the text or performance to identify the “nuanced views lurking below the surface” (148).

Critics have noted how unconventional Félix and Hipólita are even within the tradition of *comedia* cross-dressing. Harry Vélez Quiñones wonders why the siblings “should find it so impossibly difficult to adopt a performance of gender that matches their biological sex” when “hundreds of similar characters in plays by Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, Calderón de la Barca, Agustín Moreto, or Juana Inés de la Cruz accomplish much more challenging performances of gender with absolute ease?” (192). The successful cross-dressers in those plays normally do so for a short amount of time and with a specific goal in mind, such as gaining access to otherwise closed spaces in order to reach a lover or exact revenge, and then return to their normal clothing, names, and behavior once the job is done. In *The Force of Habit*, the siblings arrive onstage at ease in the expected dress and manners of the gender opposite their biological sex, and their struggle to conform to their parents’ gender-swapping demands is long, difficult, and painful.

This is especially true for Hipólita, whose gendered performance appears to be more internalized and complete than that of Félix—even her parents initially refer to her as a young man, as opposed to a woman with masculine qualities—and whose physical, psychological, and emotional suffering as a result of the switch is more severe; after all, dropping her sword and stepping onto platform shoes is a huge step down in her society, in terms of power, independence, and prestige. This is sure to make modern sensibilities (and one might imagine, some early modern sensibilities as well) question whether the social gain of marriageability really outweighs her personal loss of self. While Hipólita is transformed at the last into a
feminine figure acceptable to society’s standards, one wonders why a suitor who fell in love with her when she acted like a man would threaten violence against her in order to make her a woman and his wife.

While Hipólita’s performance of femininity is a step down on the social ladder, Félix takes a step up by taking on the masculinity that he previously lacked. Again, it is important to recognize that the personal and emotional trajectories of the siblings’ stories are far from equivalent, and even represent reverse experiences. Félix’s transformation is, in part, a reflection of his growth into a self-sufficient adult, though this growth is complicated by the path he must take to reach maturity and independence: performing to his father’s expectations and standards, which include physical violence. Félix must commit an act of violence against a rival in order to claim his masculinity and recuperate his own honor, again in the name of love.

These acts of violence resemble each other in that they occur offstage and force audiences to rely on a secondary telling of what has occurred, all of which adds a layer of ambiguity that makes the play’s ending less neat than it might appear at first glance. The audience’s only view of Félix’s transformative battle with his rival comes at the very end, when he mercifully allows the defeated Otavio to escape with his life. Of Hipólita’s encounter with Luis we see nothing, and must determine from her words and distress the nature of her defeat. When Hipólita appears again onstage in the wake of the encounter, she is a woman who has lost her courage and strength of character in the shock of what has just occurred. She describes how she was overpowered by Luis, and how the encounter has made her realize that she is, indeed, a woman. This scene, occurring offstage and retold by a shocked Hipólita, is complicated by the ambiguous nature of the retelling: did Hipólita willingly allow herself to be overpowered, was
the sexual act entirely nonconsensual, or was it something in between? A generous reading of this encounter is that perhaps Hipólita’s shock stems more from her “defeat” in this contest than from the sexual act itself. Yet even if we accept this account, in that moment sex itself becomes masculinized as violent conquest. For a person who has lived her entire life being treated as an equal, and even admired by men for her strength and skill, the battlefront of sexual experience is also the final lesson in female subjugation and the breaking point of Hipólita’s masculine characteristics.

Jeffs, however, argues that today’s directors can present a more nuanced reading and performance in which Hipólita does not lose her masculine power to heterosexual love or a submissive sexuality, but instead begins “negotiating a balance of power within herself, calling upon her resources of dominance and passivity when the situation requires one or the other, or a cunning mix of both” (170). Félix’s situation can be similarly nuanced, she says, if the director carefully stages an ending that remains true to the text while still allowing for “open interpretation” and “ambiguity” (171). This will indeed be a challenge for the modern director as there is little in the closing of Act III to support such optimism—particularly in the case of Hipólita.

The positive ambiguity that Jeffs recommends does appear in the early modern adaptation of the play by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, entitled *Love’s Cure, or The Martial Maid* (c. 1612-13). *Love’s Cure* is more explicit in its references to physical and sexual violence, more exaggerated in relation to the moral and physical shortcomings of its male characters, and presents—in spite of a similarly conventional ending—an even stronger argument for gender as performance than Castro’s original. Beaumont and Fletcher’s Hipólita character, Clara, emerges...
as the clear protagonist over her brother Lucio, as she pragmatically and effortlessly switches between exemplary feminine and masculine performances, using both to her advantage. Anne Duncan argues that Clara is “presented as the only ‘real man’ in the play” because she gives a superior performance of the male code of honor, and that her character therefore complicates contemporary English stage practice (in which she would have been played by a male actor) and anti-theatricalist debates (which reflected larger social concerns over gender performance) by positing that “a woman can perform a man best” (398).

The Félix character, Lucio, brings into full view the issue of gender as performance. In Love’s Cure, he is raised as a female, with a woman’s name, so that no one but the closest servants and his mother know that he is actually the male heir of the exiled Alvarez (Don Pedro). From the opening scene, the audience is aware that the only thing saving Lucio from death—vengeance for his father’s actions prior to the play’s beginning—is the fact that the would-be avenger, Vitelli, thinks he is a woman. It is clear that Lucio’s upbringing as a maiden is about more than learned manners: it is a disguise to protect him from notions of honor that would fault him for another’s actions, and from the accompanying revenge. As Lucio battles for a woman’s love and family honor, his newly gained masculine courage is tempered by restraint—a masculine honor code that other male characters appear to have discarded in favor of crude violence, and which Clara has displayed for the entirety of the play.

While Love’s Cure appears to shy away from an outright indictment of the possible sexual violence and female subjugation in Castro’s treatment of his female protagonist, it goes further in developing the latent interpretation of gender in The Force of Habit as a negotiation of different forms of power. Much like Shakespeare’s The Taming of the Shrew in modern
productions, *The Force of Habit* should be a challenge welcomed by directors and actors alike because of the opportunities it presents for creative, nuanced performances and fruitful post-performance discussions. Playwrights, of course, have the luxury of adaptations, but instead of rewriting Castro’s ending, they may wish to take another cue from Fletcher, who wrote a sequel to the *The Taming of the Shrew* called *The Woman’s Prize*, the plot of which can be summed up in its alternate title: *The Tamer Tamed*.

*The Force of Habit* is an entertaining and engaging play that can foster important dialogues about gender, gender performance, and gender-based violence. We hope that our translation enables it to be recuperated and embraced.

**Our Translation**

Our translation of *The Force of Habit* is based on Eduardo Julia Martínez’s 1927 edition of *La fuerza de la costumbre*. It was the first translation produced by UCLA’s Working Group on the *Comedia* in Translation and Performance. Directed by Professor Barbara Fuchs and sponsored by UCLA’s Center for 17th- and 18th-Century Studies, this working group includes UCLA graduate students, local theater practitioners, and Golden Age scholars.

As part of our goal of fostering new and expanded audiences for Spanish Golden Age plays, our translation is designed for maximum accessibility, readability, and adaptability. Directors, playwrights, actors, and dramaturgs as well as students, scholars, and casual readers will find Castro’s complete text translated into clear prose (the movement from verse to prose is the only substantive textual manipulation), with brief but vital explanatory notes. This translation
complements the play’s only other English version, by Kathleen Jeffs, an adaptation for the stage performed under her direction at Gonzaga University in 2013.

Our translation was performed by Chalk Repertory Theatre as a staged reading in May of 2014, and again in October 2017 as part of the annual Southern California Shakespeare Festival, where it was performed by an Actors’ Equity Association company in residence at Cal Poly Pomona. The play is also the subject of two curriculum projects, developed as part of our “Classics in the Classroom” initiative, an effort to bring Spanish classical theater into K-12 classrooms by working with Los Angeles-based theater practitioners. Thanks to funding from the University of California Humanities Research Initiative (UCHRI), we were able to collaborate with teaching artists from 24th Street Theatre’s “Enter Stage Right” program (Los Angeles, California) to develop lessons for elementary school students and workshopped them in several classrooms. A similar collaboration with About…Productions (Pasadena, California) yielded a robust curriculum designed for a 12-day teaching artist residency at the high-school level called “Embodying the Classics.” This work was also supported by the UCHRI, as well as the Pine Tree Foundation (New York).

Works Cited


Pronunciation Key

Each vowel in Spanish has just one sound. They are pronounced as follows:

a - AH
e - EH
i - EE
o - OH
u - OO

The underlined syllable in each word is the accented one.

ñ - pronounced like the gn in lasagna

DOÑA COSTANZA: DOH-gNA COHS-TAHN-ZAH
DON PEDRO DE MONCADA: DOHN PEH-DROH DEH MOHN-CAH-DAH
FÉLIX: FEH-LEEEX
HIPÓLITA: EE-POH-LEE-TAH
GALVÁN: GAHL-VAHN
LUIS: LOO-EES
INÉS: EE-NEHS
LEONOR: LEH-OH-NOHR
LUIs: LOO-EES
OTAVIO: OH-TAH-VEE-OH
MARCELO: MAHR-SEH-LOH

ZARAGOZA: SAHR-AH-GOH-SAH
VALENCIA: VAH-LEHN-SEE-AH
CID: SIHD
MARTÍN PELÁEZ: MAHR-TEEHN PEH-LAH-EHS
SANTA ENGRACIA: SAHN-TAH EHN-GRAH-SEE-AH
RIVER GUERVA: GOO-EHR-VAH
The Force of Habit

Characters

DOÑA COSTANZA, mother of Félix and Hipólita
DON PEDRO DE MONCADA, father of Félix and Hipólita
DOÑA HIPÓLITA, daughter of Costanza and Pedro, sister to Félix
DON FÉLIX, son of Costanza and Pedro, brother to Hipólita
DON LUIS, brother to Leonor, in love with Hipólita
DOÑA LEONOR, sister to Luis, in love with Félix
OTAVIO, nobleman
MARCELO, nobleman
TUTOR, Félix’s tutor
GALVÁN, lackey
INÉS, maidservant
SERVANT
CAPTAIN
MASTER OF ARMS, fencing teacher
CONSTABLE
BAILIFF
ACT I

SCENE 1

Room in COSTANZA’s home

Enter COSTANZA and FÉLIX wearing the long habit of a student

FÉLIX    What novelties are these, my lady?
            What changes?
            From a sackcloth robe,
            a nun’s brown habit, long wimples,
            and a rosary,
            to curled hair,
            braids of gold, a full skirt,
            and a fine chain?
            From mourning to celebration?
            Yesterday, bare walls,
            sad and dull,
            and today,
            dressed and decorated
            in brocades and silks.
            Yesterday sorrows, today pleasures.
            In short, all that wept with sadness
            now sings with joy.
            What is this?

COSTANZA  Oh my son, Don Félix!

FÉLIX    Even my name has changed!
            Yesterday I was just Félix,
            and today Don Félix?

COSTANZA    Hear my reasons:
            My father,
            don Juan de Urrea,
            whose nobility honored this famous city,
            had me and my brother
            with Doña Inés de Bolea.
            After three years of marriage,
            she settled that debt we most fear,
and yet must all repay.
With his protection and care 
we grew up in Zaragoza 
amid admiration and praise.
My brother, 
renowned as an honorable gentleman, 
daring in love and in arms, 
and I for my beauty—
how Fame must have lied!
It happened that a gentleman 
of the house of Moncada, 
on his way from Valencia to Italy,\(^1\) 
decided to hear Mass 
and visit that first great church 
of our Patron Saint in Spain.\(^2\)
In the church he found me, 
and in him I found 
good sense and arrogance 
in equal measure.
He wore a cloth doublet, 
grey garter and hose, 
and on his black shoes 
two buckles of mother-of-pearl, 
breeches, jacket, 
and a cape of fine cloth, 
a pointed collar 
and a chain for a sash, 
his sword in its golden scabbard 
was dashingly girded to one side, 
while on the other, 
his dagger hung from a chain. 
His hat sported a broad brim, 
with feathers of blue and white 
cascading over the crown.
He approached as I left Mass, 
and I, more well-dressed than devout, 
and more curious than saintly, 
observed him with rapt attention.

\(^1\) Hapsburg Spain held significant possessions on the Italian Peninsula.

\(^2\) Spain’s Patron Saint, Santiago (James), is said to have been in Zaragoza when the Virgin Mary appeared there.
It seemed his whole heart was in his mouth, and his soul in his eyes. Unnoticed he drew near, and mumbled something that wasn’t clear, swallowing half the words. I did not want to answer but couldn’t help it, for in church one’s eyes can never lie. In any case, my answer was reason enough for him to abandon his journey. He lingered in Zaragoza, and turned gracefully from military displays to courtly attentions. He served and flattered me, obliging me with sighs and longings. He venerated the corners of my street, the doors of my house, the railings of my balconies, the grates of my windows—all altars to the idol he adored. I saw, at last, that my father had closed all doors to any discussion of marriage because he was a foreigner. Forced to stay in my room, I opened through a narrow window a wide door for him to reach his hopes. He entered through it many times, and, as he climbed, the darkness was his friend, and the dawn his enemy. From those long-awaited hours, from those wishes fulfilled, from those desires attained,
from that cherished darkness,  
a daughter was born,  
though she remained hidden.  
God knows what care and  
caution it took!  
But listen now  
to the greatest tragedy  
the world has ever known:  
about six months later,  
my brother happened to pass by  
just as Don Pedro,  
for such is my husband’s name,  
began climbing the ladder.  
He noticed something amiss,  
came closer  
and saw who it was.  
They both drew  
their shining swords,  
and bravely thrust at each other.  
Watching all this,  
I could hardly breathe,  
so that even now  
I can hardly tell it.  
My husband stabbed my brother  
in the chest—  
a wound so large  
his soul poured from it.  
“Jesus!” he cried, “they’ve killed me,  
bring a priest, oh Jesus!”  
I can see him now—  
leaning on his sword,  
clutching the walls,  
and falling to the ground.

FÉLIX  
What terrible misfortune!

COSTANZA  
His voice, when they recognized it,  
roused the street and the house.  
Don Pedro left him there and ran,  
and I was so upset,  
so bewildered, so beside myself,  
that I did not remove the ladder,
which was leaning on my wall and latched on to my windows. The noise brought my father out, and there, by the light of a candle he saw his son lying in his own blood, and the delinquent ladder, hanging there to my shame.

FÉLIX

Dear God, what a disaster!

COSTANZA

I did not see his reaction—the servants took me away, half dead. To escape my father’s threats, I turned myself in to the Law, and was placed in a lady’s house, a cousin to my mother. Don Pedro went to Flanders. They told me that he took the baby girl, barely more than a newborn, torn from my breast! But he left me another treasure, and that was you. From the moment you were born, you consoled me in my anguish, though I never spoke the cause. For twenty years, your father has served the king in Flanders. He commands a squadron of infantry with honor, and has great hope of preferment. Yet all those years, your grandfather, biding his time, dropped neither the quarrel nor his hope of revenge. But he died six months ago, and, although I was still in his bad graces, I became the sole heir.

---

3 Site of a longstanding Spanish occupation and frequent rebellions. Squadrons (tercios) like the one led by Don Pedro were comprised of professional volunteer soldiers from Spain.
to the home and estate.  
I notified my husband  
to come enjoy them,  
and I await him now.  
Already my heart tells me  
that noise in the hallway just now  
must announce his arrival  
and the end of my long troubles.  
Embrace me, my Félix.

COSTANZA and FÉLIX embrace

FÉLIX  
I am glad beyond words,  
Mother.  
Your happiness  
is even closer than you knew!

COSTANZA  
It may well kill me!

SCENE 2

Enter DON PEDRO DE MONCADA with a greying beard, HIPÓLITA, in men’s clothing, and an old man, who is TUTOR to FÉLIX

DON PEDRO  
My lady, do you not embrace me?  
Or is it that you do not know me?  
Why do you not speak?

DON PEDRO and COSTANZA embrace

What is it? Why do you cry?  
Although you see me much changed,  
and time has had its way with me,  
my heart, which has always been yours,  
remains the same.

COSTANZA  
My Don Pedro,  
our happiness is such  
that joy ties  
a tender knot in my throat—  
were it not for these tears
that spill from my eyes,
I would be undone!

DON PEDRO  My love, hold me again
in your tender embrace.

DON PEDRO *and COSTANZA* embrace again

COSTANZA  Are you really in my arms again?

DON PEDRO  But how much older!
I cannot hide these white hairs—
how do they seem to you?
Who could admire them, really?

COSTANZA  I will tell you what I think.

DON PEDRO  And what is that?

COSTANZA  I saw them,
my lord, and,
with every impression,
they make my love more tender.
I contemplate them modestly,
admire them respectfully,
gaze on them piously,
and weep for them tenderly.

DON PEDRO  Most witty,
my lady.
But now you must look calmly
upon this fine young man
and embrace him
as you did me.

COSTANZA  Who is this? What is this I feel? Oh my!

DON PEDRO  A chip off the old block,
with your name
engraved upon it.

COSTANZA  I see in him the very portrait
of what I used to be. 245

HIPÓLITA *kneels*

HIPÓLITA Give me your hand.

COSTANZA I will give you my soul, my daughter! My dear daughter!

HIPÓLITA My mother and lady.

COSTANZA And why are you dressed like this?

DON PEDRO As soon as she was weaned, I changed her name, and, thinking as a man, she dressed as one too, so as not to be encumbered as she went about her way. Like a trusty sword, she never left my side. She was raised at war—she’s seen battles, wounds, and slaughter. She could teach others now what she learned then. The armor fits her as though she were the Cid himself.4 She can handle a lance, and fire a musket— I swear she fights and takes risks as I do, if not with the same good sense, then at least with more spirit. She is unhappy, in truth, to find herself a woman. Such is *the force of habit!* 275

COSTANZA May God watch over her

4 Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, the great hero of Spanish medieval epic.
HIPÓLITA  To serve you with them.

COSTANZA  This treasure stayed with me when I was left without you.

DON PEDRO  Is that my Don Félix?

COSTANZA  It is.

DON PEDRO  I was about to ask you where he was.

FÉLIX  Let me kiss your hand, if not your feet.

FÉLIX  kneels

DON PEDRO  I give you my hand and my arms!

FÉLIX  stands and DON PEDRO  embraces his son

My son, this is strange: twenty years old now, in such a long habit? Why is this? Is he devout? Does he want to join the Church?

COSTANZA  No, it’s because I never let him wear a sword. I kept him at my side, for my own content, in my chambers by night and in my drawing-room by day. To avoid any painful moments and the risk of losing him, my one consolation, I never encouraged him to put on a man’s attire. That long habit is the shackles.
I placed on his feet,
though he never resented
staying put and not seeing the world.
Such is
the force of habit!

DON PEDRO This is unheard of!
You always were
a fearful woman.

COSTANZA I am a mother, and I have learned.

DON PEDRO Don Félix will learn
to conquer with courage
this horrid habit
that vanquishes valor.
That tether on a layman
is so offensive
that, before I even take off my spurs,
he must take it off,
and exchange it for proper dress.
Quickly now,
does he have any clothes?

COSTANZA He does,
but I do not allow him to wear them.

DON PEDRO And put Hipólita
in a long dress,
and do up her hair.
She can be your consolation
in your chambers and your parlor.
I will keep Don Félix
always at my side
to teach him courage,
and I know he’ll learn,
for, as soon as he buckles on a sword,
he’ll change his tune.
The house of Moncada
does not allow for womanly men.
And so, to the world’s amazement,
you’ll make a woman of a man,
and I, a man of a woman.
It’s cruel to keep a man
in a damsel’s long skirts.
Go, now,
and put on her
what you take off him.
I hope their habits will change
along with their clothes.

HIPÓLITA  I will not change!

COSTANZA  I will do
as you say.

DON PEDRO  May God keep you.

HIPÓLITA  Some fate for the two of us!
Vile fortune, what have you done?

FÉLIX  I cannot bear
to leave my mother.

Exeunt COSTANZA, HIPÓLITA, FÉLIX

SCENE 3

DON PEDRO  Who helped you
raise Félix?

TUTOR  I did.

DON PEDRO  Listen,
you who raised him,
is my son’s shrunken state
due to nature
or nurture?
Is this what his mother has made him,
or is this who he is?
Is there courage in his breast
that bursts forth when least expected?
What passion consumes him?
What fears unnerve him?
What tastes inspire him?
What schemes does he hatch?
Tell me the truth.

TUTOR
Sir, I served your father-in-law
until that wretched day,
or night rather,
that was the cause of such misfortune.
I was the servant
who saw my lady
to her aunt’s house,
and alerted the law.
Since then, she entrusts me
with her most precious business,
and I serve her
with my soul and my life.
Since his most tender boyhood
I have served your son, too,
about whom I shall speak
the truth that you demand.
As a child, he showed signs
of a fiery character
and chivalrous spirit
to be envied by all.
But his loving mother,
in her womanly fear,
foreseeing potential dangers,
and fearing misfortunes,
with pious diligence
and misguided caution,
corrected his actions,
and vanquished his nature.
When he leaned toward
manly things,
she distracted him with others,
feminine and shameful.
He would spend his days
in the women’s chambers,
passing the time,
watching the young ladies at work,
and playing with the girls.
When he found a pillow,
he would fall on the couch
and exhaust the pharmacy
of tonics and cordials.
His mother always hung around his neck
with sweet caresses,
spoiling him with gifts,
and instilling fears in him.
In winter the wind,
in summer the sun he feared,
and dew throughout the year.
He never felt the wind
or the sun!
He heard Mass at home,
once in a while at church,
if the weather was very mild.
When he walked in the corridor
of his very own house
they’d cover his head
as if he were sailing abroad.
At any sound of sword fighting
she would cling tenderly to her son
and yell: “Oh God!
They’re stabbing each other in the street!”
She would close every door
and open to him
her fearful bosom.
If muskets rang out,
she’d wrap him up,
face and body,
in her headdress, her blouse, her skirt!
If thunder rumbled,
or lightning flashed,
they trembled together
under the altar in the chapel.

**DON PEDRO**
At least that is an honorable fear:
to fear God is a virtue,
as we know his justice.
To fear men is cowardice.

**TUTOR**
That is how he was raised,
and when he had the chance
to learn manly ways,
she always stopped him.
He was never allowed to carry
even a practice sword,
much less brandish pointed steel for combat.
And so,
when he throws a stone,
he throws like a girl,
though he’s strong enough
to lodge it in an oak.
She even takes
table knives from him,
for fear they’ll cut him!

DON PEDRO Good God, what a disgrace!

TUTOR And so these habits,
so constant and prolonged,
became second nature:
he is very timid,
he is shy, he is fearful . . .

DON PEDRO In short, a chicken.
And a Moncada, by God!
This is unheard of.
His nature must be restored.
I will fire him up,
as my blood boils
in his veins and his breast!
His honor will be restored,
for his is good blood,
or I shall shed it myself!

SCENE 4

Enter GALVÁN, a servant

GALVÁN All your people are here.

TUTOR Here comes your son dressed as a gentleman.
DON PEDRO  I’ve missed you, Galván.

GALVÁN  What I was missing was a mule to ride on!

Enter FÉLIX, dressed in men’s clothing, wearing the garments incorrectly, and very bashful

DON PEDRO  He looks good. He is of a good size, although timid and ungainly. You look well, my dear Félix, with no shackles now! Lengthen your stride a bit.

(FÉLIX lengthens his step awkwardly and ridiculously)

Step out with manly spirit.

FÉLIX  I long to serve you in everything.

DON PEDRO  Drape your cloak more gracefully on that side—it’s not a long mantle. That’s how they do it at court.

(FÉLIX places his thumbs in his waistband)

You look like a monk. Stop that, stop that! Your hands are in the way—stand like a man.

(FÉLIX puts his feet together)

You’re not standing right!

GALVÁN  He looks more like a teapot than a man.

DON PEDRO  Keep the length of a crossbow
between your feet,
and never join them,
for if it's bad for horses,
it is no good for men.
Don your hat, and always remember
that knowing how to don it well
is an art unto itself.
That doesn't look right!
Never mind your ruff!
Place it firmly upon your head,
not lightly on your hair.

GALVÁN   Otherwise it looks more like
a tiara than a hat.

FÉLIX    I'm not ready for this,
and I don’t appreciate the jokes.

DON PEDRO And now you’re upset too?

FÉLIX    I feel insulted.

DON PEDRO Have you not figured out yet
that a man who is easily offended
seems a fool to all?

FÉLIX    Forgive me for
not tolerating such jibes.

TUTOR    This is what happens when noblemen
are raised to sulk in corners.

Enter HIPÓLITA dressed as a woman and COSTANZA behind her, a SERVANT bringing her
sword and dagger

HIPÓLITA   I swear I cannot manage
a single step.

She trips on her platform shoes and hurls them away

5 Spanish noblewomen wore elegant “platform shoes” of Hispano-Muslim origin called *chapines.*
COSTANZA  Listen, wait.

HIPÓLITA  How can anyone be even-headed when teetering on something so flimsy? How can a woman, standing on this cork, on the verge of falling at every moment, keep herself from tumbling in the end? I refuse to wear these shoes this dress and this hairpiece—useless concerns and to such dubious ends.

DON PEDRO  What is it, Hipólita? What’s wrong? You look very nice.

HIPÓLITA  I appeal to you, sir. Rid me of this suffocating dress, and of this hairpiece which smothers my head. I swear the thinnest strand of it is a noose around my neck . . .

COSTANZA  My dear, stop it this minute! My lord, how bizarre!

DON PEDRO  Madam, our children are monsters both.

GALVÁN  Her brother could give her his beard, and she could give him some courage in exchange. That would be a happy trade!

COSTANZA  His blood has rushed to his face. Is he upset?

DON PEDRO  You raised him so poorly that he is constantly mortified.

HIPÓLITA  takes the sword from the SERVANT’s hands
HIPÓLITA  My sword must return to my side.
No more of this,
which suits me so poorly!

DON PEDRO  It’s not to be—
you are a woman.
I want to place it at your brother’s side.

HIPÓLITA  I cannot take this quietly—
I must say
a proper goodbye!

(She draws the sword)

Oh sword!
I worship the cross of your hilt
and the steel of your blade.
I have no hope
of buckling you on again,
for it would be cruel,
dishonorable,
disloyal to take you up again
after I’ve placed a knitting needle
where you used to be.

And yet, how much more honor is there,
valiant sword,
in detecting an ambush
in your polished steel
than in gazing at braids
in the looking-glass.
Time is unjust—
being a man
suited me so well,
and just as my disposition changed,
my gender should have changed too.
Oh my sword!
Banished from my side,
perhaps you could bend a little,
although you are made of steel,
and return where you used to be,
so close and well-girded.
Sword of my life,
heaven knows
this hand never
drew you to your shame!
And if obedience did not now
force my hand,
one could not take you from it.
I would guard you and defend you.
Let him whom I obey
bear witness that I leave you
out of obedience and honor,
to my great sorrow,
but not for cowardice, no.

DON PEDRO takes the sword

DON PEDRO Enough, daughter,
that will do!
And now you, my son,
receive this sword
with the same spirit
that your sister showed
in granting it,
and listen to what is required
of a gentleman
who wears this shining steel.
He who does not wear it
has fewer obligations,
but flies closer to the ground.
The sword, buckled at his side,
is, for the brave man,
a safeguard for his honor,
protection for his life,
and he must never yield it,
even when that life
is in danger.
Even if it is inconvenient
to one’s own life,
honor comes first!
To serve his Christian king,
and for his faith,
he must brandish it,
forever protesting among the heretics,
and offering to die for his faith, never wavering nor insulting it. It falls on us to honor, profess, and use our sword to defend it. You must not draw your sword for light offenses, but, once drawn, it must not return unbloodied. Better bloody than naked in my estimation, because, unlike a body, it is shamed when naked, and red when it is not, even if it defeats the enemy. And if you must draw your sword against a common man because he arrogantly offends, hand to hand and man to man, then it’s clear that a true gentleman must show valor equal to the nobility he sports. For when common men resist their betters, they must kill or be killed, or at least be set to flight. So if at all possible, the gentleman must avoid grappling with the common man. I could go on, but I will tell you all in good time.

(DON PEDRO buckles the sword on FÉLIX)

Now you buckle it on, and when you go to Mass, it shall be blessed, as shall you. Heaven will make you a man, as I beg of it to do.
Come, my lady, give him your hand and your blessing.

FÉLIX kisses the hands of DON PEDRO and COSTANZA

FÉLIX May heaven repay you for this new self you have given me. 685

DON PEDRO That will be necessary if you are to have honor.

HIPÓLITA How I envy you, brother!

FÉLIX And I you. I’m jealous of whomever will be with my mother, and because I see you with no ruffs and cuffs. Terrible inventions both!

DON PEDRO You must get used to them. 695

FÉLIX I would like to tear them off.

GALVÁN By God he is right. Cuffs are inhuman! And those who care for them look like their hands are for sale. 700

DON PEDRO Only gallant lovers worry too much about them, you’ll see. A careless elegance is more befitting of men. Your sword should hang at your side, but toward the midpoint. Yours is askew. It should go like this.

DON PEDRO adjusts the sword

That’s how it goes.
FÉLIX I am ashamed to say
I have never worn one before. 710

DON PEDRO Wear it, and don’t sulk.

COSTANZA Hipólita?

HIPÓLITA My lady!

COSTANZA It’s my turn now
to teach you how to wear heels:
put them on again. 715

HIPÓLITA tries to put the shoes on without success

HIPÓLITA I will,
but I am trying to figure out how to do it.
If I don’t use my hands . . . 720

HIPÓLITA puts her leg out indecorously, takes the shoe in her hand and tries to put it on, as her mother takes it from her

. . . I will never get them on.

COSTANZA What are you doing, child?

DON PEDRO Nice job!

GALVÁN Was that a shoe?

COSTANZA Have you no shame
to show your foot and even your leg? 725

HIPÓLITA If I never once covered them
in the twenty years since I was born,
why do you blame me now?

She returns to trying to put on the shoes and still can’t do it

COSTANZA A pretty sight. 730

HIPÓLITA I can’t!
COSTANZA Don’t you see . . .

GALVÁN Here she goes again.

COSTANZA . . . that feet are far more lewd beneath your skirt? You do it, Félix, be a gentleman. Help her here.

FÉLIX slips the shoes on her

FÉLIX Here we go.

DON PEDRO I am amazed by the pair of them.

FÉLIX That looks nice!

GALVÁN If only he could draw his sword as well as he fits a shoe!

DON PEDRO If only he could draw, with his Urrea and Moncada blood!

COSTANZA Come, we must receive visitors in my drawing-room now, and we’ll get a petticoat on you!

HIPÓLITA Petticoat be damned, Jesus Chri—

COSTANZA My goodness! I have never seen anything like this.

GALVÁN And she’s two letters from taking the Lord’s name in vain!

DON PEDRO What is that noise? (To GALVÁN) Go see.

GALVÁN exits
SCENE 5

_Hearing the sound of swords, COSTANZA shields FÉLIX_

FÉLIX Those are swords.

COSTANZA Oh, my darling son!

HIPÓLITA Shall I go, too?

HIPÓLITA wants to go, but DON PEDRO stops her

DON PEDRO Stay here, woman.  

HIPÓLITA He has insulted me with that name.

GALVÁN returns and unsheathes his sword

GALVÁN Here, here, sir, here!
They’re in your very house!
And they’re fighting—oh the ruffians—
your servants, they’re toast.
Between the dead and the wounded there are more than seven hundred.

DON PEDRO Quiet.
What is the trouble, you fool?
If I am angry enough, I can draw my sword and kill seven thousand if need be.

DON PEDRO exits, putting his hand to his sword

HIPÓLITA What about you?
Aren’t you going with our father, brother?

FÉLIX I’m flustered.

HIPÓLITA Get to it,
or is that a knitting needle you carry there?

HIPÓLITA takes the sword from FÉLIX and leaves behind her shoes

Give it to me, you pansy,⁶ and watch those platform shoes. 780

FÉLIX My lady, come back!

COSTANZA I’m so afraid.

Exeunt

SCENE 6

Enter LUIS and DON PEDRO with drawn swords, and LEONOR is holding DON PEDRO back

DON PEDRO You make bold in my house and with my servants?

LEONOR Stop, please! 785

LUIS I will respect your white hairs.

DON PEDRO They aren’t so snowy as to freeze my hot blood! And my sword must be reckoned with in Italy, France, and Flanders. Let me go, my lady! 790

LEONOR Wait, my lord!

DON PEDRO I warn you: I have respect for women— do not make me lose it! 795

---

⁶ The word we translate as “pansy” is maricón, used as a highly derogatory term for a man who is deemed effeminate.
Enter COSTANZA and FÉLIX, as HIPÓLITA is attacking LUIS

HIPÓLITA: Measure your sword against mine
if you’re so valiant
with others!

COSTANZA holds DON PEDRO aside

COSTANZA: Wait, Daughter.

LEONOR: (Fainting in FÉLIX’s arms) I die! Oh Jesus!

FÉLIX: My arms will catch you, my lady!

COSTANZA: I cannot lose you again
so soon after your return!

DON PEDRO: Doesn’t our daughter
fight well?

COSTANZA: God keep her.

DON PEDRO: She amazes me.

LUIS: Stop, my lady—by God!
Do not kill me, I will surrender.
Although you strike me with your sword
it is your eyes that wound me—
you have the advantage over me.

HIPÓLITA: You defend yourself well
without attacking at all,
and in this you show
that you are courageous and strong.
And so, I have no wish to kill you,
or embarrass myself.

LUIS: Your beauty has already done me in—
I die the sweetest of deaths!

HIPÓLITA: Leave sweetness aside—
I cannot bear it—
and fight without these courtesies!

DON PEDRO Leave me, people are coming. 825

Enter OTAVIO and MARCELO

OTAVIO (To COSTANZA) My lady, what is this?

MARCELO separates the fighters

MARCELO Restrain yourselves, my lords.

HIPÓLITA Courtesy can be brave, too.

FÉLIX The sun itself
is not more beautiful! 830

LEONOR You outshine it, surely,
if it sets in your arms!

FÉLIX And it rises before my eyes.

LUIS If you will hear my apologies,
you will see that it is only my ill luck
that deserves your anger. 835

COSTANZA My lord Don Luis, our own relative,
who is well-known to this house,
cannot be in the wrong.
My lady Leonor? 840

LEONOR Yes, my lady?

FÉLIX (Aside) Oh, to gather her
a thousand times over
into my arms and my heart!

LUIS My sister and I
were on our way here in a coach.
The street was blocked
by mules and men,
so the driver
asked them to move, as he usually does. They responded badly, as they usually do. I spoke to them politely and they, in turn, forced me to draw my sword. By God, if I had known that they were your servants, I would have shown this house the respect it deserves, by the crest that ennobles it and the presence of my lady, Doña Costanza, who commands me as she pleases. And I did not even know that my lord, Don Pedro de Moncada, whose very name is famous, was now here. I long to greet him, as my lord and my friend.

DON PEDRO I welcome your courteous words, Don Luis. I kiss your hands and welcome you to my arms.

LUIS Your kindness is too much.

DON PEDRO I am fond of you already, for your gallantry and courage.

HIPÓLITA All of which he has, by God.

LUIS You, my lady, have vanquished me entirely, and do yourself credit with your praise.

HIPÓLITA You flatter me with this surrender, and try with me
what works with other women,
who are proud of their beauty,
and care nothing for being strong.

DON PEDRO  This is Hipólita, my daughter.

LUIS    Her courage well shows that.

LEONOR  Give me your hands, my lady.

HIPÓLITA I must kiss yours.

FÉLIX  (Aside) What great beauty!

OTAVIO I am pleased to meet you.
Give me your hands, my lord.

MARCELO And to me, as well,
for your fame and name
deserve my respects.

DON PEDRO  You do me too much honor
with your courtesies.

COSTANZA Why are we in the street?
Come in the house, if you please.
Leonor shall have
at least some water
for the fright that she had.

LEONOR I will gladly take it.

OTAVIO We are all at your service.

LUIS  (Aside) My soul is on fire,
her honest spirit appeals to me.

HIPÓLITA  (Aside) What do they search for, what do they want,
those eyes that watch me so?

LEONOR  (Aside) Félix is looking at me again.
FÉLIX  
(Aside) This must be love
that so delights and disturbs me.

COSTANZA  Look, my lord,
your son just about melts
when he looks at Leonor.

DON PEDRO  I pray to God it be so,
for once in love,
he will be truly brave.
ACT II

SCENE I

Street outside the church

Enter OTAVIO and MARCELO

MARCELO This is a lovely church.

OTAVIO Extreme in its beauty and devotion.

MARCELO Those ladies are the living images of it.

OTAVIO And so many of them together!

MARCELO In Saint Francis the human always becomes divine.

OTAVIO Have you been to Mass?

MARCELO It is early yet.

OTAVIO Well, then three of us shall behold them, for here comes Don Luis.

MARCELO He claims to love that lady, who lies somewhere between Mars and Bellona.  

OTAVIO Is she beautiful?

Enter LUIS

LUIS What is it you say? Who are you two talking about?

OTAVIO Your new love.

MARCELO It’s clear you’ve fallen in love!

7 Roman god and goddess of war.
LUIS    And by God I fell deeply!
         I am pierced to the soul
         by this youthful love.          940

MARCELO That old saying was made for you:
         a lesson learned in blood
         is not easily forgotten!

OTAVIO   Her gentle thrusts
         have made their mark.          945

LUIS    And had they not been well parried,
         they would have taken my life.
         But her divine eyes
         bloodied me more
         than that sword to which I surrendered
         my entire soul.          950

OTAVIO   Look who’s getting out of that carriage.

LUIS    Who?

OTAVIO   Don Pedro and Doña Costanza.          955

LUIS    My wishes come true!

MARCELO  And your lady, too.
         How she leaps down!
         She must be angry.

OTAVIO   What did she say?          960

MARCELO  She cursed her shoes.

LUIS    She doesn’t know how to wear them yet.

SCENE 2

Enter DON PEDRO, COSTANZA, FÉLIX, HIPÓLITA, and the TUTOR
DON PEDRO  Those were the days, my lady, when I would wait here for you to arrive.

COSTANZA  That may be, but I prefer these days, when I can freely take you by the hand as my husband.

DON PEDRO  That is true. Félix, step lively!

FÉLIX   I’m still off the mark. I will teach myself (Aside) so that you do not torment me so.

COSTANZA  Do you wear your cloak now as a cape, Hipólita?

HIPÓLITA  I wasn’t paying attention.

LUIS   (Aside) I love her with all my soul!

DON PEDRO  Must you two always be so much trouble!

_They greet each other and HIPÓLITA makes as if to doff her hat_

_The family exits and the three men remain_

MARCELO  Oh how dashing, by God, she was about to take off her hat!

LUIS  Her hands just go where they are used to going.

OTAVIO  Isn’t it amazing? Siblings so contrary— it’s incredible!

MARCELO  It is remarkable to see him so like a woman and her unable to pull one off.
That sword doesn’t really fit him, nor the mantle her.

LUIS That’s how strong habit becomes after a long time.

OTAVIO It is powerfully strong! More than popes or kings— beyond laws human or divine!

MARCELO It’s remarkable! They say that a man, on a whim, wore a patch on one eye for just one month, and was blind in it afterwards. What can possibly resist such a strange power, if just the habit of not seeing can take away one’s sight?

OTAVIO Its force is beyond words: is there anything more impossible than to live without drink? And yet a man with dropsy,8 was so determined to be cured, that he stopped drinking at all, and now lives without it.

MARCELO Habit is a spell, a charm!

LUIS In short, it leaps at any chance, and that’s what makes it strong.

MARCELO What could be stranger than how these two exchanged such different natures?

---

8 Old-fashioned term for edema, a condition which leads to bloating in the extremities.
These are superhuman effects, far beyond our ken!

OTAVIO   No one talks about anything, but the two siblings in this place. 1025

MARCELO   I swear, I’ve heard amazing stories about them! They are legend here, and Don Luis comes into it, too. 1030

LUIS      For which I thank my lucky stars!

MARCELO   They all talk about the time we saw you fight with her.

LUIS      She is like a very sword!

MARCELO   She is so brawny, that to show you her favor, she’ll cut you with her sword! 1035

LUIS      She knows how I thrust and will look kindly upon me.

MARCELO   Are you so much in love? 1040

LUIS      Where to begin? I love and long for the good esteem of Don Pedro de Moncada, his noble line and his courage. And the good breeding, the quality, the fame, the reputation of Doña Costanza all cast their spell on my breast. And then, when I saw her bright as day, I fell for a woman who does not even know how to be one! 1045

OTAVIO   That’s true.
MARCELO What do you think of Don Félix?

LUIS Give him time—although he was badly raised and spoiled, he is of such fine metal that it will shine through when tempered.

OTAVIO No more to say?

LUIS No more for you to know. I’m off, goodbye.

Exit LUIS

OTAVIO Goodbye. (To MARCELO) Clearly you feel something, to judge from how passionately you spoke. You must have liked the strong woman, too!

MARCELO I am as hot for her as you are for Doña Leonor.

OTAVIO She’ll be here soon, and I’m off to see her. Be well.

MARCELO Go, go. Love, everything in this world is love!

Exeunt

SCENE 3

Enter COSTANZA and HIPÓLITA

COSTANZA Your eyes wander too freely for an honest woman.

HIPÓLITA I was raised freely, but I look with no longing.
COSTANZA  I believe it, 
and had not thought of that. 
But an honest woman 
must be less obvious in how she looks around. 
She can see what she wants to see 
with a casual glance.  

HIPÓLITA  I was raised in Flanders, 
where people are more frank, 
and you can trust the men. 
But I’ll do as you say.  

COSTANZA  Flanders is a cold, cold land, 
Daughter.  

HIPÓLITA  And so shall I be, 
for that same reason.  

COSTANZA  Oh, Daughter, don’t ever say “not me.” 
For I have seen the remnants 
of much greater ice go up in flames. 
Don’t trust your eyes— 
they are treacherous friends, 
they ruin your life, 
and wear out your soul. 
Their curiosity forces your hand, 
and their daring can kill. 
They are sweet traps 
into which we fall, 
dead by our own eyes. 
They are a woman’s worst enemies!  

HIPÓLITA  You want me to treat them as traitors— 
if that’s what’ll make you happy, 
I won’t look at all.  

COSTANZA  I’m not saying you shouldn’t look, 
just not quite so much— 
you’ve been staring 
at Don Luis!  

HIPÓLITA  He looked so brave,
so courtly, and so honorable . . .
I saw him break up the brawl so capably,
with such courage and force . . .
I saw him treat my father
with such noble courtesy . . .
I saw him hold off my sword,
and yet not attack . . .
And so I grew fond of him
and wanted to see more of him . . .
because courage is a magnet,
at least for me—
but not, by God,
as a woman would want him!

COSTANZA I believe you,
yet desire always starts out
claiming honor,
and then makes bold.

HIPÓLITA Not in my case.

COSTANZA I pray God that it not be so.

HIPÓLITA How could it be,
when it has never been so?
I always act on the best of intentions.

COSTANZA But purity of heart
is not enough in this world,
which judges by what it sees,
and that must be exemplary.
Sit here,
and get on with your embroidery.
(To a SERVANT) Please, bring me a cushion.
(To HIPÓLITA) Sit right here.

A SERVANT brings a large cushion and HIPÓLITA sits, unable to sit as the other women, with her feet and legs uncovered until COSTANZA covers her up

HIPÓLITA I’ll never do this properly.
Wouldn’t a chair be better?
COSTANZA: Pull back your feet.

HIPÓLITA: I curse whoever made me a woman.

COSTANZA: You will learn to look around more discreetly.

HIPÓLITA: This is unbearable!

*She spreads out her legs*

COSTANZA: Good Lord!

HIPÓLITA: Why doesn’t everyone sit with a cushion?

COSTANZA: That is our habit.

Enter FÉLIX and GALVÁN

GALVÁN: Your father has ordered me to serve you, and that I shall do.

FÉLIX: It gives me pleasure, good Galván, to acquire such a good servant. Dear Mother, give me your hand.

COSTANZA: Dear son, your sister has really taken to embroidery!

HIPÓLITA: Oh, brother, I can’t do this—I was not born for it! It is driving me crazy—I can’t stand it!

FÉLIX: It takes some skill.

HIPÓLITA: Dull, dull, dull!

FÉLIX: You’re pulling on the wrong thread.
HIPÓLITA This is killing me.

FÉLIX Would you like me to show you?
Give it to me.
With your permission, my lady.

FÉLIX *takes the embroidery from HIPÓLITA and begins to work as well as the other women*

GALVÁN You embroider exquisitely.

HIPÓLITA What are you doing?
For God’s sake!

GALVÁN (To FÉLIX) You sit so elegantly!

HIPÓLITA Have you noticed?

GALVÁN Have you considered becoming a tailor?
You would make a fortune.

HIPÓLITA I can’t believe it!
You make a better lady
than a gentleman.
Get out!
Damn the man and his uselessness.

COSTANZA That was uncalled for.

HIPÓLITA Be strong.

GALVÁN What a pair!

FÉLIX I had no idea
I was upsetting her.

HIPÓLITA If you had no idea,
turn then to serious things,
and then you’ll know
what I would do
if I were in your shoes
and not a woman.
My God, give me his life,
or give me death!

COSTANZA  Clearly I must try something else.

HIPÓLITA  (To FÉLIX) I’m sorry.

FÉLIX  And I’m grateful for your advice.

SCENE 4

Enter the TUTOR and the MASTER OF ARMS

TUTOR  The fencing master is here.

COSTANZA  Sit down, and control yourself from now on.

HIPÓLITA  This is killing me. What I would do for a sword!

The MASTER OF ARMS pulls out fencing swords

MASTER OF ARMS  Are you ready for a lesson, my lord?

FÉLIX  Yes, master. I very much want to be skilled.

MASTER OF ARMS  Then pay attention! Hold the sword like this, draw it with nerve. Bring your foot out . . . not so much . . . hold it there.

FÉLIX puts his foot out too far and overextends his arm

Stretch out your arm, not all the way, like so. There are many stances, but this one is best.

HIPÓLITA  Oh, brother,
how limply you draw your sword!
There’s no wind in your sails!
Give me the sword,
and I swear I’ll teach you to fight
with the same spirit as you embroider!

HIPÓLITA takes the black practice sword and strikes a fencer’s pose

You must grab the sword like this,
and you must look ferocious.

MASTER OF ARMS That is correct,
and the posture is excellent.

HIPÓLITA Let us fight.

MASTER OF ARMS So be it,
if that is your wish, my lady.

HIPÓLITA Let’s leave it for later—
my father is coming.

GALVÁN (To the MASTER OF ARMS) Lucky man!

MASTER OF ARMS What do you mean?

GALVÁN If she had fought with you,
you’d be short an eye,
or a nose.

Enter DON PEDRO

DON PEDRO Hipólita, what is this?
You insist on trying to be a man
when you are woman?

HIPÓLITA I can’t stand this, Father.

DON PEDRO Give the sword to your brother.

HIPÓLITA If I could give my arm too,
then he might hold it properly.
DON PEDRO  Show him how to be brave, Master.
Teach him to fight,
which is not the same as fencing
or playing around.
No hanging back!
For God’s sake,
let him learn from his own wounds
how to parry and feint!
Show him how to draw his sword with spirit,
to keep the rhythm of his footwork,
to thrust, then cut,
backhand, and stab.
And tell him when to use each one—
they’ll come in handy
once he has learned them.
If he has a well-steeled spirit,
these lessons will be enough
for any gentleman.
Go on, Master, begin.
But first,
let’s test his nature.
Duel with him, fight.
Don Félix, give the master a good blow.

FÉLIX and the MASTER OF ARMS begin to fight, FÉLIX is handling the sword awkwardly

FÉLIX  I cannot control the sword.

COSTANZA  Oh, my Lord, he’s so clumsy.

HIPÓLITA  Don’t hang back, brother.
        Jesus, what a weak thrust!

DON PEDRO  (To the MASTER OF ARMS) Hit him! Let’s see if he gets angry.

The MASTER OF ARMS whacks FÉLIX, who cries out

FÉLIX  Oh Jesus!

DON PEDRO  You’re a disgrace!
        You whine like a woman—
take your vengeance!

HIPÓLITA takes the sword from FÉLIX and gains on the MASTER OF ARMS

COSTANZA  This is too much to bear!

HIPÓLITA  With the sword returned to my hand,
I’ll show you what you have to do,
and we’ll see if the Master
can get away from these blows.

MASTER OF ARMS  Stop, my lady!

HIPÓLITA  Strike better,
since you are so skilled.

GALVÁN  His skill is not the issue here.

DON PEDRO  Daughter, that is enough!

HIPÓLITA halts her attacks

GALVÁN  The Master is looking lively now!

DON PEDRO  And you, coward, are you not affronted?
Why do you shrink back?
Why are you so surprised?
Have you no guts?
Don’t you feel shame
to see a woman outdo you?
I am so . . .

COSTANZA  Oh Lord, stop!

DON PEDRO  Why so afraid?
What cowardice has come over you?
You are a Moncada!
Do you do these vile things to affront me?
Do you not know what blood runs through your veins?
Do you not know where and how
our great house was founded,  
with its towering pillars  
that compete with the sun:  
Hugos, Gastones,  
Pedros, Guillenes, Ramones,  
pride of Spain itself?  
And you tear down with your shame  
the house that I sustained!  
Read the annals of Aragon,\(^9\)  
my son, and learn there  
who your ancestors were:  
the Moncadas and the Urreas.  
Raise your thoughts  
to their giant deeds,  
and they will warm your blood.  
Or, if you hold back  
from a sense of Christian virtue,  
then find refuge  
in a convent.  
To lose my heir  
will pain me less  
than to see you like this.  
What do you have to say for yourself?  

**FÉLIX**  
I want  
to be as brave  
as my noble ancestors,  
and my soul is honorable,  
my lord.  
Courage spurs me on—  
it strikes at my very heart,  
it makes my blood boil.  
I want to act on it,  
but my lack of experience  
rips me up.  

**HIPÓLITA**  
That’s better.  
It takes courage to want to be brave.

---

\(^9\) One of the great kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula, it formed a dynastic union with Castile at the end of the 15\(^{th}\) century through the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon with Isabella of Castile.
DON PEDRO  That is some consolation.

COSTANZA  Oh, my dear boy! 1340

DON PEDRO  Stand aside, my lady.

COSTANZA  Why?

DON PEDRO  Because this womanliness is contagious, and you’ve given it to him. (Referring to HIPÓLITA) Take that woman away . . .

GALVÁN  That’s not what I would call her, by God!

DON PEDRO  . . . and teach her to be a coward.

HIPÓLITA  That will be impossible.

DON PEDRO  Neither of them should be one, by rights.

TUTOR  If his father had raised him, he would have set a better example.

DON PEDRO  In order to make you brave, leaving honor aside, I will show you there’s no point in cowardice. I’ll prove it to you, so that you’ll never cower. What, after all, do cowards gain? 1360

GALVÁN  Well, they live longer, or so the books say.

DON PEDRO  They live less.

FÉLIX  Less?

DON PEDRO  I will prove it. 1365
DON PEDRO pretends to attack

Once you get your sword this close, I cannot even wound you without dying in the attempt. Even if it’s dangerous to attack, not to attack is even more so—an opponent will kill you all the quicker if you hold back. And if a man flees—which is shameful in a real man—who’s to say his opponent won’t run after him? And what if he catches him and wounds him then? Oh what shame to die from a wound in your back! And so, even if honor did not exist, cowardice would be a mistake.

TUTOR  What more is there to say?

GALVÁN  I disagree: running is not the same as fleeing.

HIPÓLITA  Maybe for you, but for one who is noble, they are one and the same.

DON PEDRO  My son, find your courage, or you threaten our honor.

FÉLIX  Your words give me courage, my lord. I will do what I can, as soon as I can find my way.
DON PEDRO  (Aside) I have an idea of how
to make him lose his fear . . .
(To FÉLIX) Son,
would you join me as my sole companion?
For in whom should I trust
if not my own son?

FÉLIX  I feel my courage rising
to serve you loyally and with honor.

DON PEDRO  Then put on armor,
and take up a shield.
(Aside) This will be a fine plan!
We’re off! Goodbye, Doña Costanza.

COSTANZA  Goodbye.

DON PEDRO  May you fulfill my hopes.

FÉLIX  I will,
on my mother’s life!

GALVÁN  Note the great extolling
back and forth.

HIPÓLITA  That is a funny exchange of oaths
among so many mustachios.
If I could take them
and put them on my face,
by God I swear . . .

COSTANZA  Stop it.

HIPÓLITA  . . . I’d do otherwise.

Exeunt

SCENE 5

Street outside LEONOR’s window
Enter OTAVIO and MARCELO

MARCELO She sings divinely.

OTAVIO Leonor is an angel through and through. I’m crazy with love.

MARCELO It doesn’t take much for you to lose your mind. 1430

OTAVIO I’ve tried everything to restore my sanity. Listen, she sings again!

MARCELO No warming up? 1435

Enter LEONOR, singing at her window

LEONOR (Singing) Black eyes, sad eyes, why so full of tears? If the night is fine, why then these fears? The sun lights your days though you outshine it quite. Why then do your sad eyes turn to the night? You’ll tell me it’s madness, for such it must be, to make your soul ask what it knows instantly. Knowing what it knows, what could it possibly say? Oh, voice of my soul, cry by night, as you speak by day. 1440

MARCELO This is heavenly, by God.

OTAVIO The angels have stopped singing to listen to her. 1455
MARCELO Are you the one of whom she sings?

OTAVIO Would that I were so lucky!

MARCELO Now they’ve closed the window.

OTAVIO My soul grieves!

INÉS, LEONOR’s servant, comes to the window

INÉS (Aside) Now my lady has gone— I must get rid of these fools. (Aloud) Goodbye, you silly suitors.

OTAVIO Wait, is that all you came for?

INÉS My lady calls. (To someone offstage) I’ll be right in! (Aloud) My lady is waiting.

MARCELO How charming.

OTAVIO So witty. People are coming, let’s go.

Exeunt

SCENE 6

Enter DON PEDRO, GALVÁN, and another SERVANT

DON PEDRO I no longer know these streets.

GALVÁN Fabio lives on this one, and it’s a dead end.

DON PEDRO Remember then, both of you,
once Félix is alone,
watch his back.
Have you warned Fabio?

GALVÁN
And how!
His two doors are open,
and the main one
leads to the street.

DON PEDRO
I’ll go in that way,
and then come out in disguise
to find Don Félix.
If we are lucky,
I’ll cure him of his fear.

Enter FÉLIX with sword and chainmail

FÉLIX
God in Heaven!
The dark is terrifying!

DON PEDRO
(Aside to GALVÁN) It’s him, get back.
(To FÉLIX) Son?

FÉLIX
My lord?

DON PEDRO
Tonight I charge you with
guarding the entrance
to this street for me.

FÉLIX
I would do that and more to serve you.

DON PEDRO exits

He’s gone into that house—
I must confess my fright.
I’ve never been out at night,
and can’t tell what’s what.
If hell is rocky,
then this may well be hell,
the cobbles pierce my very soles—
I am more used
to walking on soft carpets.
I stumble into corners
like a blind man,
my eyes unused to the dark.
To me, blind and afraid,
every man looks like he’s carrying
a giant on each shoulder.
What is this now?

DON PEDRO enters dressed in a different cape, with a handkerchief over his mouth and
brandishing his sword

DON PEDRO  
(Aside) If this teaches him,
it will be a good night’s work.  

FÉLIX  
Oh, Jesus! Father! Father!

DON PEDRO  
(Aside) I’m ashamed to be your father.

Hearing the noise, LEONOR and INÉS appear at the window

LEONOR  
Swords! Is it my brother?
Oh heavens, have mercy!

FÉLIX  
How can I get out of here?
My back is up against the wall.
Is he going to kill me?
Fighting is the only solution!

FÉLIX begins to swing his sword

DON PEDRO  
(Aside) My plan is working already.

DON PEDRO retreats, running through a door

FÉLIX  
I’m about to explode.
Now you flee, you coward? Wait!

LEONOR  
Don’t follow him.

FÉLIX  
Who is that?

LEONOR  
Listen to me, my lord, on my life!
FÉLIX   I recognize your voice.  

LEONOR  Are you Don Félix?  

FÉLIX   Yes, my lady.  

LEONOR  Are you hurt?  

FÉLIX   Only your eyes  
have pierced me through,  
and I long for you to cure me.  

LEONOR  That is not a mortal wound.  

*Enter* GALVÁN and a SERVANT  

GALVÁN  Let’s get closer.  

LEONOR  People are coming, Don Félix.  

FÉLIX   I feel scared again.  

*Enter* DON PEDRO  

GALVÁN  What are you doing with an unsheathed sword, my lord?  
We’re all friends here.  

DON PEDRO  Have you crossed swords with someone?  

FÉLIX   Yes,  
a man disrespected me,  
but he got his just desserts.  

DON PEDRO  It’s good to see you so fired up.  

FÉLIX   I cut him again and again,  
until he finally ran away.  

GALVÁN  Brave boy!  
He’d make a good ruffian,  
bravest when he’s cornered.
DON PEDRO  Did you lose your hat or your scabbard?
You must get them back.

FÉLIX     Here they are.       1555

DON PEDRO  A brave man
leaves nothing behind.

LEONOR    (To INÉS) The father is a great gentleman.
I admire his courage.

INÉS      And the son?       1560

LEONOR    I am fond of him,
too.

DON PEDRO  Calm down.

FÉLIX     Yes, my lord,
I am just thrilled.       1565

DON PEDRO  How is that?

FÉLIX     My lady has seen me
in this dangerous moment.

DON PEDRO  That is an honorable sentiment.       1570

FÉLIX     I am honored to express it.

DON PEDRO  If I can cure cowardice,
I will be famous among doctors.

Exeunt

SCENE 7

Street outside LEONOR's window, a different day

Enter MARCELO and OTAVIO
OTAVIO  So now everyone knows
that Don Félix is Leonor’s suitor.  1575

MARCELO  The two siblings
could exchange roles.

OTAVIO  Love
is not that simple.

MARCELO  You’re jealous.  1580

OTAVIO  Maybe—
aren’t you?

MARCELO  No more than I was,
because chance brought me
jealousy and love at once.  1585
First, I was jealous,
then, in love.

OTAVIO  That’s true.

MARCELO  And so, though things look bad,
it’s nothing new,
so I can’t complain.  1590
It’s different for you.

OTAVIO  My lady won’t love one
who is a man in name only.

MARCELO  She might love a man who is a woman,  1595
as I love a woman who is a man.

OTAVIO  Ours is the most perfect gender,
and thus, the most desirable.

MARCELO  In truth,
love makes anything possible.  1600

OTAVIO  I swear I see them up there!
LEONOR and HIPÓLITA come to the window

OTAVIO  Doña Costanza
         must be visiting Doña Leonor.

MARCELO  Great, infinite beauty.

OTAVIO  Her beauty makes me long
         for what cannot be!  1605

LEONOR  (To HIPÓLITA) There are suitors in the street.

HIPÓLITA  That’s exactly
         where I’d like to be.

LEONOR  You cannot reconcile yourself
         to being a woman.  1610

HIPÓLITA  Even if I say nothing,
         my dress speaks volumes—
         it’s torture!

LEONOR  How you exaggerate!
         You’re so full of jokes.  1615

MARCELO  Here comes the sun.

OTAVIO  And what beautiful suns they are!

HIPÓLITA  The dawn, the sun,
         the moon, the stars—
         don’t they tire of such conceits, my lady?  1620

LEONOR  They are quite stale.

MARCELO  Your voice
         rises to the heavens.

LEONOR  And sinks not to your level—
         that’s a new one.  1625

HIPÓLITA  It was well put.
Dashing even.

OTAVIO  If you speak tenderly,  
        she'll never respond.  

MARCELO  What can I do  
        other than challenge her?

OTAVIO  Maybe she'll meet you out in the fields,  
        since she's so brave.

HIPÓLITA  And what if I do?  

MARCELO  I believe you would kill me.

OTAVIO  What happiness it would be  
        to be killed by such hands.

LEONOR  (To HIPÓLITA) They show such desire  
        to honor you!  

MARCELO  All in all, you have offended me,  
        and I must challenge you.

HIPÓLITA  Fear won't stop me.  
        I will come out to the fields.

MARCELO  If you are so brave, come down here.  
        But leave your beauty behind,  
        so you can fight fair.

OTAVIO  (To LEONOR) And since I'm at his side,  
        you can come too,  
        and, though your beauty is your sharpest weapon,  
        I won't ask you to leave it behind,  
        since it is what I long for.

LEONOR  And would you not try  
        to take advantage of my beauty?

OTAVIO  You're already killing me—  
        there are daggers in your eyes
that wound from afar.

SCENE 8

Enter FÉLIX and LUIS

LUIS    Let us woo each other’s sisters awhile.

FÉLIX    Let’s go. 1660
        (Aside) His sister drives me crazy—so beautiful yet different!

LUIS    (Aside) I feel the spark of jealousy.

LEONOR  You seem more womanly when you look at my brother so tenderly. 1665

HIPÓLITA If I look, it is only because his courage and honor have proven him worthy. 1670
I am grateful for your own courtesy in setting eyes on my brother.

LUIS    So, gentlemen, what is going on here?

MARCELO Where there are ladies, one deals in love. 1675

FÉLIX    Well, if that’s it, carry on.

LUIS    You’ve got a good hand to play! 1680

OTAVIO  Our hand was fine without you two in the mix.
FÉLIX And do the ladies make a royal flush?

LUIS By God, we’d like such a hand. We stand to lose the most!

LEONOR And so you have us in hand?

LUIS It would be foolish to be so certain.

HIPÓLITA It’s only because you’re so brave.

LUIS You give me too much credit.

FÉLIX And I trusted my sister’s courage.

MARCELO That may well be.

OTAVIO And if so, then what?

FÉLIX Well, if anyone is worthy, who better than me?

OTAVIO Anyone, really.

LUIS That’s enough.

HIPÓLITA No one, not in lineage nor in valor.

OTAVIO If you say so.

HIPÓLITA I will back him up.

MARCELO No one’s up to the challenge.
HIPÓLITA  *(Fussing with her sleeves)* How is it I can handle a pike, but not these pins?  

LEONOR It’s just the braid on the cuff, it’s stuck to your brooch.

HIPÓLITA I’m all tangled up in this dress.

LEONOR I’ll undo the knot, just wait.

HIPÓLITA I can’t wait. I’m like Alexander the Great, who cut through the knot rather than untie it!  

The cuff falls out the window

LEONOR There it goes.

HIPÓLITA Would that it had fallen into the deepest ocean!

LUIS Give it to me.

MARCELO I got it first.

HIPÓLITA I’m sorry already.

LEONOR This isn’t good.

LUIS Give me that cuff, Marcelo!

MARCELO Why should I? The heavens gave it to me.

LUIS Because its owner is waiting for it.

MARCELO And won’t my feet take me to her?

---

10 Alexander the Great’s solution for the intractable Gordian knot was to slice through it with his sword.
LUIS Not on my stairs
they won’t!

MARCELO If that’s the case,
then all I need is your permission. 1735

LUIS I don’t grant it!

MARCELO Well, I don’t want to give the cuff to you.

LUIS Then I’ll take it from you.

MARCELO Let’s see you try.

HIPÓLITA If it’s my cuff, what are you two doing? 1740

MARCELO My sword
will defend it!

MARCELO exits grasping his sword, while LUIS shakes off OTAVIO to follow MARCELO

LUIS Let me go,
and let me at him!
I’ll cuff him for it. 1745

Exeunt LUIS and MARCELO

HIPÓLITA Brother, come here!

LEONOR Oh, there goes my glove.

The glove drops and FÉLIX takes it

FÉLIX This is my good fortune.

OTAVIO Had I come without my sword,
it might have been! 1750

OTAVIO takes the glove from FÉLIX’s hands

FÉLIX (Trying to take out his sword) I can’t . . .
OTAVIO You are nothing, and I want this jewel.

FÉLIX Wait!

OTAVIO Let’s see you do marvels. 1755

FÉLIX I can’t.

HIPÓLITA Oh, unworthy gentleman!

OTAVIO Leave your sword in your scabbard and try some embroidery instead. Or do you need a servant to pull it out? It’s your courage that’s stuck! 1760

FÉLIX I can’t . . . 1765

OTAVIO When you get around to it, my friend, you can cut me— but you won’t, not with that maiden sword, too ashamed to undress for us! 1770

DON PEDRO enters the street from a door

DON PEDRO What’s going on?

LEONOR Hold on, by my life.

FÉLIX I’ll do as you say.

HIPÓLITA Glove and cuff I must recover, for heaven gave me for a brother a man who is a woman. 1775

HIPÓLITA exits

LEONOR Well, there we are.
At least my bare hand
is less shameful
than your sword in its scabbard.
If you had drawn your sword
to defend my glove,
you would have deserved the pair,
but who needs gloves
when he has no use for his hands?
There will be no more tokens
between us,
not mine, not yours, nor anyone else’s,
by God!
What a great coward
the one who ran from you last night
must have been!
If you had defended my glove,
you might have deserved my hand—
now, instead,
I despise you for this cowardice.
Here is a small token—
you need feathers
to complete your act!

(She gives him a feather from her hairpiece)

Here,
you can wear these.
Although what you really need
is a less elegant bird
that’s tastier to eat . . .

LEONOR exits

FÉLIX I will give you satisfaction.
Wait, my lady, please.

He goes to exit but DON PEDRO enters

DON PEDRO What should she wait for, you pansy?
Such shameful errors
cannot be undone!
I shall kill you myself.
FÉLIX Listen, I must get out of here, but I will return to restore your honor.

DON PEDRO By God, I should make you bleed all the blood I’ve given you!

DON PEDRO exits drawing a dagger on FÉLIX, who flees from his father

SCENE 9

Room in COSTANZA’s home

Enter COSTANZA, holding back HIPÓLITA, while GALVÁN and the TUTOR go to the balcony

COSTANZA Have you ever seen such impudence? 1815

HIPÓLITA It’s actually courage.

COSTANZA Stop, daughter.

HIPÓLITA Let go, mother!

COSTANZA Come, hold her, you two.

HIPÓLITA Stand back, old man! 1820

TUTOR You’re too strong!

GALVÁN All this for a cuff that fell off!

HIPÓLITA You want to take me, you little devil?

HIPÓLITA punches GALVÁN in the face

GALVÁN By God, 1825
I wish you had no cuffs left,
then you’d leave my nose be . . .
HIPÓLITA    I need a sword!
           You’re despicable!
           If you don’t give me a sword,
           I’ll take one myself!

HIPÓLITA takes a sword from a SERVANT

COSTANZA    Daughter, I warn you, this is killing me!

LEONOR enters

       Stop her, Leonor.

LEONOR      Stop, my lady.

HIPÓLITA    Oh, my friend,
           my heart is bursting!
           My soul cries out for revenge.

FÉLIX enters, chased by DON PEDRO, who threatens him with a sword

FÉLIX        Sir, what are you doing? Sir!

DON PEDRO    I’ll kill you!

COSTANZA    Oh, my son! And for what?

DON PEDRO    And where are you going, woman?

HIPÓLITA    I’m going to avenge my brother.

DON PEDRO    Why has heaven given me
           two such children!
           One needs a bridle,
           the other spurs.
           I could take that revenge
           you claim,
           but it must be taken
           by his own hand,
           or it’s no use.
           You should exchange clothes again,
           and I’ll set him to needlework,
to shame the pansy—
except that he doesn’t
have any shame, no,
and he stains the honor
of the best blood in the world!
I’m going to kill him.

LEONOR    Wait!

COSTANZA  My son!

DON PEDRO And you, too,
you’re the cause this shame!

FÉLIX     I’m so ashamed I could die!

Luis enters with a cuff covered in blood

Luis   This, my lady,
is the cuff that fell from your arm.
Forgive me if it’s blood-stained,
for in order to get it back,
I slashed the hand
that dared to steal it,
and its red blood
soiled the white cloth.
Had it lain
in a lion’s claws,
in the very mouth of hell,
or in its deepest pit,
by God, I would have fetched it,
just to put it in your hands again!
Take it, it’s yours.

HIPÓLITA I accept it,
and give you a thousand thanks,
a thousand praises.
If I were the king,
I would add this bloody cuff
to your coat of arms!

Luis   I’d rather serve
the one who reigns
in my heart.

DON PEDRO

Oh, how this courage shines forth!
Why can’t you take this example?
Why isn’t your soul moved by such honor?
Why does it not burst out from you?
By God, my son,
unworthy of that name,
you must cut off that hand
with which he took the glove,
or my hands
will tear you to pieces!

FÉLIX

Stop insulting me, Father,
for I am in such a state
that I will soon change
your opinion of me.
The insult I received,
the jealousy,
the pain of so many affronts at once
have turned me into a lion.
The shame
that burns from deep inside
has blown up this mine.
I will be another Martín Peláez,11
who, ashamed of his cowardice
when the Cid took his seat,
later became a wonder.
By our Maker,
I will be a divine scourge,
and cover the sun
with crimson clouds of blood.
A thousand vipers have stung me,
and I am all venom.
Goodbye, Father.

TUTOR

Stay, my lord!

DON PEDRO

Note his courage,

---

11 A cowardly cousin of the legendary Cid, his father forced him to go to war, where he became a hero.
and wait for my instructions.

COSTANZA  And you take courage, my lady.

LEONOR  I will not hold him in my heart again until he returns in triumph.  1925

GALVÁN  You need not fear, and now he won’t either!

LUIS  I will stand by him, for I am yours.

FÉLIX  No one follow me, leave me alone.

HIPÓLITA  That’s more like it, by God— show some spirit, for I’m losing mine.  1930
ACT III

SCENE I

Enter DON PEDRO and FÉLIX

DON PEDRO  Delaying until the right moment to exact revenge is no lack of courage. On the contrary, it makes it all the more satisfying. Your enemy has been away, and he hasn’t shown his face.

FÉLIX  He will assume I’m off my guard.

DON PEDRO  He doesn’t think you’re brave.

FÉLIX  What should I do? I would kill for a new reputation.

DON PEDRO  The more passionate you feel about something, the worse your counsel, and so mine won’t be reliable.

FÉLIX  So who do you trust?

DON PEDRO  There aren’t many people you can count on in times like these. You might as well ring an alarm for the entire city as get all your relatives involved. There’s sure to be some doubting old man or cowardly boy among them who will betray your confidence and alert the authorities to thwart your revenge.¹² This vengeance,

¹² Duels were illegal at the time, though they nonetheless occurred frequently.
which touches on my honor,  
must go right.

FÉLIX
Who did you call upon  
to assist us, my lord?

DON PEDRO
Don Luis,  
who was with you  
when it happened,  
and therefore must stand with you.  
I also called a captain, a great soldier,  
who was in my battalion in Flanders.  
They’ll give you good advice.

FÉLIX
I will do as you say.

DON PEDRO
Be guided by your honor,  
and if you want revenge,  
think of nothing else  
but the fact  
that you have been affronted.  
You’ll get cold feet  
if your mind starts to wander,  
and you’ll never kill anyone  
if you’re afraid to die.  
Show your opponent  
respect and courtesy—  
a man who speaks softly  
kills daringly.  
When you fight,  
grab the enemy’s sword  
and secure it first,  
then kill him,  
even if by holding it  
you cut your hand—  
it’s worth losing a hand  
to save your life.  
When you’re not very skilled,  
or not at all,  
you need a good trick,  
one that’s not been tried too many times.  
An unskilled man
can’t buy time.  
If the fight goes on too long,  
you’re bound to be killed or overcome.  
When you’re in such danger,  
you can’t delay.  
You take your chances,  
betting everything on one move.  
But here come those we summoned.  
Calm down.

FÉLIX  
I will remember well  
what you have taught me.

Enter LUIS and the CAPTAIN

CAPTAIN  
I am at your command.

DON PEDRO  
(To the SERVANT) You there, bring chairs.  
(To the CAPTAIN and LUIS) You’ve come to restore my honor!

LUIS  
I come, my lord,  
because this cause is mine  
as much as anyone’s.  
Your son was at my side,  
and it was my sister’s glove  
that was taken from him,  
and that I went to recover,  
when you led me to expect  
Don Félix would not seek revenge.

DON PEDRO  
We must decide  
how he is to be avenged.

LUIS  
He could kill his enemy  
with a dagger by night,  
or a club by day.

FÉLIX  
And will this restore  
the reputation I have lost?

LUIS  
Surely one who is affronted  
can safely take revenge?
CAPTAIN  Yes,
but he was not affronted.
Not getting that glove
was his own failing,
not an offense committed against him.
And if you’re shamed through your own fault,
you must restore your reputation
rather differently
than if another has affronted you.
Therefore,
he must regain that glove honorably,
with his own hands,
and with it, his reputation.

LUIS   You’re right of course.

DON PEDRO  Right on target.

FÉLIX   Well then, when and how
shall this glove be recovered?

CAPTAIN  The most gallant thing
would be to reclaim it
in the same place where you lost it,
so that the lady to whom it belongs
might witness the deed.

FÉLIX   And if he’s already lost it
or given it away?

CAPTAIN  Then you exact its price
with your brave hands—
it’s worth a life.

DON PEDRO  Take note, son:
how honor makes things dear!
It comes at a high price,
and you must not squander it.
Let us think this through:
it is not a good idea
to reclaim it
on the street,  
for there’s always someone around  
trying to keep the peace  
who will intervene  
for good or ill.  
The law does what it must,  
even when revenge is at stake.  
If they get their way,  
matters will stand  
as they do now for Don Félix.  
What is worse,  
he shall be publicly shamed,  
rather than avenged.  
No, if he is to reclaim the glove,  
he should do so  
where he can take it,  
triumph, kill, or die.  

LUI S  Let him summon his opponent to a duel,  
and send a note  
to make him accept.  

DON PEDRO  I do not place much trust in notes.  

CAPTAIN  I will take the message to him,  
and by rights,  
I should make him  
bring a second, too.  
I will second Don Félix,  
to make up  
for his inexperience.  

DON PEDRO  No, Captain, I insist,  
if it comes to that,  
it must be me.  

LUI S  And if not you,  
it should be me.  

FÉLIX  You are all most kind,  
but you cannot be suggesting  
that I avenge my affront
with borrowed courage.

DON PEDRO  Well said.

CAPTAIN  There is one thing you can do 2105
that will avoid the need
for notes or messages—
find that unavoidable moment
when he must face his fate,
whether good or bad.

FÉLIX   I am at the ready.

CAPTAIN  A brave and discreet fellow, 2110
when he finds his enemy,
takes him out to the fields without letting on,
so that no one can get in the way—
then, in some remote place,
where no one can stop you, 2115
you take the glove or his life.

DON PEDRO  And so you will return with honor! 2120
My well-born son, scion of a noble breast—
I’d rather find out they’ve killed you
than that you’ve been defeated.
Come here,
with this embrace, I give you my blessing.

FÉLIX   Your words
infuse courage in my heart.

CAPTAIN  Can there be such a father? 2125

LUIS   I am moved
by their words.

DON PEDRO  Oh, sacred honor, worth so much, 2130
but so dearly purchased!
Goodbye, my son.

FÉLIX   Goodbye, father.
FÉLIX exits, DON PEDRO and the CAPTAIN talk as they walk offstage

DON PEDRO  You are not as well known here, Captain . . .

CAPTAIN  That is true.

DON PEDRO  Forgive me, sir, you . . .

LUIS   He is so preoccupied that he leaves me behind.

DON PEDRO  But listen here . . .

CAPTAIN  Please.

DON PEDRO, FÉLIX, and the CAPTAIN exit stage completely

LUIS   Seize your moment, and good luck!

SCENE 2

HIPÓLITA enters

HIPÓLITA  Where am I going? Where have they brought me?

LUIS   And who brings me such happiness?

HIPÓLITA  What worries, what fears ravage my heart?
Where is my former courage?
What has my heart done with it?
Tenderness in my breast?
I, afraid? I, anxious?
Could any change be greater?

LUIS   Could any chance be sweeter?

HIPÓLITA  Love must be like lightning,
for it has struck in the strongest place.
Oh, Lord, it scorches my soul!
But, you? Here in this place?
I want to scream—
there are thieves in my house.

Luis

This is no thief,
but one who searches,
sweetly and selfishly,
for the thief that robbed him,
in order to recover what he has lost.
You are the thief, not me!

Hipólita

I robbed you? By God!
And what have you lost?

Luis

You’ve taken
my love and my life,
and yet they’re so much better off in your hands
that it’s no loss to me.

Hipólita

I thank you for the flattery.

Luis

I’m flattered that you know
how to thank me.

Hipólita

Then you think me such a fool
that I would accept
a compliment
and then fail
to show my gratitude?

Luis

I adore your soul for its divine reasoning.

Hipólita

If you ignore your obligations
you will never be obliged.
And by this I mean
that I love you honorably.

Luis

I will be eternally
and happily yours.

Hipólita

I was raised on the battlefront,
so you should know that, 
although I’m a woman, 
I have the resolve of a soldier.
I’m loving, I’m loyal, 
but I’ll warn you . . . 2190

LUIS What’s this you say?

HIPÓLITA . . . that I would be very sorry 
if you should repay me poorly.

LUIS The heavens shall go dark, 
and the seas dry out 
before I cease to adore 
your adorable extremes!

HIPÓLITA Who’s there? 
Stay there, don’t move.

INÉS and GALVÁN enter; the couples are having separate conversations

GALVÁN Won’t you hear me out? 2200

INÉS No.

HIPÓLITA Oh, Don Luis! 
How is it possible 
for me to be afraid? 
I’m in your debt on account of my brother. 2205

LUIS I owe you far more than that.

GALVÁN (Aside) They’ve changed their tune. 
As for me, I’ll keep my eye on them.

LUIS Farewell, my lady. 
My sword and I are at your disposal. 2210

LUIS exits

SCENE 3
GALVÁN Go and give your message. The bird has fallen in the net, maybe I’ll find revenge for my nose, which she split open with one punch!

HIPÓLITA What did you say, Inés?

INÉS My lady, Doña Leonor, has sent me to give you this message from her brother.

(\textit{She gives HIPÓLITA a note})

But you have already spoken to him.

HIPÓLITA I’m infinitely in his debt.

GALVÁN Ah, better and better!

HIPÓLITA And how has Doña Leonor been since yesterday?

INÉS Still somewhat afraid, because of the trouble we had. Today she left the house early, because of the truce between Marcelo and her brother, which you must know all about. My lady is so plainspoken that she wanted to send assurances to his mother and sister.

HIPÓLITA Marcelo has a sister?

INÉS One so beautiful that her rosy glow can make the very sun jealous as it shines in the sky. Don Luis has always
shown great interest in her.
But now that he’s in love with you,
he’s changed his ways.

HIPÓLITA  
(Aside) Dear Lord! What’s this I feel?

GALVÁN  
(Aside) We’re blushing now . . .
it must be jealousy.

HIPÓLITA  
(Aside) What cowardly fear shames me now?
(Aloud) Is she really that beautiful?

INÉS  
And how.

HIPÓLITA  
(Aside) My insides are on fire.

INÉS  
They were arranging a marriage,
but it came to nothing.
He must have dropped it because of you.

HIPÓLITA  
I mean that much to him?

INÉS  
He is desperate for your love.
(Aside) She seems flustered.
(Aloud) So, my lady, what do you say?

HIPÓLITA  
You shall deliver my response.

GALVÁN  
(Aside) What an opportunity
to avenge my nose!

HIPÓLITA  
Go, Inés, and tell your lady . . .
but I don’t know what to say.
I’ll tell you later.

INÉS  
I kiss your hands.

INÉS exits

HIPÓLITA  
Oh my!
Why this anguish,
this pain, this fear?
Why should I care
what came before,
if it had nothing to do with me?
Sometimes love returns between old lovers,
but would a gentleman
deceive me?

GALVÁN     My lady,
             leave sadness aside,
             and prepare to dance!

HIPÓLITA   Dance? Is there a wedding?

GALVÁN     Don’t you know
             that Don Luis has wed?

HIPÓLITA   (Aside) This is poison
to my ears!

GALVÁN     Didn’t he tell you
             when he was with you?

HIPÓLITA   (Aside) Oh, false friend!
             (Aloud) So, is he married?

GALVÁN     Indeed he is.

HIPÓLITA   Who did he marry, Galván?
             (Aside) How could he dare?

GALVÁN     He is marrying Lady . . . I don’t know her name.

HIPÓLITA   (Aside) Despicable gentleman! Wicked man!

GALVÁN     (Aside) Let’s call her Ana.
             (Aloud) He is marrying Doña Ana.

HIPÓLITA   Which Doña Ana?

GALVÁN     Doña Ana, sister to Marcelo,
             whom Luis wounded.
HIPÓLITA  
(Aside) Oh heavens!

GALVÁN  
They arranged it 
so as to preserve their friendship. 
And you only find out now, 
when he is receiving 
a million congratulations?

HIPÓLITA  
Did you see him?

GALVÁN  
Yes, 
he is full of pleasure . . .

HIPÓLITA  
(Aside) Is this possible?

GALVÁN  
. . . at all the good wishes.

HIPÓLITA  
(Aside) Oh, traitor!

GALVÁN  
His sister, Doña Leonor, 
went to visit his wife.

HIPÓLITA  
(Aside) Then it’s true.

GALVÁN  
She’s happy, 
and as their friend, 
you should be happy, too.

HIPÓLITA  
(Aside) Is such wickedness possible? 
How can I be so calm 
in the midst of this storm?

GALVÁN  
(Aside) She took the bait.

HIPÓLITA  
(Aside) Is such betrayal possible? 
My heart is dead, 
my soul sticks in my throat.

GALVÁN  
That’s it. Rage with jealousy. 
That’ll teach you 
to punch such honest noses!
HIPÓLITA  (Aside) Unjust fate, fair heavens, how can I withstand this affront? 2325

GALVÁN  Your pleasure, my lady?

HIPÓLITA  Leave me alone.

GALVÁN  That takes care of her. I’ve avenged my nose with my mouth.

GALVÁN exits

HIPÓLITA  Am I dreaming? Why did he seek my love, ravishing my soul from my breast with such tender sorcery, if he had other intentions, other loves? He’s married? By heaven, these are affronts, though they seem jealousy. Was he not here just now, claiming to serve me forever? Why did he trick me if he planned to affront me by abandoning me? Honor and pleasure mocked with unjust deceit—and it all reflects on me! Heavens, these are affronts, though they seem jealousy. Had he not deceived me with that sly, unfaithful soul, I would still be in love and take no offense, and would love him all the more. But when his deception so clearly insults me, what can I think? Fair heavens, these are affronts, though they seem jealousy. I must be insane. How else could a man dare to pierce my breast and glimpse my very soul only to reject me? Was it to boast that he had my favor?
What is this, then?
Good heavens above, these are affronts,
though they seem jealousy.
Why wait? Why not kill him at once,
and rescue my honor from these straits?
I will tear out his soul with my very hands,
or with my teeth!
I am a lioness, I burn with fever,
I roar for revenge!
Because these are affronts,
though they seem jealousy.

HIPÓLITA exits

SCENE 4

Enter OTAVIO and MARCELO with one arm bandaged

MARCELO  I carried the cuff in this hand,
and I did not gather my cape
around my arm,
and so my bad fortune
led his pitiless sword.
As he wounded me,
I dropped mine.
Then many people arrived at once,
and gave him a chance to pick it up,
lucky devil!
I had to let him take it
while they arrested me
and took me to prison.
Meanwhile, he escaped—
so much greater is his good fortune.
I signed a truce,
which makes the affront
that much worse,
and yet it cannot be avoided,
because he who refuses to make peace
makes his grievance more public.
But it was a forced truce,
and so I will feign now
and avenge myself in good time.

OTAVIO  How is your hand?  2395

MARCELO  Almost healed.

OTAVIO  That, at least, is lucky.

MARCELO  The hand will heal easily, yet I’m on the verge of death since Luis stole my life itself. But I must go now—there he comes, and my wound is fresh.

MARCELO exits

LUIS enters, reading a paper and accompanied by a SERVANT

OTAVIO  He’s reading, and hasn’t seen me yet. Perhaps I can avoid him.  2405

LUIS  (Reading the paper) “We may have signed a truce, but justice doesn’t apply to the affronted. I will wait for you behind the church of Santa Engracia with my cape and sword” - Marcelo. Go in peace, and take this.

LUIS gives a chain to the SERVANT

OTAVIO  There’s always a good reason when a servant gets a tip like that.

SERVANT  I go most happily.  2415

SERVANT exits

LUIS  This makes me wonder, and think, and try to anticipate—
but if in the end I have to go,
what is the use of thinking?
These things must be done
At once, without fear—
too much reflection
and they may not be done at all.

LUIS exits

SCENE 5

OTAVIO He’s gone.
It’s too bad he handed over
that chain for the note.
Ah, but his sister’s beauty
dispels my sadness,
oh beautiful sun before my eyes!

LEONOR enters at the window

LEONOR (Aside) Isn’t that Otavio? What is this?
He dares to come without fear?
Well, that girly-man
won’t dare ask him for the glove.
What use is a lover
of so little courage?

OTAVIO (Aside) I’ll talk to her—
a little license can be attractive.
(Aloud) If my humility and respect
should make you listen to me now,
my lady,
I would be obliged.

LEONOR Courtesy obliges me
to listen.

OTAVIO My lady,
I hold this token in place of my soul,
since it brings,
if not laurels,
then the palm of your hand. 
I defended it bravely,  
for the cause was yours, 
though I was too bold in doing so 
without your permission. 
I hope that, with my apologies, 
I will deserve more favor 
than before, 
when only circumstances 
excused my actions. 
And so that I might be known 
for such great fortune, 
please give me leave 
to keep it in your name.

*The CAPTAIN and FÉLIX enter through different doors*

**CAPTAIN**  
This corner gives the best view.

**LEONOR**  
That’s Don Félix.

**FÉLIX**  
Oh, heavens!

**OTAVIO**  
No matter.

**LEONOR**  
*(Aside)* By making him jealous, 
I might give him courage. 
*(To OTAVIO)* Though lovesick, 
you seem short of favors, 
since you come pleading 
with just one glove. 
And so, though you were bold 
to take it without permission, 
you deserve it 
for keeping it safe. 
It’s yours now!

**OTAVIO**  
How happy you make me!

**FÉLIX**  
*(Aside)* While I burn!

**LEONOR**  
*(Aside)* I will make him brave
by making him jealous.

OTAVIO  With your approval,  
I would like to put this token  
in a place of honor.

LEONOR  Defend it in my name.  

OTAVIO  Whoever wants to take it from here . . .  

He puts it in his hat

. . . will first have to vanquish my sword,  
and take my head with it.

LEONOR  Perfect.

FÉLIX  (Aside) I am beside myself, oh woman,  
oh enemy!

LEONOR  (Aside) He is furious—  
the jealousy works,  
it will make him brave.

OTAVIO  I am ready to fight the heavens themselves  
for your sake, my lady.

FÉLIX  (Aside) I am ready to kill him.  
Jealousy admits no composure.

LEONOR  What confidence!

CAPTAIN  (Aside) What arrogance and patience!

FÉLIX  (Aside) Still, a little prudence  
will ensure my revenge.  
(Aloud) Otavio?

OTAVIO  What do you want?

OTAVIO makes as if to put his hand on his sword
FÉLIX     Stay your hand, do not be afraid.     2505
         I come in peace—listen.

OTAVIO   I am not a man
         who frightens easily.

LEONOR   Félix!

FÉLIX     I am surprised at you—     2510
         do I hold your name in such little regard
         that I would offend a man
         you favor so much?

LEONOR   I am grateful to you.

FÉLIX     And you, ungrateful woman, have lost me.    2515

LEONOR   (Aside) What if he pretends to be offended,
         but wants to avenge his honor?

FÉLIX     Let us leave this place—
         I wish to speak to you alone.

OTAVIO   Here or anywhere else,
         I will know how to respond.       2520

FÉLIX     It will be easier to draw my sword
         somewhere else,
         as I have already unsheathed my courage.
         Then I can demand
         the glove from you.
         Come, if you are as brave
         as you are arrogant.

OTAVIO   I’ll show you over there
         what kind of man I am!      2530

FÉLIX     Come with me.

*Exeunt FÉLIX and OTAVIO*

CAPTAIN   They must have reached an agreement.
I will follow them.

LEONOR  He challenged him,  
that’s all there is to it.  
Well done! Heaven protect him!  
If a man cannot be brave  
when he is jealous,  
then there is no hope.

_Exit the CAPTAIN and LEONOR_

SCENE 6

_Enter LUIS_

LUIS  What’s this I see?  
I cannot be sure.  
Is this fear?  
No, it’s not fear, but surprise.

_Enter HIPÓLITA in men’s clothing, her face covered with a cape_

A fine figure! What a gentleman!

HIPÓLITA  (_Aside_) I am furious.

LUIS  What are you looking for?

HIPÓLITA  I am in a rage.

LUIS  What is it that you want?

HIPÓLITA  I want to kill you.

LUIS  What’s this I hear?  
I might take you on myself,  
but I suspect treason  
in one who hides his face from me.  
Who are you? Did Marcelo send you?

HIPÓLITA  (_Aside_) I am both furious and afraid!
(Aloud) I am a bolt of lightning.

HIPÓLITA uncover her face

LUIS You are no less than heaven itself. My lady, why do you berate me in such a rage?  

HIPÓLITA Because you have broken faith, you have abused me at my love’s expense. Vile, disgusting traitor, bad friend, ungrateful lover, false gentleman! I am wild with shame and anger. Take from my sword what my mouth cannot say!  

LUIS Hold on, by God, what bad omen leads me on? I make you furious, though I pledged myself to you? How can I offend you, when I adore you so? I am a vile traitor, though I offer my loyalty and honor to you, my lady? I consent to mistreatment? I, despicable? A false friend? I, ungrateful, when I am gratitude itself in being with you? My lady, why do you reproach me and distress me so?  

HIPÓLITA You anger me all over again with new lies. You’re married, and yet you ask me all this after you’ve betrayed me? You’re distressed, because I tell you what you truly are?
LUIS   I, married?

HIPÓLITA  You, married.

LUIS   To whom?

HIPÓLITA  To a certain Doña Ana, Marcelo’s sister. 2595

LUIS   Someone has lied to you.

HIPÓLITA  Lied to me? Everyone wished you well yesterday.

LUIS   Wait!

HIPÓLITA  Traitor! 2600

LUIS   Even if I were, that would not be possible.

HIPÓLITA  How’s that?

LUIS   Listen— Marcelo's sister is named Elvira, not Ana. You see, you’ve been tricked!

HIPÓLITA  (Aside) My haste to believe proves that I am a woman now. 2610

LUIS   And if that were not enough from a man who loves you, I will speak from the heart, where your name is written and your image engraved: to serve you, I would sacrifice myself to you— I give you my sword and my consent. I would rather die at your hand than see you so offended. 2615 2620
HIPÓLITA  *(Aside)* Oh heavens!
As jealousy dies away,
my love is at the ready!
I will pretend
I am still angry and offended,
for now I am as embarrassed
as I was jealous before.
*(Aloud)* I am not satisfied,
take up your sword.

2625

LUIS  *(Aside)* She’s more embarrassed than angry,
I can tell.

2630

HIPÓLITA  Defend yourself!

LUIS  Now your eyes shine
like rays of the sun,
instead of lightning bolts.
*(Aside)* But how can I be so distracted
when my glory is at hand?

2635

HIPÓLITA  Defend yourself now, now!

LUIS  Well, if you insist,
and I am the one who is being challenged,
it is up to me
to choose the place and the weapons—
the weapons can be those we carry.

2640

HIPÓLITA  *(Aside)* He is clever,
but he speaks as a lover, too.
*(Aloud)* It seems fair,
I agree to those terms.

2645

LUIS  And so I will wait for you
behind that grove of trees.

HIPÓLITA  Move along,
and there you will see
that I am a woman in name only.
LUIS  And there you will see
that I am man enough
for more than one woman.
You’ll get a taste of my strength, God willing!

HIPÓLITA  Keep walking, and we’ll see which of us surrenders
when we get there!

LUIS  *(Aside)* There, oh Fortune,
will I achieve my greatest desire.

HIPÓLITA  *(Aside)* He is deceiving me, I can see it,
yet I do not wish to see it.

LUIS  *(Aside)* She is letting me
lead her on.

HIPÓLITA  *(Aside)* It’s a fine trick

to let oneself be tricked.

They exit, and before they are gone, the CAPTAIN enters

SCENE 7

CAPTAIN  I lost them, by God!
Is that them, over there? Could it be?
It must not be,
because here they come.
I will watch from here, well hidden.
There’s no reason to back him up,
unless I see him betrayed,
or at an unfair disadvantage.

Enter OTAVIO and FÉLIX

OTAVIO  What about this place?

FÉLIX  I’d prefer one more secluded.

OTAVIO  I’ll follow you
wherever you go.
I want to speak to you
in private.  

FÉLIX  I can well believe it
of your nobility and courage.
Let’s go behind those walls.

OTAVIO. I’ll be right behind you,
even though, by rights,
I should choose the spot, you can . . .

FÉLIX I certainly appreciate it,
but I’m looking
for a secluded and private place,
so that no one bursts in on us,
and to keep my bashful maiden sword
from greater shame.

OTAVIO It must be bashful indeed . . .

FÉLIX I’m certain that in your heart
it will cease to be so.

OTAVIO That’s the spirit!
I’m happy to see you so fired up.

FÉLIX Its black habit
will be red
by the time I’m through with you.

OTAVIO That’s pretty presumptuous
for such a feeble enemy.

FÉLIX Enough.

OTAVIO What?

FÉLIX I said
you’re right.

_They move offstage to fight, the CAPTAIN watches the fight from the door and describes what he sees_
CAPTAIN They’ve jumped over the walls. I’ll stay here, and look through these cracks. I’d gladly switch places with Don Félix, because I don’t want him to be killed. What fine form! What courage! Honorable actions fearlessly performed! Now they’ve bared their chests and drawn their swords. Otavio holds firm, but Félix leaps upon him. Good god! What a blow!

Enter OTAVIO, badly injured and falling over, and FÉLIX comes after him

OTAVIO Why kill a man who has surrendered?

CAPTAIN He’s going to kill him.

FÉLIX I have pity, and a well-born heart.

Noise of people offstage Hurry! Stop them!

CAPTAIN Incredible! People? Here? What could they want? I don’t know where they’re coming from, but it’s definitely the law.

Enter the CONSTABLE and the BAILIFF, who begin to fight with the CAPTAIN and FÉLIX

CONSTABLE Arrest him.

FÉLIX You’re wasting your time! If my hands are free, you’ll be needing your feet.

BAILIFF I’m dead!
CAPTAIN  What a blow!
         Here I come!

FÉLIX   I’m just in the way here.

CAPTAIN  Félix, get away,
         while I take care of them.

Exeunt

SCENE 8

Enter COSTANZA

COSTANZA  What bizarre confusion,
         what cruel misfortune!
Everyone knows about my son
except for me.
My daughter is not at home,
and I don’t know
what has happened to her.
I’ll never be able to straighten her out!
But . . . there she is.
What’s going on?
Look at her drag her feet!

Enter HIPÓLITA, dressed as a woman

HIPÓLITA  I came as fast as I could,
         but I think I’m still late.

COSTANZA  Did you leave without my permission?
         Is that honorable?
         Why are you covering your face?
         Are you ashamed?

HIPÓLITA  Oh, Mother!

COSTANZA  What has come over you?
HIPÓLITA  I don’t know.  

COSTANZA  Are you crying?

HIPÓLITA  Yes, Mother!
I’ve had a taste of peace,  
and now as a woman,  
I forget, how to be brave in war.
Now muskets scare me,  
and I want nothing to do with swords,  
unless their blades have been blunted.
Now I feel pain  
when pricked by a needle,  
and I’m sure to faint if there’s blood.  
My heart is pure tenderness,  
and my mouth sweet as honey.  
My voice is weak and my heart, too.  
I’m having palpitations,  
I need medicine.

COSTANZA  What’s causing all this?

HIPÓLITA  I am afraid.  

COSTANZA  What’s wrong with you?

HIPÓLITA  I can’t,  
I am so fearful and ashamed.

COSTANZA  You’re upsetting me.

HIPÓLITA  Listen, then:  
how right you were, Mother,  
when you said  
that our eyes can betray us.  
Mine betrayed me,  
even though I was warned!  
What shall I do?  
Mother, my eyes have killed me!  
Such cruel insolence!  
I placed so much trust in them,  
as they fell for Don Luis,
that he stole my soul through them.
Who would have thought it possible?
And since where there’s love,
there’s jealousy,
today I challenged him
out in the fields,
full of jealousy,
so we could have it out.
He had the choice of place,
which he changed
so as to change my intent.
In a pleasant meadow,
in the shade of two poplars and a laurel,
with flowers of so many colors
that it rivaled the finest garden—
it must have been in Cyprus,
for Love was born there,\(^\text{13}\)
which makes miracles happen,
and this was a miracle—
two streams flowed,
and murmured as they went,
as though they knew what was to come.  
There, Mother, bold in love,
we drew our swords . . .
I thrust at him, he parried it,
took a step back, I thrust at him again,
he forced my sword down
and took hold of my arm.
I could not resist his grasp
and found myself locked
in his embrace.
We wrestled for a while,
both of us determined to win,
but dew on grass
is as slippery as soap . . .
I slipped, stumbled,
and fell down at my enemy’s feet.
And that was nothing,
but after I fell he—oh, Mother—
he did what I could never have imagined.

\(^{13}\) A cult site that claimed to be the birthplace of Aphrodite, Greek goddess of love.
He shook my soul, 
transformed my entire being, 
and he said: 
“So that you can see 
that you’re a woman, for you are.” 
Well can I believe it! 
And now all I can do is cry, 
because he’s gone and I love him, 
and so I am indeed a woman.

SCENE 10

Enter LEONOR

COSTANZA Daughter, here comes Leonor.

LEONOR Heaven above, 
what sorrows my cares bring!

COSTANZA A just vengeance, I imagine.

LEONOR Where is your son?

COSTANZA Heaven guard us.

LEONOR What? Is he not here?

COSTANZA Do you know anything, my lady?

LEONOR I know something’s not right.

COSTANZA The blood in my veins has turned to ice.

Enter DON PEDRO and GALVÁN

DON PEDRO Is the horse ready?

GALVÁN It is harnessed and at the door, 
waiting for you.

DON PEDRO I am his father, after all,
and I cannot shake this concern. 
But if they kill my son, 
I shall take revenge. 
Oh my beloved son!

LEONOR I am very upset.

HIPÓLITA I hope to see him soon.

COSTANZA Such misfortune!

_Enter the CAPTAIN_

DON PEDRO What news, Captain?

CAPTAIN Listen and be glad: 
Don Félix is not ashamed 
to be your son anymore! 
He took Otavio out to a field, 
beyond where the river Guerva runs. 
I followed them as best I could, 
to the remains of an old tower, 
with ruined walls among the grass. 
Honorable as I am, 
I was determined not to help him, 
even if he was killed, 
except if there was foul play, 
so I just hid and watched. 
Through an opening in the wall 
I could see without being seen. 
Proud and arrogant, 
Otavio wore the glove 
like a feather in his cap. 
Don Félix asked him for it, 
and he answered, “I will defend it, 
and if you hope to take it from me, 
you’ll wear it in pieces, 
because if my arms lack for force, 
I’ll break my head over it.” 
Don Félix shouted, “Here I come!” 
and bared his chest to Otavio. 
He replied, “I am waiting for you!”
uncovering his chest,
“My weapons are of the same mettle,
for I am noble, and true to myself!”
Then their swords came out,
quick as lightning.
Otavio stood his ground,
but Félix grabbed his sword,
and then charged him so furiously and bravely
that he pushed the blade away with his shoulder,
and with the pommel
he smashed him in the face.
He falls to the green grass,
and his red blood
turns emeralds into rubies!
He lost his hat and glove,
and stunned,
having lost his sword and everything,
he called on Heaven,
crying, “do not kill one who has surrendered,”
with an altered voice in his bloody mouth.
Don Félix left him alone,
as merciful as he is well born.
But he had barely recovered his spoils
when a noise made me look up.
People were coming,
and as I was waiting for the fight to end,
and they were almost upon it,
I feared some treason, I confess,
and so, fired up as I was,
I took out my sword.
It turns out to be the law,
with a bunch of peasants ready to arrest Don Félix,
but I jump in, in a fury, as is my way,
and, with only six blows,
I killed half a dozen of them,
and the rest fled like rockets.
Meanwhile Don Félix got away,
and I expect him any moment,
in good health and with his honor restored.
I’m not surprised I got here before him,
for I am quicker and more daring.
But here he comes, and by heaven,
he will make a fine gentleman—
now he deserves his place
in the House of Moncada.

HIPÓLITA Don Luis is coming too.

Enter LUIS, the TUTOR, and FÉLIX, carrying OTAVIO’s glove, hat, and sword

LUIS I am happy to find you here.

FÉLIX I owe my victory
to your courage.

DON PEDRO Come now into my heart.

COSTANZA I’m speechless,
but once again I have a reason to live.
Are you well?

FÉLIX I come with honor.

TUTOR I must embrace you!

LEONOR This brings such great pleasure,
it’s no wonder I’m so flustered.

FÉLIX Here, my lady, is your glove,
and even the hat where he kept it,
and where my jealousy lit.

FÉLIX gives LEONOR the hat and the glove

This is Otavio’s sword,
with which I have restored my reputation.

FÉLIX gives her the sword

Receive it from my hand,
if your disdain will suffer it,
and forgive me if I lost it
in my clumsiness and confusion—
what slowed me down was
the force of habit!

LEONOR  I receive it with all my soul,  
and set it in the heavens.  
Forgive me for making you jealous—  
I needed to brace your heart,  
which was mine already.  

DON PEDRO  He who restores the glove  
also deserves the hand.  

LUIS  If my sister welcomes it,  
I am happy that it should be so.  

FÉLIX  Then my happiness is complete.  

COSTANZA  And Luis should give his to Hipólita,  
since, as I hear,  
he proved himself worthy of her in another challenge,  
and so should not avoid it.  

GALVÁN  I am to blame for that.  

HIPÓLITA  And I have forgiven you.  

FÉLIX  Great fortune . . . !  

LUIS  Great glory . . . !  

LEONOR  . . . is mine.  

HIPÓLITA  . . . as was mine.  

DON PEDRO  From their habits  
I restored my children  
to their very nature—  
a miracle,  
as one habit trumps another.  
And so ends our play,  
The Force of Habit.