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Ponti, Emanuela (2010) *Performing dreams in England and Spain, 1570-1670*. PhD thesis.

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**PERFORMING DREAMS IN ENGLAND AND SPAIN,  
1570-1670**

by  
Emanuela Ponti

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the Department of  
Theatre, Film and Television Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Glasgow,  
February 2010.

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Dedicated to Cornelio, Nadia, Giuseppe, Micol and Mark,  
my family.

## **PREFACE**

The work described in this thesis was carried out by the author in the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies of Glasgow University during the period September 2005 to September 2009. The work is that of the author and is original in content except where otherwise stated.

Emanuela Ponti

February 2010

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is the result of five years of postgraduate study in the TFTS Department of Glasgow University, where I first completed my MPhil Theatre by Research and then began the stimulating journey that has been my PhD.

My interest in theatre history and in the early modern period started during my undergraduate studies at Milan University and was nurtured by Dr Margaret Rose and Professor Anna Anzi, who supervised my MA dissertation. I would like to thank them both for their initial support and advice. Grazie to Dr P.A. Skantze, my first supervisor at Glasgow University, who set in motion my curiosity towards dreams in early modern England and Spain and believed in this project when it still did not make much sense. I am very grateful to my supervisors Dr Vicky Price and Professor Adrienne Scullion, who generously and patiently guided my work over the last two years and gave me precious suggestions and encouragement throughout.

Once more, grazie to my beloved and much-missed family: to Cornelio and Nadia for their unconditional love and unrivalled example of parenthood, to Giuseppe for his witty talent and to Micol for her sweet tenderness. It is difficult to express through words the love I have for them and the gratitude for the ways in which they make me feel close to them all, even miles and miles away from Tradate. I hope this work will somehow reward them for my long absence from home and I know I will never thank them enough for their being, simply, *meravigliosi*.

Friends in Italy also deserve my thankfulness for having accepted and encouraged my choice. I want to thank Lorenza for being so close to me since the first day of our *Liceo* and I would like to remind her that physical distance cannot weaken the strength of our friendship. Thanks to Eleonora, a great friend who has shared with me countless joyful moments and the passion for literature and art. Grazie to Valeria and Lele for their generous friendship, enthusiasm about my studies and overall support.

In Glasgow, thanks to my friend Giangi, the best chef in the world who has fed me with lovely feasts and with his amiable madness. Thanks also to the other Glaswegian friends, those who have left and those who are still here, marvellous 'machines' (!) with whom I have spent five unforgettable years.

Lastly to Mark, a great wee man '*che dà per gli occhi una dolcezza al core, che 'ntender no la può chi no la prova*'.  
'

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the performance of dreams and dreaming in a few early modern English and Spanish plays, namely William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Pedro Calderón de la Barca's *Life Is a Dream* and *Sometimes Dreams Come True* and Aphra Behn's *The Young King*. In chapter 1 I introduce the cultural milieus in which my case studies operate and validate my comparative approach by calling attention to the fact that both dramas attend to similar preoccupations regarding traditional rank and gender hierarchies. Furthermore, I provide an account of the dream theories in force at that time and underscore that dreams are seen as either negligible or very significant entities. Chapter 2 elucidates why I have chosen to study the dreams within the selected plays focusing on their phenomenal, generic and ideological attributes. Phenomenological analysis allows me to prove that the dreams I consider are deeply sensory occurrences that *look* and *feel like* reality and vividly expose disturbing (male) habits of power attainment and safeguarding. The plays at issue predictably terminate with the celebration of the (socio-political or religious) values of the patriarchy; nonetheless, I argue that the lifelike dreams have throughout cast doubt on the legitimacy of the beliefs that prevail on- and off-stage and, hence, cannot be simply set aside at the end of the performance. Chapter 3 considers *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in order to: 1) show that in these two comedies powerful male figures exploit dreams to shape the visual/ideological perceptions of socially inferior characters; and, 2) verify that the simultaneously illusory and tangible quality of dream (and performance) is not easily dismiss-able as 'airy nothing'. Chapter 4 and 5 respectively explore *Life Is a Dream* and *Sometimes Dreams Come True* and demonstrate that the dreams in question paradoxically endorse and query the philosophical and religious core of these two plays. In fact, life *may* be a dream, but in it the acquisition of political authority matters very much; Catholic dogma *may* be true, but it only comes to life via (supposedly insubstantial) dreams. By investigating *The Young King*, the last chapter of this thesis again proves the phenomenal and cultural weight dreams acquire on early modern stages: the dreams within this tragicomedy intensely reveal the artificiality of established gender positions and powerfully portray 'natural' male pre-eminence in an equivocal light.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction: Theatre and Dreams in England and Spain, 1570-1670

This thesis explores the performance of dreams and dreaming within early modern English and Spanish drama, specifically in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (1592-94) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595-96), Calderón de la Barca's *Life Is a Dream* (1636) and *Sometimes Dreams Come True* (1670), and Aphra Behn's *The Young King* (1679).<sup>1</sup> These plays have been selected for three main reasons: they present characters who *actually* fall asleep and dream or, alternatively, think they are dreaming; they show the (at times only provisional) social advancement of a male character by means of a (*real* or feigned) dream experience; they exhibit the manipulative use that socially dominant characters make of dreams or dreamlike circumstances.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, the case studies belong to different historical periods and contexts (Tudor and Stuart England, Habsburg Spain, Restoration England) and fit into diverse genre categories. However, I argue that they manifest similar anxieties regarding the gaining or the preservation of socio-political power and that they do so by performing dreams on the stages of the public theatres. My analysis of the individual dramatic works focuses on the *phenomenal* features the dreams acquire in performance. Thanks to these features, the on-stage dreams tangibly materialise before audiences and produce a *lifelike* depiction of controversial issues. At the same time, they are *just* dreams and, as such, some of the dramatic characters (as well as the playwrights and the theatre companies worried about censorship) can opportunely disclaim their actual significance at the end of the performance.

In the past the literary dreams of early modern England and Spain have been studied mostly through formalist or psychoanalytic approaches: for instance, Marjorie Garber's

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<sup>1</sup> The Spanish artistic production created between 1550 (the last years of Charles V's reign) and 1681 (when Calderón died) is traditionally referred to as 'Golden Age'. However, as George Mariscal observes, this (aestheticizing) term obscures the very heterogeneous (political and cultural) conditions of, for example, artists working in the 1550s or 1650s (Mariscal 1991:12-13). In view of that, in this thesis I try to avoid the term and prefer the one 'early modern': in Anthony Cascardi's words, a designation that invites one to consider the period's 'larger questions of modernization and subject-formation' (Cascardi 1997:1).

<sup>2</sup> In Bert O. States' words, the world of the play assembles 'a certain kind of *actual*' before the spectators (States 1985:46, emphasis original). Accordingly, throughout the thesis I use italics for words (such as 'real', 'actual', etc.) that refer to the unique actuality of the theatrical event: the dreams I analyse are not, strictly speaking, genuine dreams, yet they are on stage for everyone to see and hear.

*Dream in Shakespeare: From Metaphor to Metamorphosis* (1974) offers a chronological account of how the forms of Shakespearean dreams change from the comedies to the romances; Julian Palley's *The Ambiguous Mirror: Dreams in Spanish Literature* (1983) sees the dreams in the works of various authors especially as wish-fulfilment tools for the characters.<sup>3</sup> More recent studies, however, have taken into consideration fictional and non-fictional dreams of different sources (diaries, letters, chronicle histories, political and religious tracts) and have related them to the cultural milieu in which they originated. For example, in his *Lucrecia's Dreams: Politics and Prophecy in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (1990) Richard Kagan investigates the political threat that the dreams of a young woman, Lucrecia de León, represent for the reign of King Philip II; Carole Levin's *Dreaming the English Renaissance* (2008) verifies the important resonances dreams have for religious beliefs, questions of power and sexuality, and political issues concerning the Tudor and early Stuart monarchs.<sup>4</sup> A. C. Spearing, in his introduction to *Reading Dreams* (1999), stresses the persistent significance of dreams in early modern culture:

in past centuries [...] people have been unable to rid themselves of the feeling that dreams matter. [...] the feeling that dreams do convey messages [...] has always survived. (Spearing 1999:21)

Likewise, Susan J. Wiseman remarks the 'formal spread' dreams have in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe (from poetry to theoretical treatises) and lists the numerous ways through which they are understood:

as a genre of writing (the dream-vision), a collection of interpretable symbols, an experience which an individual might attribute to God or the devil, an indication of physical and mental health and its opposite, and a compromised sign of human status itself [...] the dream was called upon to articulate crucial desires and problems in early modern experience. (Wiseman 2008:5-6)

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<sup>3</sup> For other investigations of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literary dreams in England and Spain see the collection of essays in Dinko Cvitanovic's *El sueño y su representación en el Barroco español* (1969), Manfred Weidhorn's *Dreams in Seventeenth-Century English Literature* (1970) and John Arthos' *Shakespeare's Use of Dream and Vision* (1977). I will further comment on these studies in the first section of the second chapter.

<sup>4</sup> See also the book edited by Peter Brown, *Reading Dreams: the Interpretation of Dreams from Chaucer to Shakespeare* (1999), Julián Acebrón Ruiz's *Sueño y Ensueños en la Literatura Castellana Medieval y del Siglo XVI* (2004) and the volume *Reading the Early Modern Dream: The Terrors of the Night* (2008), edited by Katharine Hodgkin, Michelle O'Callaghan, and S. J. Wiseman.

A few examples of dreams actually experienced by early modern people will confirm the crucial role they played on both a personal and a public level.<sup>5</sup> Fascinatingly, Lucrecia de León repeatedly dreamt of Queen Elizabeth: in her dream of 18 December 1587, for instance, she visited a palace in London and saw a woman (the queen) with a dead lamb in her lap. Beside her was another woman, 'dressed in widow's weeds', who the queen afterwards decapitated. As Kagan suggests, the dead lamb may represent Queen Elizabeth's persecution of Catholics, whereas the beheaded woman may embody Mary Stuart (Kagan 1990:71). The horrific imagery of this and other dreams Lucrecia had testifies to the political and religious preoccupations of the young woman and her contemporaries: Spain was preparing for war with England, Queen Elizabeth was seen as a cruel enemy, and perhaps the Spaniards felt guilty about the Catholic Mary's execution on 8 February 1587.<sup>6</sup>

Queen Elizabeth also appeared in two dreams the English astrologer Simon Forman recounted in his diary: on 23 January 1597, Forman dreamt that he and the queen 'walked up and down through lanes and closes, talking and reasoning. [...] She had a long white smock very clean and fair' (quoted in Rowse 1974:20). A month after this first dream, Forman dreamt that Queen Elizabeth was approaching him dressed all in black and with a French hood. Whereas the white dress of their previous meeting may symbolise the queen's virginity, Levin thinks that the black garb of the second vision could prove Forman's concern with the forthcoming ending of Elizabeth's reign and the absence of a designated heir (Levin 2008:152). As Helen Hackett points out, 'it is striking how much implied political content there is' even in Forman's 'spontaneous' dreams (Hackett

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<sup>5</sup> In her essay 'The 'Candy-Colored Clown': Reading Early Modern Dreams', Kathleen McLuskie stresses that (real and fictional) dreams are strongly connected to the culture they come from and, therefore, 'can only function socially' (McLuskie 1999:153). The dream normally rewrites a preceding historical or ideological subtext and communicates 'a cultural unconscious' more than an individual psychology. Consequently, McLuskie advocates an examination of early modern dreams that considers the long-lasting dream/theatre relationship and the cultural role of dreams at that time. In her own words, 'reading dreams in early modern culture requires [...] attention to the connections between dreams and theatre, to the available models for the interpretation of dreams, and to the ways in which this cultural raw material contributes to the development of a dramatic and theatrical language of representation' (McLuskie 1999:149).

<sup>6</sup> I will return to the dreams of Lucrecia de León in chapter 4, where I analyse Calderón's *Life Is a Dream*. Her dreams were transcribed in thirty registers by the theologian Don Alonso de Mendoza and the Franciscan friar Lucas de Allende. We may suspect the veracity of (Lucrecia's and others') reported dreams and consider the fact that possibly Lucrecia was pleased by the attention she received because of her night visions – an element that may have somehow 'prompted' her to dream repeatedly. However, as Levin observes, 'in some cases, whether the dream actually occurred – or occurred as described – may be far less important than how people responded to it' (Levin 2008:5).

2008:55).<sup>7</sup> The cases of Lucrecia de León and Simon Forman vitally indicate that the socio-political realities of early modern Spain and England enter and shape the private dreams of their people. Consequently, the time's oneiric events comprise a precious and fresh source of information about 'the most significant issues of a historical period, especially the sites where religion and politics, as well as death and power, intersect' (Levin 2008:1).



FIGURE 1: El Greco, *The Dream of Philip II*, c. 1580.

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<sup>7</sup> Within its investigation of Bottom's dream experience in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, chapter 3 will further consider Forman's dreams and the important interpretation of them Louis Montrose provides in "Shaping Fantasies": Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture'.

Dreams were employed as evidence at court and in legal cases and at times constituted a compelling weapon against political enemies (Levin 2008:7). In 1644 the Puritan divine William Prynne published *Breviate of the life of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury* and inserted in it some of the dreams Laud had described in his diary. One of these dreams, which occurred on 21 August 1625, showed the Duke of Buckingham entering the Archbishop's bed and behaving 'with great kindness' towards him: Prynne easily took the dream as a verification of Laud's 'uncleanness' (Carlton 1986:12). On 2 November 1642, imprisoned in the Tower, Laud dreamt that 'Parliament was removed to Oxford, the Church undone: some old Courtiers came in to see me and geared [jeered]' (Prynne 1644:26, quoted in Wiseman 2008:11). Laud's private and public apprehensions were perceptibly emerging in his oneiric experiences and were evidently telling him, in Wiseman's words, 'to prepare for the worst' (Wiseman 2008:12).<sup>8</sup>

As the above examples make clear, dreams play an important part in the lives of early modern English and Spanish communities. Accordingly, this dissertation looks at fictional dreams (dreams enacted within the public theatres) and verifies the cultural weight they could attain in performance. In his *First Meditation* (1641), reflecting on the difficulty of distinguishing between real life and a dream state, René Descartes writes:

I am now perceiving this paper with eyes that are certainly awake; the head I am nodding is not drowsy; [...] But have I then forgotten those other occasions on which I have been deceived by similar thoughts in my dreams? When I think this over more carefully I see so clearly that waking can never be distinguished from sleep by any conclusive indications that I am stupefied; and this very stupor comes close to persuading me that I am asleep after all. (Descartes 1641:14)

Likewise, Archbishop Laud emphasises the muscular impact of a dream in which he sees his own reconciliation to the Church of Rome: 'Herein I felt such a strong impression that I could scarce believe it was a dream' (quoted in Carlton 1986:11-12). The dreams within my case studies similarly embody a conflict between being and appearances; normally they do not resolve this clash, or do so only ambiguously. If *actual* dreams exactly feel like real life and *actual* experience is easily assumed to be a dream, the issue at stake may be that there is no truth, no reality that is not deceptive. This unanswered tension, as

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<sup>8</sup> Patricia Crawford, in her article 'Women's Dreams in Early Modern England', underlines that early modern women 'used their dream narratives for various purposes, constructing meanings which were sometimes personal and other times public' (Crawford 2000:130). This observation equally applies to the implications we may detect in Archbishop Laud's dreams.

Jonathan Hall writes in his *Anxious Pleasures*, indicates 'a historical loss of certainty' (Hall 1995:211). A disambiguation - a separation of essence and illusion - may be offered at the closure of a play: nonetheless, the performance itself has mainly suggested the dubiousness and falsity of eventual clarifications. The instances of Lucrecia de León, Simon Forman, and William Laud have demonstrated the presence of political concerns within private dreams. Reasonably, we find analogous preoccupations in dramatic works meant for performance before heterogeneous audiences and (at times) the monarchs themselves. In order not to attract censorship, however, those anxieties have to be expressed cautiously, and dreams provide the ideal means of doing so. In her analysis of dream visions of Elizabeth I in Renaissance English literature, Hackett maintains:

Dream-vision creates an other-world, both like and unlike the real world; a world where it feels as if anything might happen; a world where characters and events seem to be freighted with meaning, and yet their meanings remain tantalisingly opaque. In this genre, the figure of a royal mistress who is both desirable and desiring may be simultaneously used and disclaimed as a representation of Elizabeth I. (Hackett 2008:45)<sup>9</sup>

Various implications arise from these considerations: as the dream visions of Elizabeth I do, dream performances powerfully personify situations that remind the playgoers of real problems outside the theatres. By putting an end to the anarchy produced by (*actual* and *artificial*) dreams, the plays reach the conclusions necessitated by their genres. Possible charges of improper and illicit subjects can be dismissed thanks to the seeming irrelevance of the dreams; yet the audiences might not have quickly forgotten their disturbing contents.

\* \* \*

This introductory chapter principally wants to provide preliminary data about the drama of England and Spain between 1570 and 1670. Its first section reflects on the comparative approach I have chosen and points to what I believe will be the benefits of contrasting early modern English and Spanish dramatic works. Sections II.1 and II.2 bring in the background in which the selected plays operated. The former illustrates the time's political

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<sup>9</sup> Among other works, Hackett studies John Lyly's *Endymion* (1588), Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queen* (1590), and Shakespeare's rendering of the Bottom/Titania encounter in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595).

circumstances, the material conditions of play-going and playmaking, the controversy surrounding performances and performers, and the analogous social codes and questions the two dramaturgies interrogated. The latter section, conversely, focuses entirely on the religious climate, the aspect that most differentiated early modern England and Spain. In each of these sections I draw particular attention to the features the two dramas had in common, with the purpose of further validating my comparative methodology. The final part of this Introduction inspects the dream theories in force in early modern culture: it thus marks out the theoretical milieu within which the dream motif functioned and offers an initial understanding of its import on the public stages of London and Madrid.

Whereas this first chapter delineates my comparative strategy and the socio-cultural scenario of early modern English and Spanish theatre, the second chapter illustrates the phenomenological and historical questions this thesis aims to answer. Therein, I propose the application of phenomenology to the subject matter: I elucidate how my phenomenological approach works, why I believe it is valuable for my project and how it makes it distinctive, and what possible practical problems it may bring about. My phenomenological tactic principally intends to trace the sensorial dimension of the case studies: for this reason, chapter 2 also explores how the senses (above all, sight and hearing) are conceived in the early modern context. In its second half I regard the genres under consideration in this thesis as indicative of their age's dominant ideology and ponder the historical utility of the dramatization of dreams. Though the plays' finales principally celebrate the values embraced by the prevailing oligarchies, I contend that the (very *tangible*) performance of dreams has interrogated the final victory of those principles.

Chapter 3 investigates the employment of dreams in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, two significant illustrations of what dreams could accomplish on the Elizabethan stage. In both works, dreamlike circumstances allow powerful characters (for instance, the Lord in the Induction and Oberon in the woods) to manipulate other characters whose rank or gender is socially inferior (for instance, Sly and Titania). The two comedies' closures minimize – or better, hide from plain view – the cruel manipulation formerly fashioned through the dreamscapes and put the accent on an apparently satisfactory resolution. Yet the palpable incidents occurring before the conclusion resemble authentic experiences more than vain dreams; importantly, they suggest that *real* life in Padua or Athens is not much different from the *fiction* in the Lord's house or Oberon's forest.

Moving from Elizabethan England to Habsburg Spain, chapter 4 analyses Calderón's *Life Is a Dream* and demonstrates that its dreams address socio-political worries analogous to those in the English comedies. The title itself prefigures the final endorsement of the life/dream metaphor and of the Catholic 'doing good' belief: the experience within the royal palace – a dream of supremacy that suddenly vanishes – *seemingly* makes Prince Segismundo aware of the futility of human things and teaches him the value of unconditional forgiveness. However, what the palace *dream* shows is, essentially, that life is *not* a dream: the preservation and handover of political power are key issues; the (deceptively natural) hierarchical inferiority of a son to a father may justify the latter's despotism; and male sexual desire could entail (and excuse) rape. In spite of the predictably composed closing, the dreams within the performance, to a certain extent, portray conversion as publicly opportune: prompted by a made-up dream, Segismundo finds a point of view which favours his own political needs.

Chapter 5 inspects another of the dramatic genres popular in seventeenth-century Spain: the *auto sacramental* *Sometimes Dreams Come True*, a religious work by Calderón performed for the Madrid municipality during the Feast of Corpus Christi. The play dramatizes the Biblical story of the dreamer Joseph as a prediction of Jesus' coming and, importantly, employs a character called Sueño (Dream) as the actual stage manager of the Eucharistic mystery. Although this genre has usually been interpreted as a quite straightforward vehicle of Catholic propaganda, my reading emphasises its (disregarded) ironic possibilities and its provocative scrutiny of secular and spiritual hierarchies.<sup>10</sup> In contrast to Joseph's spontaneous faith, on- and off-stage audiences – kings among them – are strongly invited to see and to hear the miraculous performance and to participate in it sensuously. Paradoxically, only apparently unreliable dreams can materialise the religious dogma and its truth on stage.

The last chapter of this thesis moves back to the English context and considers Aphra Behn's *The Young King*, a sort of adaptation of Calderón's *Life Is a Dream*. Behn's Restoration tragicomedy uses (*real* and pretended) dreams to deal with questions of socio-political power and gender roles, issues relevant to her own status as a professional female writer. The play, unsurprisingly, terminates with the reinstatement of Orsames (the 'young king' of the title) on the throne; yet, previous to that, Orsames' dream experiences

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<sup>10</sup> For traditional interpretations of the Spanish *autos sacramentales* see Alexander A. Parker's *The Allegorical Drama of Calderón* (1943), James E. Maraniss' *On Calderón* (1978) and Melveena McKendrick's *Theatre in Spain* (1989, especially pages 238-260).

have subtly criticised the natural birthright of monarchs and the violent character of male sexual desire. Within its seemingly harmless dreamscape, the play's other strand presents Princess Cleomena (Orsames' sister) as an unruly woman who challenges conventional systems of rank and gender; significantly, Cleomena will achieve a better awareness of her own personal desires through the last dream she experiences. As in my other case studies, the dream both allows a temporary disorder and a rapid return to established socio-political codes. Nonetheless, its lifelike fleshiness has openly interrogated the allegedly innate nobility of male sovereigns and the appropriateness of their 'natural' rule.

In summary, my thesis historically stretches from the 1570s to the 1670s and focuses on the dramatic dreams present in the selected English and Spanish plays. In this Introduction and in the second chapter I flesh out the cultural influence of early modern dreams and I propose a historical and phenomenological reading of the oneiric event within the playhouses of Tudor and Stuart London and Habsburg Madrid. My theoretical approach will enable me to prove that: 1) theatrical dreams become flesh in performance and *look like* reality; 2) the *actuality* of on-stage dreams vividly embodies controversial matters of socio-political indoctrination and power conservation; and, 3) though the disturbing dreams fade away at the performance closure, their sensory shapes have interrogated the time's dominant ideology and may still be alive before the spectators' eyes and within their ears.

### **I: Why compare early modern English and Spanish drama?**

Comparative approaches to early modern English and Spanish dramatic production have surfaced only quite recently and do not constitute a critical school. Walter Cohen's *Drama of a Nation* (1985) first attempted to describe 'the unique similarities' between the two theatrical traditions and did so through the 'broad perspective' offered by a Marxist methodology (Cohen 1985:9).<sup>11</sup> Publishing his *Public Theatre in Golden Age Madrid and Tudor-Stuart London* twenty years later (2005), Ivan Cañadas still introduces early modern Spanish drama as relatively uncharted and underlines the worth of putting it side by side with the English:

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<sup>11</sup> Cohen considers the transition from feudalism to capitalism and the emergence of the public theatre in both nations. He regards the spread of romantic comedy and the national history play as genres that enact 'the successful adaptation of the aristocracy to social and political change' (Cohen 1985:187). He then analyses the crisis of the public theatre by looking at satiric comedy and serious drama, i.e. forms that testify to 'the failure of the aristocracy to adapt to social and political change' (Cohen 1985:282).

The drama of Golden Age Spain, as the lesser known parallel, or avatar, of the English theatre of the same period, in a sense, presents the exciting possibility of starting anew. [...] a comparative matrix should provide insight into the other, even as it casts what we thought we already knew into a fresh perspective (Cañadas 2005:187)<sup>12</sup>

My own approach shares some of Cohen's and Cañadas' strategies and purposes. I regard the chosen dramatic works as performance pieces enacted in front of socially mixed audiences and participating in 'contemporary social debates about order, hierarchy and gender norms' (Cañadas 2005:7).<sup>13</sup> Because of the public and polyphonic character of the case studies, I believe in the value of handling them through a flexible combination of discourses: 1) a preliminary investigation of their socio-cultural milieus, necessary to a comprehension of the various tensions they refer to and act out in performance; 2) a textual analysis that, uninterested in literary conventions, grasps how different disputes come alive on stage; and, 3) a reception-based enquiry that accounts for the (probable) reception of the performances and for the negotiations the dramatists employ to cater to the tastes of heterogeneous spectators. As Paul Julian Smith stresses in his *Writing in the Margin*, this last point is especially important: the primacy of the audience in the English and Spanish early modern theatres encourages one to 'shift critical emphasis from source to target, or from production to consumption' (P. J. Smith 1988:128).

Due to the complexity of the individual plays and the - similar but certainly not identical - material conditions from which they sprang, I have chosen to explore them in parallel chapters that highlight their connectedness without neglecting their distinctiveness.<sup>14</sup> Unlike *comedia* studies, Shakespeare studies have now for years been energized by political analyses - for example, Marxism, feminism and new historicism. Thus, I think that

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<sup>12</sup> In his article 'Drama in Golden-Age Spain: The State of the Art', Richard Pym expresses considerations analogous to Cañadas': 'this theatre remains in many ways a world still to be discovered, still exciting, still rewarding' (Pym 2003:39-40). The other main study that offers a comparative examination is John Loftis' *Renaissance Drama in England & Spain* (1987). Loftis' interest, however, is mainly theme-driven and focuses on individual history plays dealing with the two nations' rivalry. The two dramaturgies have also been analysed in single essays, for example those collected in *Comedias del Siglo de Oro and Shakespeare* (1989), *Parallel Lives: Spanish and English National Drama: 1580-1680* (1991), and *Vidas paralelas - el teatro español y el teatro isabelino: 1580-1680* (1993).

<sup>13</sup> The application of performance studies to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish drama is still relatively new. In *The Golden Age Comedia: Text, Theory, and Performance* (1994) Charles Ganelin and Howard Mancing explained that *comedia* studies were gradually moving from a concentration on textual criticism and theory to an interest in performance-related issues, such as the aesthetics of reception and the role of the audience (Ganelin and Mancing 1994:1-6).

<sup>14</sup> The study of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* develops in the same chapter because both comedies were created by the same author within a short interval of time and through akin generic (i.e. ideological) characteristics.

Shakespearean criticism can function as a fresh critical tool if applied to early modern Spanish drama. Furthermore, as Cohen suggests, 'it seems only reasonable that the opposite procedure might produce useful results' (Cohen 1989:150). This dissertation engages with four plays by two male dramatists – Shakespeare and Calderón - who have usually occupied a very high position in the canon of their respective dramaturgies. As Cohen remarks, however, Shakespeare's dramatic production has also been available for a 'progressive appropriation in both aesthetic and political terms': his representation of royal and aristocratic power has not been easily assumed as compliant, his art has not been seen as necessarily elitist (Cohen 1989:149).<sup>15</sup> In contrast, the school of the British Hispanists has normally read Calderón's plays as supporters of the ruling class and its ideology and has avoided treating them 'in a more demystifying fashion' (Cohen 1989:148).<sup>16</sup> Alongside quite canonical works by Shakespeare and Calderón, the last chapter of this thesis analyses a (little known) tragicomedy by a female author, Aphra Behn: a writer whose opus has lately been the object of flourishing investigation, but whose status as a woman living by the pen was problematical in seventeenth-century England. By weighing these dramatic works against each other, therefore, I wish to propose a novel reading of the way they manage contemporary preoccupations through dream performance. I attempt not to consider Shakespeare as a sort of 'uncontroversial standard' against which to measure Calderón's and Behn's pieces - the lesser-known counterparts (Cohen 1989:147). Rather, I intend to de-familiarise his two comedies by positioning them inside an atypical framework: an unusual environment constituted 1) by the philosophical and religious dramaturgy of a foreign, aristocratic dramatist (Calderón) and 2) by a female-authored tragicomedy enacting worries about gender and rank

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<sup>15</sup> For instance, in his article 'A Kingdom of Shadows' Louis Montrose distinguishes between Elizabethan court performances and those within the public playhouses: the former needed the queen's actual presence (or that of an on-stage character who symbolised her) to reach a conclusion. In contrast, public performances (such as that of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) were a more mediated and more ambiguous practice of royal applause: in other words, they possessed a greater degree of 'both formal and ideological autonomy' than the courtly shows (Montrose 1998:226).

<sup>16</sup> These interpretations of Calderón's plays have perhaps been influenced by the fact that he was an aristocrat and became a priest in 1650. The leading British scholar of *comedia* studies has been Alexander A. Parker with his *The Approach to the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age* (1957). Parker has argued that Greek or Elizabethan tragedy is usually incompatible with the worldview of Baroque Spain and has proposed the concept of 'poetic justice' as a moral criterion in early modern Spanish drama (i.e., 'wrongdoing should not go 'unpunished' and 'virtue should not remain 'unrewarded') (Parker 1988:52). However, as Edward Friedman notices, Lope's tragicomedies may depend less on poetic justice than on the practical necessity of pleasing his audience with variety. Likewise, Calderón's honour plays frequently show 'spectacular death scenes' and their sense of justice is far from clear-cut (Friedman 1989:88).

mendaciousness (Behn's *The Young King*). Equally, I aim not to take Calderón's and Behn's works for granted: the preceding discussion of Shakespeare, with its focus on the open-ended-ness of his comedies, can itself be a critical instrument that sheds new light on the plays studied in chapters 4, 5 and 6. The different socio-political contexts in which the plays function cannot be ignored; nonetheless, I want to argue that they attend to comparable issues through the performance of dreams.

### **II.1: The public theatres in context.**

This section reviews the socio-political scene that surrounded early modern English and Spanish drama. It mainly focuses on the second half of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century, the period when Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Calderón's *Life Is a Dream* appeared on stage. The religious play *Sometimes Dreams Come True* and Behn's *The Young King* operated within a later context (in brief, the end of the so-called Golden Age in Spain and the first decade of the Restoration in England): for this reason, I will further discuss their dissimilar framework in chapters 5 and 6. I am aware of the difficulty of carrying out primary research in two contexts simultaneously and of the risk of lessening their distinctiveness. Even so, I intend to draw attention to the analogous circumstances in which the plays were produced and, in particular, to their capacity to articulate nonconformist discourses.

The sixteenth century saw the gradual transition from feudalism to capitalism as the major mode of production in Western Europe. Before the introduction of the monetary economy, the preservation of political power relied on the alienation of land by the monarch, in return for services. The use of coinage liberated the sovereigns from this debilitating need and allowed them to control the landed nobility more effectively.<sup>17</sup> As Hall explains, mercantile growth depended on the military and economic reinforcement of central power: through taxation and the licensing of commercial enterprise, the Crown could afford large permanent armies and fleets and got involved in 'long-range mercantile trade' (Hall 1995:29). Commodity production slowly caused the diminution of local structures and agricultural centres, whereas the mounting power of centralised and absolutist monarchies, as Cohen underlines, promoted the creation of urban courts that attracted the landed aristocracy and the burghers (Cohen 1985:104). In a comparable

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<sup>17</sup> The rural nobility, rewarded for its service to the monarchs through supervision over the land, aimed to convert its own position into 'hereditary 'blood' rights' and hence represented a threat to royal power (Hall 1995:29).

way, sixteenth-century English and Spanish public theatre can be seen as expressive of 'the contradiction between centripetal and centrifugal desires' of the (mercantile and autocratic) age in which it surfaced (Hall 1995:29). The de-territorialization instigated by mercantilism favoured the birth of 'a new sense of the social body': communities re-centred around the body of the monarch and national cultures began to advance (Hall 1995:32).<sup>18</sup> Overall, the public theatres of sixteenth-century England and Spain assisted the diffusion of state culture and the monarchs' absolutist desires. The sovereigns needed a spectacular visibility to augment their power, and the theatre could offer it, though in a potentially ambivalent way:

Absolutism is inherently theatrical, for it demands a sense of power centred in the royal personage, and a corresponding denial of reciprocal or contractual dependence upon the subordinate subjects. [...] the theatricality of royal power is also its deepest vulnerability. (Hall 1995:201)<sup>19</sup>

Supposedly, the dominant gaze of the monarch replicated on earth God's all-embracing and almighty gaze. However, this domineering gaze had to be staged and the monarch him/herself, unlike God, was seen in the act of gazing: the monarch's power, therefore, fell back on being seen by his/her subjects and reluctantly admitted its dependency. In his article 'Shaping Fantasies', Montrose has argued that symbolic forms (such as those enacted in performance) do not merely represent power: they also create that same power, or, in other words, mould in some measure the culture from which they spring (Montrose 1983:84). To be sure, English and Spanish early modern dramatists and theatre companies were dependent on monarchical and aristocratic patronage. Nonetheless, the opposite was also somewhat true: the public theatres offered their audiences various accounts of the nobility and could vitally aid the process of legitimisation of absolutism.

The 1570s saw the birth of permanent, public, commercial playhouses in both England and Spain, when numerous playwrights started composing regular plays (in Spain generally called *comedias*).<sup>20</sup> The two countries were at war from 1585 until 1604 and

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<sup>18</sup> As Leonard Tennenhouse clarifies, in England Queen Elizabeth's body politic stood for the state itself and was regarded as infallible and everlasting. Her image had to be protected from possible threats to its integrity, threats ranging from unauthorised paintings to the rivalries within the aristocratic body (Tennenhouse 1991:27-29).

<sup>19</sup> In *The Illusion of Power* Stephen Orgel writes that central to the Renaissance concept of kingship was 'the notion of the ruler as an exemplary figure'; theatrical performances could vitally stage the 'appearance of virtue' before the subjects' eyes (Orgel 1975:42, emphasis added).

<sup>20</sup> In London permanent theatres were established (and a few theatre companies endorsed) as a result of the Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds in 1572. The Privy Council regulated the acting

travel between them was not easy. However, because of the alliance with the Dutch (who had been under Spanish rule for many years) English people could read and perhaps see Spanish plays in Amsterdam. In his book *Renaissance Drama in England and Spain*, Loftis traces to Spanish sources four Stuart plays and maintains that no Tudor play derives from Spanish models.<sup>21</sup> It is likely that educated English men (for instance, Endymion Porter and Richard Fanshawe) travelled in Spain at the beginning of the seventeenth century, attended the theatres, and reported what they had seen once back in England. Nonetheless, Loftis maintains that 'in their developments from the religious dramas of the Middle Ages, the English and the Spanish dramas were largely independent of one another' (Loftis 1987:235). In fact, as Cohen proposes, the two theatres matured autonomously, but 'took on a uniquely similar cast': their distinctiveness from other European dramas lay in their combination of 'native popular and neoclassical learned traditions' (Cohen 1985:15 and 17).<sup>22</sup> Whereas contemporary French drama was the drama of the ruling class, the English and Spanish was 'the drama of a class' (the aristocracy) as well as 'the drama of a nation' (Cohen 1985:150). This became possible through a series of similar socio-political circumstances: in early modern England and Spain a 'relative cultural homogeneity' of town and country, of upper and lower classes, encouraged the drama to employ a multiplicity of cultural practices and to appeal to diverse social classes (Cohen 1985:19). That homogeneity both strengthened and was promoted by Elizabeth I's and Philip II's absolutism. In the course of the sixteenth century, the two absolutist states were steady but 'incomplete': indeed, they had momentarily left behind their 'centralizing efforts' after the turbulence of the late 1560s - the Rebellion of the North ('a Catholic, separatist, and feudal uprising') that took place in England in 1569 and the insurrection of the Catalans and the *Moriscos* of Granada in Spain during the years

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profession, whereas the Master of the Revels had a patent for the licensing and censorship of playbooks. In Madrid permanent playing was authorised in 1568, when the aristocratic Council of Castile granted the charitable *Cofradía de la Pasión* a license: the confraternity raised money for a hospital by staging theatrical performances and this benevolent purpose helped the public theatre to survive, in spite of its numerous opponents.

<sup>21</sup> The plays drawing from Spanish sources are the anonymous *Love's Cure* (undated), Massinger's *The Renegado* (1624) and James Shirley's *The Young Admiral* (1633) and *The Opportunity* (1634) (Loftis 1987:237). All four plays were subsequent to Prince Charles' journey to Madrid in 1623, when English artists and gentlemen began to manifest a deeper interest in Spanish literature (Loftis 1987:247).

<sup>22</sup> Cohen provides the example of Renaissance Italy, where plays normally addressed an upper-class, erudite audience and were performed at court. Even the *commedia dell'arte*, though appealing to all social classes, was directed toward rich circles or an international audience. For these reasons, early modern Italian drama expressed itself through neoclassical comedy and did not often appropriate popular materials (Cohen 1985:98).

1569-70 (Cohen 1985:19 and 137).<sup>23</sup> The incompleteness of absolutist consolidation, therefore, proved crucial to the development of England's and Spain's early modern drama: the articulation of distinct viewpoints was possible, the dramatists could 'mingle communal and individualist attitudes' and bring into play an assortment of feudal, monarchical, humanist, bourgeois and popular ingredients (Cohen 1985:149). Cohen himself underscores that on stage the different perspectives struggled with one another (rather than being harmoniously amalgamated) and the aristocratic ideology normally outweighed other positions at the closure of the performances. Cañadas makes a similar point, remarking that the authority of the monarchy and the elite on English and Spanish public theatres cannot be denied. Nevertheless, 'the need to appeal to the popular audience remained the primary concern of dramatists and theatre companies' (Cañadas 2005:14).

The imperfection of English and Spanish absolutism and the commercial nature of the public theatre may account for the fact that the drama of both countries was able to articulate cultural unorthodoxy. Philip II, for instance, closed the *corrales* (the public playhouses) on May 2, 1598; they remained closed for almost a year, until Philip III, the new king, reopened them on April 17, 1599. The episode demonstrates the controversial status of the theatres and questions the traditional view of Spanish early modern culture as a totalitarian regime: had the king regarded the theatre as a flawless propaganda tool, he would not have shut it down.<sup>24</sup> The notoriety of public performances stirred anti-theatrical polemics in both countries: Philip Stubbes, in his *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583), attacked the English acting profession and accused it of offending religious virtue and the social

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<sup>23</sup> In both countries the monarchs emerged reinforced by the unrest of the 1560s: the longevity of Elizabeth I and Philip II contributed to the internal peace of the end of the century, but neither country was able to chase 'standard absolutist centralizing policies' (Cohen 1985:138). In contrast, France's establishment of a very strong absolutism was completed rapidly, a few years after Cardinal Richelieu's assumption of power in 1624: socially, Richelieu connected the French stage to the court and nobility; aesthetically, he linked it with neoclassical rules. French tragedies or tragicomedies began to focus almost exclusively on the aristocracy's conduct, whereas in England and Spain interclass relations were also considered (See Cohen 1985:104-108).

<sup>24</sup> José Antonio Maravall, in his influential work *Culture of the Baroque* (1975), has argued that the methods of the Spanish Inquisition 'approximated totalitarianism' and allowed the state to penetrate its people's 'consciousness' (Maravall 1986:51). However, other scholars have disputed this vision: for example, Charlotte Stern has emphasised the fact that in early modern Spain 'there was enough freedom to accommodate the picaresque novel, the farce, and the critical writings of the *arbitristas*' (Stern 1982:13). The *arbitristas* (such as González de Cellorigo and Pedro de Valencia) were liberal thinkers who, among other things, proposed a reform of the ecclesiastical property holdings and wrote against the honour code (see Hildner 1982:95).

good.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, in Spain the Jesuit Father Juan de Mariana's *Tratado contra los juegos* (*Treatise Against Plays*) (1609) condemned the theatre's moral corruption of the public. As Cañadas observes, actors and theatre entrepreneurs were master-less individuals and, as such, they defied the normal hierarchical social structures (Cañadas 2005:9). In addition, as William Blue reasons, the public stages showed low-class men (in Spain also women) disguised as monarchs, aristocrats, and even saints: their detractors clearly feared that the audience could see 'that anyone could become what they were not simply by changing clothes' (Blue 1993:92).

Besides the two states' imperfect absolutism and the commercial demands, other material facts correlate the public theatres of early modern England and Spain. As Hugh Macrae Richmond writes, the English and Spanish playhouses 'have proved to share professional practices to a remarkable degree' (Macrae Richmond 2004:44).<sup>26</sup> The Rose and Globe theatres of Elizabethan London had physical characteristics akin to those of the *corrales de comedias* in Madrid: they were open-roofed structures that provided for a large, standing audience in the pit and for a seated audience in galleries and rooms on three sides and above the protruding stage.<sup>27</sup> In both cities, the theatregoers belonged to all social classes, but whether they stood or sat in a gallery depended on their financial possibilities: hence, staying in the pit or in the galleries was indicative of a spectator's rank.<sup>28</sup> As Cañadas observes, spectators with restricted economic income could not afford to attend the theatres as often as the aristocrats or the gentry. As a social group, however, the labouring poor outnumbered the privileged and did not have to visit the playhouses as often 'to make their presence felt' (Cañadas 2005:12). The owners of the theatres mostly

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<sup>25</sup> In *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama*, Jeremy Lopez notices that anti-theatrical writers like Stubbes especially censured the audiences' 'love of the variety offered by plays': the theatres were schools in which one learnt, for instance, to rebel against princes, to commit treasons, to play the whore-master, the glutton and the drunkard (Lopez 2003:23).

<sup>26</sup> Despite the structural resemblances of the playhouses, as Macrae Richmond points out, actual connections between English and Spanish performers in the sixteenth century have not been documented (unlike the tours of early modern English theatre companies in Northern Europe) (Macrae Richmond 2004:44).

<sup>27</sup> Discussing the configurations of the Corral del Príncipe and the Globe, John Orrell points out that the two playhouses offered actors and audiences analogous theatrical experiences: the performers were brought close to the spectators and a sort of medieval symbolism (the Heavens above, Hell below) was also visible (Orrell 1991:24-25). In her *Theatre in Spain*, Merveena McKendrick fully describes the staging conditions of the Spanish playhouses (see McKendrick 1989:178-184). For details of staging within the *corrales* see also John J. Allen's article 'Staging' (Allen 1993:27-38).

<sup>28</sup> As Jean E. Howard writes, the English public theatres were designed 'to reflect older status categories': common men stayed in the pit, gentlemen in the galleries, and lords on the very top. Nevertheless, people could pay for better or worse places notwithstanding their status (Howard 1991:69).

profited thanks to the money coming from the most expensive seats, but the actors' earnings principally depended on 'a uniform payment at the door by all members of the audience': thus the impact of the standing spectators in the English and Spanish theatres cannot be undervalued (Cohen 1985:169).

Alongside the audiences' plausible appreciation of the popular motifs of the performances, a few English and Spanish playwrights had significant relations with popular culture and came from the artisanal classes: Thomas Kyd's father was a scrivener, Shakespeare's a glover. The leading dramatist in sixteenth-century Spain, Lope de Vega (1562-1635), was a commoner, and so was Cervantes.<sup>29</sup> Their non-canonical education might account for their comfortable dismissal of classical dramatic conventions: both Shakespeare and Lope were acquainted with neoclassical theory, yet they used its precepts selectively. In his *El arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* (*The New Art of Playmaking at this Time*, published in 1609), Lope defended his own dramatic production in three points: first, he demonstrated he knew the canons and cleared himself of accusations of ignorance. Second, he declared that he did not follow those principles because the taste of his audiences (comprised of 'el vulgo', the plebeians, and of women) was not up to classical standards. Third, he reasoned that some of his innovations actually had merit: the mixture of comedy and tragedy imitated the variety found in nature; the respect of the unity of time would have hindered plausibility and obliged him to cram too many events into one day; finally, he simply considered his modern techniques good because they were successful in the Madrid theatres. Lope's apology seems to confirm the socially assorted composition of the time's audiences and the vital role audience response played within the playhouses. To some extent, the modest provenance of both Shakespeare and Lope may mirror their comedies' interest in questions of social hierarchies and mockery of aristocratic culture.<sup>30</sup> In his *Power on Display*, Tennenhouse explains that a dramatist like Shakespeare could not attain membership in the privileged class of his patrons and censors; as a result, he normally 'represented their class to them

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<sup>29</sup> The examples of Shakespeare and Lope should not, however, diminish the importance of the university-educated dramatists in both countries: among others, Marlowe, Lodge and Greene in England and Calderón and Tirso de Molina in Spain.

<sup>30</sup> The ridicule of courtly lovers, a common feature of Shakespeare's romantic comedies, lost its appeal after 1601, as Tennenhouse underscores: the Jacobean tragicomedies and romances handled aristocratic love affairs 'with notable gravity' (Tennenhouse 1986:37). The influence of James I's court on Shakespeare increased in the last decade of his career, yet the King's Men profited from the monarch's favour more in terms of prestige than financially (see Alvin Kernan's study *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright: Theatre in the Stuart Court, 1603-1613*).

from the viewpoint of the outsider and subject' (Tennenhouse 1986:39).<sup>31</sup> Likewise, Cañadas remarks how social aspiration and antagonism contributed to the ambivalence of Shakespeare's and Lope's works. Possibly, both writers alluded to their marginal status as playwrights through the creation of morally ambiguous heroes and villains. Their concern with 'issues of social privilege versus personal achievement' potentially aided the articulation of opinions situated outside of the dominant aristocratic ideology (Cañadas 2005:35).

Whereas on the London stages male transvestite boys played the female parts, in Madrid women actually interpreted those roles. In spite of this distinction, the presence of boy and female actors interrogated contemporary concepts of gender hierarchies in similar ways.<sup>32</sup> The Spanish theatres separated their spectators according to sex: the first-floor gallery (the *cazuela*, or stew-pot) was reserved for women, a moralistic measure that ironically contradicted the important function of the on-stage actresses. On the other hand, women were absent from the London stage, but they constituted a substantial portion of the audience in attendance. Female spectators attracted the indignation of anti-theatre preachers: for instance, in *The Schoole of Abuse* (1579) Stephen Gosson maintained that theatre menaced women's sexual purity and that, consequently, women should have remained at home. As Jean E. Howard argues, in the London playhouses the female spectators were (momentarily) released by 'the structures of surveillance and control' usually active in their society. They were 'licensed to look' and, possibly, 'to judge what they saw and to exercise autonomy': this freedom could question their subjugated position and jeopardize male supremacy within patriarchy (Howard 1991:71-72). In Spain the public visibility of women, whether on- or off-stage, caused analogous anxieties: in fact, Spanish actresses were banned from the stage between 1596 and 1598. However, disguised boy actors turned out to be more disturbing than actresses and women were

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<sup>31</sup> In 1596 Shakespeare applied for the grant of arms (a title his father had chased thirty years before) and in 1599 he wanted to add the coat of arms to his mother's family (Tennenhouse 1986:37). Lope tried in vain to secure various distinctions and his failure to do so perhaps instigated the allegations that he was of *Morisco* stock (Cañadas 2005:28-29). Besides being a very prolific dramatist, Lope was secretary to the Duke of Sessa: this indistinct social position is maybe echoed by the issues of social mobility often at stake in his plays (Cañadas 2005:32).

<sup>32</sup> The fact that a few women playwrights were working in Spain in the 1630s and 1640s proves that early modern Spanish culture was far from monolithic: among them, Ana Caro, Leonor de la Cueva and María de Zayas (see the essays collected in Anita Stoll's and Dawn Smith's *Gender, Identity, and Representation in Spain's Golden Age*). As Catherine Larson explains, female-authored plays of early modern Spain have been dug up quite recently; the *dramaturgas* (women playwrights) 'seemed able to carve out a space of their own' in a male-dominated context (Larson 2000:137).

soon re-admitted onto the Madrid stages.<sup>33</sup> As their counterparts did in England, in Spain female characters often masqueraded as men and this practice drew harsh criticism as well. Indeed, Teresa Soufas remarks that female transvestism was the focus of contemporary moralists and that cross-dressed parts were often regarded as 'scandalous' in early modern Madrid (Soufas 1996:138). Both as character and performer, the transvestite woman confronted 'the proscriptions against woman's public speech and display' and she stood 'as an icon of alternatives in the social construction of gender' (Soufas 1996:137).<sup>34</sup> The portrayal of the female characters I analyse in this thesis supports a reading of the plays as polyphonic: Shakespeare's and Behn's unruly women and Calderón's cross-dressed Rosaura point to contemporaneous social anxieties concerning gender and rank and to the articulation of both patriarchal and rival discourses about those issues.

As the transition from feudalism to mercantilism and the centralised state set in motion a process of identity definition, questions of nationhood and race began to surface in the two countries' dramatic production. The English and Spanish national history plays constitute an unparalleled case in early modern European drama and, in Cohen's words, offer 'one of the more striking indications of the unique similarities between the two theatres' (Cohen 1985:218).<sup>35</sup> Historical drama reflected on the emergence of nationhood and absolutist fortification and especially looked at the changing relationship between the monarchs and the aristocracy. The histories registered the consequences of the kings' ruling of their countries and the active role common people (peasants, artisans, soldiers) at times played

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<sup>33</sup> Cañadas proposes that the segregation of female spectators in the first-floor gallery in part compensated for the presence of women on the Spanish stage: the contemporary sexual double standards instigated 'a (homo)social practice of ethical compartmentalization' (Cañadas 2005:43).

<sup>34</sup> Presumably, the gender of the cross-dressed actress in the Spanish theatres was not uncertain, as tights and doublet exposed the body beneath. In contrast, transvestism on the English Renaissance stage did actually hide the shape of the body beneath (Cañadas 2005:62-63). Lisa Jardine has argued that the boy player was likely 'to be regarded with erotic interest which hovers somewhere between the heterosexual and the homosexual around his female attire': the Lord's page (disguised as a woman) in *The Taming of the Shrew* provides an example of such ambiguous appeal (Jardine 1991:59).

<sup>35</sup> The history plays (Loftis studies those written between the 1590s and the 1620s) also help us understand how the two nations saw each other. Overall, Spanish artists seemed to believe that their country was predestined to rule the world; the English opinion of Spain was affected by the 'Black Legend' myth, which described the *conquistadores* of the Indians of America as exceptionally inhuman and fanatical (Loftis 1987:6). English dramatists at times expressed their fear of a possible Spanish invasion of England: for example, Loftis reads an anonymous play of the 1590s, *A Larum for London*, as illustrative of the (Protestant) anti-Spanish propaganda of the time (Loftis 1987:218).

in their nation's fortune.<sup>36</sup> The chronicle histories, as Tennenhouse underlines, produced 'political order out of political conflict': either the reality of class struggle was finally denied in favour of social unity, or popular rebellion was seen 'in a relatively unsympathetic light' (Tennenhouse 1986:73 and Cohen 1985:223).<sup>37</sup> English dramatists, however, generally focused on (past) social conflicts between the nobility and the lower classes in a much more consistent way than the Spanish.<sup>38</sup> Though the crown's interests (the centre of the plots) were more private than national, the spectators of national drama witnessed the performance of their own history (Cohen 1985:221). There was an insistence on the people's right to judge the ruling class' exercise of state power and, as a result, aristocratic ideology was being inherently undermined.

As a final point, a consideration of the two dramas' interest in matters of honour and (racial) otherness shows their sharing of comparable cultural codes and apprehensions. Discussing the Spanish honour plays, Melveena McKendrick observes that an early modern Spaniard's source of pride (and potential fear) was his social standing more than his wife: rank depended on two inseparable components, *nobleza de sangre* (nobility of blood) and *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) (McKendrick 2002:21). Due to widespread intermarriage between aristocrats and *conversos* (Jews who had been forced to accept Catholicism) in the fifteenth century, the aristocracy's nobleness of blood was at times dubious: commoners (who normally had not been in contact with Jews) could claim a purity of blood which was as good as proper lineage.<sup>39</sup> However, an obsession with racial

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<sup>36</sup> As previously mentioned, playwrights and theatre companies wanted to escape stage-censorship and hence typically avoided dangerous political subjects or overt criticism of the monarchs. In Spain censorship concentrated on departures from theological orthodoxy, while in England it paid more attention to political comments. Even so, in both countries the censoring authorities took action against 'morally or theologically offensive' plays and against plays referring to important people or containing denigration of the church or the state (Loftis 1987:28).

<sup>37</sup> The partial exception in this sense is Shakespeare's historical drama of the 1590s: interclass and intra-class relations are taken into consideration, though one or the other may acquire more prominence at a certain moment (see Cohen 1985:225-226).

<sup>38</sup> Cohen argues that this happened because in the two countries the threat to national unity came from different elements. In England it was constituted by the feudal crisis, an enemy within the country itself, firmly suppressed by the Tudors. In Spain, national unity had for centuries defined itself as the struggle against Islam. Even after the Reconquest (in 1492, with the occupation of Muslim Granada by the monarchs Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon), Spanish playwrights insisted on seeing national unity as an issue related to religion: they depicted it as the battle between Catholic Spain and the foreign infidels and presented the internal situation as (apparently) peaceful. The 'temporal options' available to the English dramatists (namely the internal conflicts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries) were therefore far smaller than those available to contemporary Spanish artists (Cohen 1985:226).

<sup>39</sup> In 1492 a royal edict was approved which declared that all Jews in Castile and Aragon had either to convert or face expulsion. At least 50,000 Jews left Spain and moved to Portugal, North Africa, Italy or the eastern Mediterranean (Barton 2004:101). The decline in the military occupation of the

origins and social extraction was a less prolific supply of dramatic intrigue than a fixation with sexual honour. Accordingly, McKendrick argues that in the public playhouses honour was illustrated especially in the context of love and marriage because this permitted compelling and eclectic possibilities. All the on-stage husbands, fathers, brothers, or jealous suitors (like their off-stage equivalents) had a woman who could impair their reputation: honour issues represented 'a sphere of experience' meaningful to a large part of the audience (McKendrick 2002:33). Both in England and Spain, patriarchal figures exercised 'protective/possessive functions' over wives, daughters, sisters, or fiancés (Hall 1995:165). The patriarchs (or merchants) exchanged or sold their women (or goods) to gain economic advantages. The value of the marketable goods depended on their integrity: namely, a daughter's chastity or a wife's fidelity (without which the husband's offspring would have been stained).<sup>40</sup> As Hall emphasises in his analysis of *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598), Don John's plot wants to destroy the honour of the 'weaker vessel' (Hero) only to attack the patriarch himself (Leonato as well as Claudio). The loss of reputation of a daughter or a wife means the destitution of the male: 'Leonato's paternal curse of Hero is also an act of despair and confession of vulnerability' (Hall 1995:190).

Although the Spanish circumstances of coexistence of different ethnic groups did not have a close equivalent in early modern England, both dramaturgies often contrasted discourses of national identity and foreignness. Between the expulsion of the Jewish community by Edward I (1290) and the legislation allowing Jewish immigration (1656), the Jewish presence in England was limited; yet the Jew continued to be 'a point of reference in the early modern construction of an English national identity' (Cañadas 2005:26). The Jew's problematic status fluctuated between themes of conversion and integration or falsehood and apostasy: the preoccupations it raised were not solely religious, as they

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aristocracy, as McKendrick points out, provoked 'a concern for other forms and manifestations of status and pre-eminence': the concepts of nobility and purity of blood addressed the upper classes' need 'to remain exclusive' (McKendrick 2002:22). Tennenhouse similarly describes the courtly economy of sixteenth-century England as one that 'makes blood the source of all other value' (Tennenhouse 1986:54). Numerous *comedias de villanos* (peasant plays such as Lope's *Fuente Ovejuna*, 1612-14) idealised the peasantry as a racially pure class especially by emphasising that the Jews had never been involved in agriculture (Cañadas 2005:25).

<sup>40</sup> Comparing the revenge code in *Hamlet* (1601) and the honour code in Calderón's *El médico de su honra* (*The Surgeon of His Own Honour*, 1629 or 1635), Bruce Golden remarks that by Calderón's time women had been made responsible for preserving masculine honour (i.e. purity of blood) for at least 500 hundred years. This concern - aggravated by 700 years of Moorish presence and Jewish influence - reached 'nearly hysterical proportions' in seventeenth-century Spain (Golden 1989:101). Golden reasons that both plays disapprove of the revenge and honour system: the male protagonists are trapped in their societies' 'binding, barbaric, and inflexible' conventions (Golden 1989:102). Nevertheless, in Calderón's play Don Gutierre's plea for honour 'only mystifies his urge to subjugate his wife' (Golden 1989:101).

also contained 'the threat of false converts to the national bloodline' (Cañadas 2005:27).<sup>41</sup> Muslims and black people (the latter representing 'a 'new world' of previously unimagined peoples and cultures') appeared also in the *comedias* and projected contemporary worries regarding racial contamination (Mariscal 1991:96). On stage these characters were frequently neglected and mainly performed comic roles, yet other accounts existed as well: for instance, some of the Muslims in Lope's historical plays were noblemen and spoke the standard Castilian language.

In the 1580s and 1590s (when English ambitions got in the way of Spanish imperialism) the English too began to serve as the antagonistic other for Spanish artists. As a result of the marriage between Mary Tudor and Philip II (1554), the Spanish heir actually ruled England for roughly four years (until Mary's death in 1558). Their union had been problematic and fostered English fears of foreign monarchs and (political and religious) aversion to Spain: for instance, Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1589) depicts Spanish characters as 'trapped within a destructive cycle of revenge' that comes across as more pagan than Christian (Hadfield 2004:5). In *Othello* (1604) Iago and Roderigo have Spanish names and may have been associated with Jesuits by an English audience: the religious order was commonly blamed for treachery and its 'subversive and underhand tactics' (Hadfield 2004:4). The dichotomies England/Spain, body/soul, and earth/heaven, as Mariscal suggests, incarnated 'a rivalry based on an essential, divinely ordained alterity' (Mariscal 1991:91).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> In order not to fuel patriarchal and nationalist anxieties, the male convert was usually portrayed as old, impotent, and doomed to remain unmarried (see James Shapiro's *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 1996).

<sup>42</sup> Alongside the Reformation, the Revolt of the Netherlands and the civil wars of France were the key events that provoked the English/Spanish hostility. When James I made peace with Philip III (1604), English merchants and translators restarted visiting Spain and attending the *corrales* (Loftis 1987:108-109). Loftis explains that under James I English attitudes towards Spain were ambiguous: the king admired Spain's wealth and military power, while the English Parliament feared Spanish ambitions (Loftis 1987:109). In 1620, when Spanish troops invaded the Palatinate in Germany (the domain of James I's son-in-law Frederick), England got involved in the Thirty Years' War. In order to arrange his (possible) marriage with Philip III's daughter, in 1623 Prince Charles (together with the Duke of Buckingham) spent six months in Madrid and watched court ceremonies, *comedias*, and religious plays (Loftis 1987:154-156). However, when the Spanish regent Olivares subordinated the wedding to Charles' conversion to Catholicism, the Spanish match broke off. Charles managed to return to England only at the end of August 1623, despite having expressed his desire to do so since May: as Loftis suggests, the prince had learnt not to trust the Spanish (Loftis 1987:161-162). Numerous plays engage with this political scenario: for example, Philip Massinger's and John Fletcher's *Sir John van Oldenbarnevelt* (1619), Thomas Middleton's *A Game At Chess* (1624), Lope's *Los españoles en Flandes* (*The Spanish in the Flanders*, 1595 or 1607) and Calderón's *El sitio de Bredá* (*The siege of Breda*, 1625).

In conclusion, the analysis of their socio-cultural background demonstrates that the public theatres of early modern London and Madrid functioned in comparable ways. Their dependence on both aristocratic patronage and paying audiences permitted the coexistence of disparate ideologies; their potential grilling of the status quo became the target of censorship and anti-theatrical pamphlets. The dramatic production of the two countries joined in contemporary disputes about hierarchy, gender and identity; it voiced contradictions that were not always easily answered and did so, as I propose, also through the performance of dreams.

## **II.2: The Protestant/Catholic divide.**

Their different religious creeds possibly constituted the major divergence between early modern England and Spain. The English Reformation strongly affected the relationship between the two nations: to the Spanish kings Charles V (1516-1556) and Philip II (1556-1598) the Reformation meant the transformation of England from an (erratic) ally into a dangerous enemy; England (the natural leader of the Protestant states) was regarded as the main cause of the Spanish problems in the Netherlands.<sup>43</sup> Generally, Catholics assumed that the main reason for the religious upheaval was Henry VIII's desire to divorce Queen Katherine. The Spaniards saw England as the chief defender of the Reformation and the 'fomenter of heresy' in Europe; they considered the invincible Armada's mission as the battle of the Catholic faith against the 'falsehood of a siren', Queen Elizabeth I (Loftis 1987:61). This section, accordingly, investigates the role Protestantism and Catholicism played in the two (social and theatrical) milieus and introduces issues that I will return to in subsequent chapters. The religious beliefs moulded the identity of the two nations and were mainly instrumental to the reinforcement of their central powers; nevertheless, the drama of the time was also able to criticise those values and their uncritical supporters.

The religious divide surfaced within the public theatres. Early modern Spanish playwrights often reflected on religious conviction and employed a specific dramatic genre (the *auto sacramental* studied in chapter 5) to illustrate theological points. The disparity in

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<sup>43</sup> Shakespeare and Calderón dramatize the English split from the Catholic Church, respectively in *Henry VIII* (1613) and *La cisma de Inglaterra* (*The English Schism*, 1626-27). Shakespeare's play, 'tolerant and reconciliatory', presents both Katherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn as victims of affairs of state (McKendrick 2002:201). Calderón, in contrast, stresses Anne's ambition and her evil pairing with Wolsey, but does not overcharge her with witchcraft and 'sexual depravity' (McKendrick 2002:192). Marlowe's anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish position is normally more vigorous than Shakespeare's: in *The Massacre at Paris* (1592-93), for instance, he depicts Catholicism as the destructive union of the Pope and the Spanish sovereign.

the production of religious drama in the two dramaturgies can be tracked down more to their absolutist regimes than to the existing religious differences. The predominantly secular and modern structure of English society was the chief reason behind the gradual disappearance of religious drama: the crown suppressed it in order to eliminate heterodoxy within the Reformed church. As Montrose has pointed out, in England the celebrations for the Corpus Christi were turned into the feast of the Body of the Realm: through the Anglican church, the monarch (Elizabeth I in particular) acquired the power of a religious icon (Montrose 1998:221-222). The centralised state also amalgamated together other pagan and Christian festivities (for instance, Midsummer Eve, St John's Day, the rites of May, and St Valentine's Day) in order to achieve a national cultural uniformity. In Spain, in theory, the Catholic Church owed ultimate obedience to the Pope; however, the Spanish monarchs powerfully succeeded in mastering the Church and its economic resources. In fact, the Inquisition (established already in 1478) served both as an agent of religious orthodoxy and 'royal centralization' (Cohen 1985:139).<sup>44</sup> As Heinz Gerstinger explains, the Spanish kingdom (with its hierarchical structure) was meant to embody on earth a microcosm of God's realm. The monarch personified divine order and justice and the articulation of Catholic dogma in allegorical and secular plays was supposed to strengthen the religious as well as the political status quo (Gerstinger 1973:24).

Comparing the two countries' theatrical practices in relation to secularity, Kenneth Muir has argued for a clearly defined partition:

The main difference between the two Golden Ages of Elizabethan and Spanish drama is simply that in Spain the plays were written by Catholics for Catholics, whereas in England the drama was ostensibly secular, whatever the convictions of the individual dramatists. (Muir 1991:211)

Possibly, Shakespeare and his colleagues knew a number of mystery plays and witnessed some moralities. After 1585, however, when Shakespeare started writing his own plays, religious topics (and New Testament subjects in particular) were normally kept away from

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<sup>44</sup> As a document written to Philip II in 1558 stated, legal contraventions of mercantile activity were punished by the Inquisition: 'it shall be commanded that [...] persons who improve their lot with others' money, [...] should be subject to all the prohibitions placed upon those condemned by the Holy Inquisition' (*Memorial del contador Ortiz*, quoted in Mariscal 1991:85).

the stage.<sup>45</sup> Beside the English government's determination to maintain the Elizabethan religious settlement, the theatre companies were aware of performing in front of people with different beliefs and did not want to cause offence. Hence, Muir maintains that Shakespeare wrote 'for a secular stage' and had no intention 'to support or illustrate any particular doctrine' (Muir 1991:212-213). Tensions between good and evil and a metaphysical dimension certainly appear in Shakespeare's works (for instance, in *Othello*, 1604, or *Macbeth*, 1606), yet ideological and generic conventions (together with the chosen dramatic material) shape his plays more than religious views. Accordingly, religious principles do not usually affect the moral conduct of Shakespeare's characters and the theme of divine providence is at times presented under an ambiguous light, as for example in *King Lear* (1605).<sup>46</sup> Muir maintains that material that on the London stage was treated tragically would have been guaranteed a happy ending in the Spanish playhouses.<sup>47</sup> He proposes that Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists could oscillate dubiously between Catholic and Protestant stances and gratify spectators of divergent credos (Muir 1991:213). According to Protestant doctrine, in morality plays human beings were depicted as having no freedom of choice to determine their fate; in contrast, Spanish playwrights insisted on the Catholic concept of free will and on the inner conflict of the believers, two prominent features of Calderón's *Life Is a Dream*.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> The central government suppressed the mystery cycles after the Catholic Rebellion of the North in 1569 and completed a gradual process of censorship of Catholic traditions that had started with Henry VIII's break with Rome. Cohen argues that the mystery cycles' creativity had in any case exhausted itself by 1500; other more secular dramatic forms (or what he calls 'humanist drama') better engaged with England's changing situation (Cohen 1985:124).

<sup>46</sup> The theme of divine providence also features in *Richard III* (1592): God plagues Richard, the villain-king, and uses him as an instrument to reinstate the English throne to Richmond, whose reign inaugurates the Tudor monarchy. Carole Levin writes that 'some dreams were central to the establishment of the Tudor line': in *Richard III* the ghosts of Richard's victims haunt him in his dreams, while they encourage Richmond in his own dreams (Levin 2008:93 and 104). Shakespeare thus portrays the end of the Plantagenets' dynasty through problematic sleep and troubled dreams. In the Spanish context, Lope and Calderón often dramatise meditative passages about religious or philosophical issues (as the titles of some of their plays suggest). Their tight dramatic structures exemplify a pattern in human affairs that more plainly mirrors a belief in divine providence (Loftis 1987:229).

<sup>47</sup> Muir discusses Othello's final repentance and desire for eternal torture as elements that, in a Christian context, could potentially save the Moor (Muir 1991:216). Analysing Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1604), he conjectures that, had Calderón written the same play, 'the hero would have been allowed to repent, even at the eleventh hour' (Muir 1991:217).

<sup>48</sup> Drawing a comparison between Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* (1604-16) and other Spanish plays that dramatize a pact with the devil (for instance, Calderón's *The Prodigious Magician*, 1637), Cohen maintains that Marlowe's play stands apart from the others. In dramatizing the conflict between Renaissance and Reformation, Marlowe endows his work with 'unusual pessimism': 'Individualist aspiration, however attractive, leads to damnation. Protestant conventionality, by contrast, offers safety at the price of vitality' (Cohen 1985:378). Through its humanist vigour, *Dr. Faustus*

On the other hand, the religious divide distancing early modern England and Spain is perhaps thinner than normally assumed. In fact, as Lope and Calderón did in Spain, in the first two decades of the seventeenth century also English playwrights occasionally wrote plays dealing with religious subjects. For example, both Dekker's and Massinger's *The Virgin Martyr* (1620) and Calderón's *El mágico prodigioso* (*The Prodigious Magician*, 1637) depict a virgin martyr who defeats the devil's plotting and encourages a pagan man (Theophilus and Cipriano) to convert. At the closure of both, the martyr is beheaded and the rulers continue to be non-believers and persecutors of Christians: royal power, as Cohen suggests, is not always openly endorsed (Cohen 1985:375).<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, in *The Challenges of Uncertainty* Jeremy Robbins questions the conventional view of early modern Spain as 'backward' in its approach to modern science and philosophy (Robbins 1998:41).<sup>50</sup> Robbins emphasises that Spain confronted preoccupations about knowledge and perception and manifested those anxieties in literature, drama and painting. Along with the Catholic/Protestant conflict, new geographic discoveries (the New World as well as Japanese and Chinese culture) made reality more ambiguous all over Europe. The Renaissance rediscovery of stoicism and scepticism modified the ways in which reality was conceptualised: among others, the works of Descartes and Newton replaced faith with probability and science as the new arbiters of reality.<sup>51</sup> Contemporary thinkers (Montaigne especially) interrogated European presumptions of superiority; the new early modern cosmology replaced geo-centrism with helio-centrism and triggered a fresh fascination with

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transcends religious tragedy and interrogates human fate within a world that has lost its previous social and metaphysical unity. According to Cohen, *Dr. Faustus* is at the same time the last important English morality play and one of the 'founding works' of Jacobean tragedy (Cohen 1985:378).

<sup>49</sup> Other instances of English religious drama are Cyril Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy* (1611) and Middleton's *A Game of Chess* (1624). Nonetheless, the former is 'relatively secular', whereas the latter, despite its total fusion of 'national and theological commitments', focuses more on specific anti-Spanish abuse than on religious points (Cohen 1985:378 and 374).

<sup>50</sup> Robbins does not weigh the early modern Spanish context against the English, yet he shares Cohen's view that Spanish art was 'never as state-controlled as French classical culture' (Robbins 1998:34). He insists that the Spanish Baroque was not 'a monolithic enterprise used to further the interests of the ruling elite' (Robbins 1998:34).

<sup>51</sup> In Spain, interest in sceptical philosophy was stimulated by the publication in Latin of two essays by Sextus Empiricus (second century A.D.); Sextus' thinking assisted the circulation of relativism, i.e. the impossibility of gaining an objective perspective of the world (Robbins 1998:42). Robbins investigates Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605-15) and Baltasar Gracián's *El Criticón* (1651-57) as instances of the Spanish interest in the unreliability of human knowledge and perception. In her investigation of Renaissance anxieties about the human status, Erica Fudge draws attention to the circulation of sceptical philosophy in early modern England and its reflection on the limits of human reason. Sextus Empiricus' work was known in England too and (probably) Walter Raleigh wrote *The Sceptick* in 1590 (Fudge 2008:41-42). I will further comment on emerging early modern ideas about the senses (and their unreliability) in chapter 2.

perception. In Spain the spread of Protestantism in Europe meant that ‘there was no longer a fixed world-order established and stabilized by a single institution, the Catholic Church’ (Robbins 1998:45). In response to the Reformation, the Council of Trent (1545–1563) re-defined Catholic dogma and underscored that traditional Christian teaching also insisted on the ignorance and fallibility of mankind.<sup>52</sup> New religious orders were founded to win back the hearts of individuals to Catholicism: among them, the Jesuits (established in 1540) promoted the study of classical literature and science.<sup>53</sup>

To return to the English/Spanish comparison, in early modern Europe England was the only Protestant country whose dramatic output was considerable. For that reason, Cohen has argued that ‘the common basis for this drama was not the Reformation but the Renaissance’ (Cohen 1985:144). The import of Protestantism to early modern English public theatre cannot be ignored: whereas Renaissance values ‘never reached the people’, the Lutheran Reformation and Calvinism significantly spread among the middle and lower classes (Cohen 1985:145).<sup>54</sup> By encouraging interiority and personal interpretation, Luther’s invitation to read the Bible somehow constituted the true Renaissance for English people. Possibly, Bible reading led to anarchy of thoughts and conflicting social/individual relationships. Perhaps, it justifies the psychological density of the characters and the abundance of soliloquies frequent on the London stages (Cohen 1985:146). However, as Mariscal has observed in *Contradictory Subjects*, the idea of the ‘individual’ was gradually maturing in early modern Spain as well. Like their Protestant counterparts, Counter-Reformation Catholic discourses emphasised ‘individual piety’ and the practice of ‘solitary and silent reading’ (Mariscal 1991:67). For the majority of Spaniards, the more bodily aesthetic experience of theatregoing (or of public readings of the Scriptures) would persist; all the same, the model of ‘solitary reflection’ and potential ‘individual autonomy’ was taking form (Mariscal 1991:69). The passionate spiritual activity

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<sup>52</sup> As one of the decrees issued from the Council of Trent clarified, the Catholic Church intended to use art to revitalise the people’s faith: ‘by means of the histories of our redemption, [...] the people are instructed’ (quoted in Robbins 1998:20).

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Austin O’Connor explains that the Jesuits initially made a didactic use of theatre and its methods: they would stage plays based on Christian doctrine in public squares and use words and actions to ‘produce affective impacts on their hearers’ (O’Connor 2000:190). Subsequently, the Jesuits began to attack the commercial theatre, which they saw as the cause of ‘the spiritual, physical, and economic destruction of men brought about by Eve’s daughters’ (O’Connor 2000:191). Among other authors, Calderón and Quevedo had been educated in Jesuit schools, a fact that may explain their engagement with theological, philosophical and political questions.

<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, critics have also argued for a ‘contradictory unity’ between Renaissance and Reformation: the humanists, with their anti-clerical struggle and their ‘appeal to the laity’, somewhat facilitated Luther’s preaching (Cohen 1985:145).

developing within the sixteenth-century Spanish Church, as Cohen stresses, came from outside 'the upper reaches of the hierarchy' and often disapproved of those hierarchies' misconduct (Cohen 1985:149).<sup>55</sup> Unlike other members of the Catholic Church, the influential Jesuit order strictly acknowledged obedience to the Pope: this represented a potential threat to the power of a monarchy not infrequently in conflict with the Holy See.

For the above reasons, and notwithstanding its vitality in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish playhouses, we should not overrate the importance of religious drama (and Catholic morals) within the whole theatrical tradition. In fact, in spite of the Counter-Reformation and the presence of the Inquisition, in Spain professional actors could choose what plays were to be staged. Consequently, 'the *auto sacramental* proved less important than the fundamentally secular *comedia*'; within the *comedia* itself religious plays represented a small part of the dramatic production (Cohen 1985:127). Against traditional readings of Spanish early modern drama as un-controversially dogmatic, more recent analyses of Spanish plays have highlighted their frequently uncertain endings and made a case for their possibly tragic closures.<sup>56</sup> In his *Reading for the Stage*, Isaac Benabu considers the often paradoxical circumstances in which the dramatic works operated:

Clearly, there is the religiosity shared by an officially theocentric society, which underscores most of the plays of the period. But how are we to explain the apparent secularity of the religious spectator in so many *comedias*? (Benabu 2003:11)

Benabu, for example, calls attention to the position of Tirso de Molina, a monk and a dramatist whose characters often turn to hazardous behaviour, erotic language and coarseness.<sup>57</sup> Don Juan in Tirso's *El burlador de Sevilla (The Trickster from Seville, 1616-20 or 1625)* constituted an 'anarchical challenge' to early modern ideas of human and metaphysical order; his immorality disclosed the reality beneath the façade of his contemporary society (Cohen 1985:368). In the public theatres, an entire section of the

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<sup>55</sup> Robbins reports that court preachers at times lectured the king on his behaviour and strategies, in order to fulfil their duty of 'speaking the truth' (Robbins 1998:35). Ordinary complaints attacked the crown's very costly imperialist politics and the benefits of the Castile region as opposed to the indigence of other regions (Cohen 1985:149). Lope's *El castigo sin venganza (Punishment Without Vengeance, 1632)* portrays a dissolute ruler (the Duke of Ferrara) in his pursuit of sexual adventures with prostitutes, a behaviour probably echoing Philip IV's excesses.

<sup>56</sup> Unsurprisingly, Spanish comedies end in marriage, but 'many of the pairings fail to satisfy us either aesthetically or emotionally' (Blue 1989:31). Blue underlines that many comedies criticise marriages arranged or forced by fathers and the cruel hand of society falling on innocent lovers.

<sup>57</sup> As mentioned before, Calderón was ordained in 1650: Benabu suggests that the author's conventionally severe and solemn image somehow gave prominence in critical studies to his serious dramatic production to the detriment of his numerous comedies (Benabu 2003:11).

seating (the *tertulia*) was reserved for the clergy, who regularly attended the performances and thus partook in those conflict-ridden communal experiences (Benabu 2003:11). Spanish religiosity of early modern times has accordingly been termed as saintly and sinful at once: Catholicism seemed to be 'of one substance' with Spanish society, yet the behaviours of early modern Spaniards regularly contradicted the precepts of Christian morality (Defourneaux 1971:29). The public stages thus showed the incongruities present in society: priests who had lovers, noblemen who dressed well but lived poorly, aristocratic titles that were sold and purchased. Theatrical role-playing presumably emulated actual comportments: in Blue's words, 'theatre was more than a metaphor, it was a way of life' (Blue 1989:23).

On the other hand, Catholic values entered the secular *comedias* and could be critical of normally accepted behaviours. The above-mentioned honour plays are especially significant in this sense: in Calderón's *The Surgeon of His Own Honour* (1629 or 1635), Don Gutierre asks a barber to bleed his (innocent) wife to death when he suspects she has been unfaithful to him. During the murder scene, the crucifix (the symbol of Christian mercy) placed over the bed possibly reminded the spectators of the disagreement between Christian morals and the honour code (Muir 1991:219). As Benabu points out, the dramatic action would have made the audience solidly aware of Gutierre's silent suffering after the sacrifice of his beloved wife: the closure indicates 'a bleak universe' where people are destined to suffer because of their communities' unquestionable beliefs (in this case, honour regarded as more important than love) (Benabu 2003:49).<sup>58</sup>

To conclude, the analysis of the religious framework of early modern English and Spanish theatres corroborates what the previous section has argued: the imperfect absolutism of the two states attempted to use the official religion to consolidate its own centralising ambitions. However, new and conflicting stances within the same religious establishment and the composite nature of the (paying) audiences stimulated the drama to explore a vast range of uncomfortable questions and communicate disparate viewpoints.

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<sup>58</sup> Critical controversy about Calderón's play has been caused by the fact that at the end the king commands Gutierre to marry Leonor; though the monarch knows how Gutierre's wife has died, he acts to support the honour code followed by Gutierre. This, nonetheless, does not mean that early modern audiences (or the playwright) approved of Gutierre's conduct: as Golden remarks, the closure of *The Surgeon of His Own Honour* resounds with irony and implies that the honour system will continue to run (Golden 1989:112).

### III: The dream theories in circulation.

In his introduction to *Reading Dreams* A. C. Spearing underlines the importance of historicizing, namely of situating (medieval and early modern) dreams ‘more exactly in specific cultural contexts’ (Spearing 1999:3). Likewise, in his introduction to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* Peter Holland reasons that sixteenth-century (English) oneiric theories provide ‘the framework within which the experiences within *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and that of the whole play by the audience would have been understood’ (P. Holland 1994:9). Equally, the study of dreams within their specific historical environment permits a better understanding of the environment itself. This section, therefore, delivers an overview of the dream theories in force in early modern Europe and ponders the ideas playwrights and audiences could share about dreams. Certainly, as Levin has verified, a good number of people in the early modern period ‘took dreams seriously’, even individuals in high social positions (Levin 2008:132).<sup>59</sup> At the same time, the assessment of the value of specific dreams frequently caused animated debates.

The major contribution to dream interpretation in classical times came from Aristotle and Artemidorus.<sup>60</sup> The former wrote the essays *On Sleep and Waking* (*De Somno et Vigilia*), *On Dreams* (*De Insomniis*) and *On Divination through Sleep* (*De Divinatione per Somnum*), probably between 335 and 323 B.C. The latter, a professional dream interpreter, composed the *Oneirocritica* (*The Interpretation of Dreams*) in the second century A.D., the age of the Antonine emperors.<sup>61</sup>

Aristotle does not recognise a connection between dreams and emotional concerns: unlike Plato, he treats dreams as ‘mere presentations’ passively endured by the dreamer, not as fictions the dreamer actively builds (Gallop 1990:9). For Aristotle, sleeping (like waking) is both a physical (i.e. related to the body) and a psychological (i.e. related to the

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<sup>59</sup> For instance, Marguerite de Valois (daughter of Henry II of France and Catherine de Medici) used to say she received warnings of events to come through dreams (Levin 2008:132).

<sup>60</sup> Plato did not write a specific essay devoted to dream theory, but there are various comments on the topic in a few of his works. In *Timaeus* (360 B.C.) Plato regards predictive dreams as one of the elements of divination the gods give to human beings; he believes that dreams can be correctly interpreted only when the dreamer has left the sleeping state. Dreams happen when the rational soul produces reflections that are perceived by the irrational soul: Plato calls those reflections *phantasmata*, internal appearances of real external objects (Gallop 1990:10-11). In *The Republic* (360 B.C.) Plato distinguishes between spiritual and intellectual dreams (experienced by reasonable men attempting to broaden their wisdom even during sleep) and passionate and physical dreams (lived by men with an animal soul stronger than the rational one). Importantly, Plato seems to anticipate Freud’s notion of dreams as wish-fulfilment: he sees them as a ‘mode of fiction’ compensating for the shortcomings of the dreamer’s real life (Gallop 1990:8).

<sup>61</sup> For a summary of writing on dreams from the classical era to the fifteenth century see Ricardo Castells’ *Fernando de Rojas and the Renaissance Vision* (2000).

soul) condition and, accordingly, he studies it as a biological phenomenon. Whereas Plato thinks that some individuals may receive divinatory dreams, Aristotle strongly denies a divine origin for dreams. There exists a certain incongruity in Aristotle's comprehension of dreams: he sees dreaming as 'a mode of perceptual awareness' occurring in sleep, yet he labels sleep 'a state of perceptual incapacitation' (in sleep perceptual responsiveness is suspended) (Gallop 1990:17). This contradiction is possibly resolved through his belief that dreams are produced neither by the perceptual nor the intellectual branch of the soul; rather, they are the work of the imagination. David Gallop proposes that Aristotle conceives of imagination both as 'a capacity for mental imagery' and one whereby something appears to a (sleeping) person (Gallop 1990:21). In spite of the absence of perception during sleep, Aristotle still considers dreams as the product of the perceptual faculty, but of this faculty in its imagining (and hence illusory) capacity:

Now, just as we said that different people are prone to deception on account of different emotional states, so is the sleeping person on account of sleep [...] what bears a slight resemblance to something appears to be that very thing. [...] Consequently, what is like something is judged to be that very thing. (*De Insomniis*: 461b7, 7-29)

Accordingly, for Aristotle dreams are akin to sensory illusions and he explains them through analogy with 'misperception' (Gallop 1990:34). The phantasms and sounds the imagination creates in sleep can be so well-defined and convincing that the dreamer might believe them to be actual. Because he considers dreams as a sort of perceptual aberration, Aristotle terms them 'daemonic', i.e. belonging to the natural order and not springing from a transcendent source. He denies, therefore, that dreams are manufactured by an intelligent agent and simply analyses them as 'curious side-effects of a physical process' (Gallop 1990:42).

Whereas Aristotle does not provide any interpretation of individual dreams, the five books of Artemidorus' *Oneirocritica* systematically read the images and symbols of both 'theorematic' (direct) and allegorical dreams (*Oneirocritica*: book 1, section 2). Artemidorus avoids the question of whether dreams are sent by the gods or stimulated by something within the dreamer; instead, he differentiates between *oneiros* (a dream indicating 'a future state of affairs' and hence predictive) and *enhyption* (indicating 'a present state of affairs') (book 1, section 1). He explains *enhyption* through concrete causes: 'it is natural for a lover to seem to be with his beloved in a dream and for a frightened man to see what he fears' (book 1, section 1). To provide an example of interpretation connected to the case

studies this thesis investigates, 'night vigils, nightly festivals, and banquets [...] are auspicious in regard to marriage and partnerships. For poor men, they are symbols of wealth and increase of property. [...] they signify to those who are distressed or frightened the end of their cares and fears' (book 3, section 61). Artemidorus' reading would have been valid for the lovers' dream experience in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (they all get married after the *dream*) or for Calderón's Segismundo (he becomes the royal heir once the oneiric feast in his father's court is over). However, Sly's dream of wealth in the Lord's house does not mean, presumably, the end of his material preoccupations.

Although numerous other writers discussed the topic of dreams in the Middle Ages and the fifteenth century, Aristotle's and Artemidorus' essays remained very influential throughout (Castells 2000:41).<sup>62</sup> Debates about dreams continued in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and began to oscillate between traditional interpretations and a more modern (i.e. more personal than communal) reading. Katharine Hodgkin, for instance, has questioned the traditional distinction between early modern and contemporary (post-Freudian) dream interpretations: early modern understanding of dreams did not rigidly rely on shared symbolic codes nor concentrated exclusively on their predictive quality. The early modern dream, frequently regarded as 'an emotional experience, rather than a neutral message', testifies to the emergence of individual subjectivity (Hodgkin 2008:114).<sup>63</sup> Among other concerns, discussions about dreams confronted the problem of the human status and its distinctiveness. As Erica Fudge clarifies in her article "Onely Proper Unto Man': Dreaming and Being Human', early modern thinkers considered animals unreasonable, incapable of reasoning abstractly, and,

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<sup>62</sup> Among the later Latin treatises, Calcidius' *Commentary on Plato's 'Timaeus'* (A.D. 249–56) allow for both divine and human dreams. Christian writers principally revise classical dream theories: bearing in mind the important role of dreams in the Old and New Testament, they cannot accept Aristotle's dismissal of dreams. For example, Saint Augustine (354–430) regards the dreamer's deprivation of sensorial perceptions as a chance to access higher knowledge: the dreamer could withdraw into the interior realm of intelligence and see better than in everyday reality. The Arabic scholar Avicenna (980–1037) distinguishes between spiritual visions (produced by the rational soul) whose object is the divinity, and physical ones (produced by the animal soul) that portray material pleasures (Castells 2000:37–41). Neo-platonic theorists believe dreams to have both physiological and spiritual roots and stress the phantasmal nature of human as well as divine dreams: the soul could receive external data only through the images created by phantasms. The illusory images appearing in the dreamer's imagination constitute the connection between the soul's inner perceptions and the physical and psychological forces that rule over the dreaming imagination (Castells 2000:45–46).

<sup>63</sup> In her article 'Dreaming Meanings: Some Early Modern Dream Thoughts', Hodgkin especially considers the writings about dreams of the sectarians of the Commonwealth (among others, Mary Burrill and the Quaker Mary Penington) (Hodgkin 2008:115–124).

consequently, unable to dream. Quoting Pierre Le Loyer's *A Treatise of Specters* (translated into English in 1605), Fudge argues that:

to *truly* dream is to imagine beyond the present and bring reason into play, and it is in this way that the human 'foreseeth by things past, those which are to come after'. By implication, the dream, a product of reason, is a site of human superiority. [...] to dream truly is to be human (Fudge 2008:32-33)

A true dream was therefore prophetic and would have been a sign of genuine humanity; on the other hand, the study of dreams generated paradoxes that threatened the idea of 'humanity' as a separate species. Indeed, Artemidorus' *Oneirocritica* (translated into English in 1606) construed the dream of speaking with an animal as true, i.e. prophetic: for early modern people, this type of dream represented 'a return to a lost golden age' when humans and beasts could communicate (Fudge 2008:43). At the same time, the fact that the animal in the dream validated the dreamer's human status (by making the dream prophetic) potentially negated the ideal of humanity as detached from the animal.

As previously said, several Spanish and English treatises reflected on dreams and their worth in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I have, however, decided to focus only on a few of them, those usually deemed more influential in their times: in Spain, friar Lope de Barrientos' *Tractado del dormir et despertar et del soñar et de las adivinanças et agüeros et profeçia* (*Treatise on sleeping and waking; of dreaming and of divinations; of presages and prophecies*, c. 1455); in England, Thomas Hill's *The Most pleasaunte Arte of the Interpretacioun of Dreames* (1576), Thomas Nashe's *The Terrors of the Night Or, A Discourse of Apparitions* (1594) and Thomas Browne's *On Dreams* (undated, c. 1650).<sup>64</sup>

Lope de Barrientos, a Dominican friar and professor of theology at Salamanca University, also worked as Inquisitor and advisor to the monarchs John II and Henry IV of Castile. His tract *On Sleeping and Waking*, created upon request from John II, consists of six parts and mainly depends on Aristotle's dream theory. As the case of Lucrecia de León (mentioned in this chapter's opening) proves, in early modern Spain dreams can play an important role in both religious and political matters. In his essay "The Interpretation of

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<sup>64</sup> Other works in which one can find information about early modern dream understanding are: Pedro Ciruelo's *Tratado en el qual se repruevan en todas las supersticiones y hechizerias* (*A Treatise Reproving All Superstitions and Forms of Witchcraft*, 1530) in Spain; Timothy Bright's *A Treatise on Melancholie* (1586), Thomas Walkington's *The optick glasse of humours* (1631), Gonzalo's *The Divine Dreamer: or, A Short Treatise Discovering the True Effect and Power of Dreams* (1641) and Philip Goodwin's *The mystery of dreames, historically discoursed* (1658) in England.

Dreams' in the Renaissance', Holland in fact observes that Spanish priests were instructed in dream analysis and were supposed to detect diabolical or divine visions (P. Holland 1999:139). Lope de Barrientos was no exception and his orthodox (Aristotelian) work is an example of the battle between the community (wise women and oneiromancers) and the state for control over dreams. Because dreams exerted a strong fascination on common people and could be regarded as divine, religious and political authorities attempted to confine them within the boundaries of official interpretation. Lope de Barrientos' essay does not deny the possibility of divinely inspired dreams (like Joseph's in the Bible). Yet, it remarks their rarity and insists that most oneiric visions are negligible:

The masses affirm that dreams come from the angels and from things men thought about when awake, but this is not always true [...] Prophecies, according to the common conclusion of the Catholic doctors, are from a good source, [...] when our God wants to reveal things to come by means of some meritorious person who He chooses. [...] But other sorts of divination, those that presume to know and relate future things, those are all mortal sin (*Tractado del dormir et despertar*:26)<sup>65</sup>

The easy rejection of the significance of most dreams helped the state and the church to consolidate their own supremacy: dreams like those Lucrecia de León had, if held true (i.e. sent by God), could cast doubt on the image of the king by strongly criticising his behaviour. As we will see in chapter 4, *Life Is a Dream* presents conflicting views on dreams: for his political convenience, King Basilio wants Segismundo to negate the value of his palace dream; audiences of the play, however, may have acknowledged the political importance of the on-stage dream.

Thomas Hill's *The Most pleasaunte Arte of the Interpretacioun of Dreames* was partly based on Artemidorus' *Oneirocritica*, originally available in England in a Latin translation of 1546. Hill's book amalgamated learned dream theories and popular beliefs and was 'apparently widely read': seven editions of it were published in the first 50 years after its appearance (Levin 2008:35). Hill's theoretical purposes resemble Barrientos': he classifies dreams as vain (caused by current affections or bodily desires) and true (signifying things to come). The meaning of a dream might depend on the gender or status of the dreamer: an interpreter 'must consider the nature of the dreamer, the age, and the reste needfull,

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<sup>65</sup> The translation of the Spanish text is mine: 'El vulgo afirma que los sueños proçeden de parte de los ángeles et de las cosas que los onbres han pensado estando despiertos, et aquesto non es sienpre verdat [...] La profeçía, segunt común determinaçión de los doctores cathólicos, viene de buena parte, [...] quando a nuestro Señor plaze revelar algunas cosas advenideras mediante alguna persona ydónea que para ello escoge. [...] Pero las otras espeçias de divinar, que son presumir de saber et fablar las cosas advenideras, todas son pecado mortal'.

lyke as the wealthy persons, and men in aucthority' (Hill 1576:22). Hill offers a methodical reading of various images and situations populating dreams: to worship a king in a dream means 'to worshippe Religion and God'; to be kissed by an emperor or king or to talk with him implies 'gayne'; to see an eagle (as Segismundo does in *Life Is a Dream*) signifies 'honour', but to see or fight with bees indicates 'ire' (Hill 1576:76-77).

Whereas Hill seems to validate the importance of dreams through his detailed analysis of their possible meanings, Thomas Nashe's *The Terrors of the Night* is a satiric essay that refutes dreams as prognostic tools. Nonetheless, it appears that also for Nashe dreams are 'a source of energy and excitement' (P. Holland 1999:145). Nashe's definition of dreams is often quoted as representative of his age's notion of oneiric visions:

A dream is nothing else but a bubbling scum or froth of the fancy, which the day hath left undigested; or an after-feast made of the fragments of idle imaginations. (Nashe 1594:153)

Nashe supplies both psychological and physical causes for dreams: the preoccupations of the day, private guilt and sins can haunt the dreamers at night. In addition, any meat that has been eaten may provoke 'a dismal dream' (Nashe 1594:154-155). Melancholy, Nashe adds, is 'the mother of dreams and of all terrors of the night whatsoever'; accordingly, a person whose humoural disposition is predominantly melancholic would dream more often than others (Nashe 1594:155).<sup>66</sup> Nashe thinks that general rules for dream interpretation cannot be set down ('that which is portentive in a king is but a frivolous fancy in a beggar'); yet he concedes that extraordinary personalities (for instance, Caesar and Alexander Magnus, or the saints and martyrs of the 'Primitive Church') experienced veritable visions 'sent from heaven' (Nashe 1594:158 and 165). Though he insists on the fact that there is 'no certainty in dreams', Nashe underlines the fearful, physical impact they may have on the dreamers: 'The glasses of our sight in the night [...] each mote in the dark they make a monster, and every slight glimmering a giant' (Nashe 1594:168).

The last pamphlet I consider is Thomas Browne's *On Dreams*, which also sees natural dreams as the thoughts or actions of the day 'acted over and echoed in the night' and considers certain foods as the causes of ('turbulent' or 'quiet') dreams (*On Dreams*:399 and 400). Importantly, Browne's speculation looks at dreams as a personal experience and suggests the time's surfacing of individuality:

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<sup>66</sup> Nashe proposes that 'by dreams' physicians could better understand the 'dis-temperature' of their clients (Nashe 1594:163).

However dreames may bee fallacious concerning outward events, yet may they bee truly significant at home, & whereby wee may more sensibly understand ourselves. (*On Dreams*:400)

For Browne, then, dreams could act more as an instrument of self-knowledge than as a predictive tool. They function, furthermore, as theatre performances in which 'a little water makes a sea, a small puff of wind a Tempest' (*On Dreams*:401). As Levin has remarked, for Browne dreams both permit 'dramatic kinds of self-expression' and work as 'windows into the self' (Levin 2008:47-48). Cleomena's dream in Behn's *The Young King*, roughly contemporary with Browne's treatise, can actually be regarded as a tool of self-awareness: it sheds light on the princess' emotions and guides her towards recognition of her beloved.

To conclude, this survey of early modern oneiric theories has proved that the (uncertain) status of dreams was the object of animated debates. Dreams fluctuated between being true (divinely inspired) and futile: this position, I will argue, constituted their main appeal for the dramatists and possibly explains their popularity on the stages of the public playhouses. Holland has proposed that in the Renaissance:

The validity and value of the meaning of a dream [...] are precisely dependent on the nature of the dream as experience as well as on whether there is any eventuating proof. (P. Holland 1999:130)

Essays like Artemidorus' or Nashe's, in fact, put emphasis on the specificity of a dreamer's experience: above all, his/her gender and rank affected the response to and the interpretation of a single dream. For instance, a dreaming monarch was usually taken very seriously: because of his/her position, he/she was thought to be a more likely receiver of divine visions (Levin 2008:155/156).<sup>67</sup> At the same time, the period's dream theories remarked on the sensory attributes of dreams, attributes that felt as tangible as real life: 'In our sleep we are aghasted and terrified with the disordered skirmishing and conflicting of our sensitive faculties' (Nashe 1594:166). The on-stage dreams featured a strongly sensorial dimension as well: consequently, they could appear as *actual* and as bearers of vital meanings. The next chapter continues the reflection on the phenomenal concreteness

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<sup>67</sup> In 1578 Sir Christopher Hatton wrote a letter to Leicester and described a dream Queen Elizabeth had of a marriage injurious to her (perhaps the wedding of Leicester himself, the queen's favourite). Elizabeth also dreamt of her sister Mary being executed (Levin 2008:140-142). Catholic propaganda (for example, Adam Blackwood's *Martyre de la rayne d'Escosse*, 1587) presented Elizabeth as a 'bastard' and illustrated the terrible dreams she apparently had. It was implied that the queen deserved the nightmares as she was a tyrant and an usurper: as Levin observes, 'the recording and interpretation of dreams could be politically driven' (Levin 2008:143).

of on-stage dreams and proposes that in my case studies the dreams' ambivalent *solidity* and inconsistency at once question and endorse the epoch's dominant ideologies.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Phenomenology, Genre and On-Stage Dreams**

Whereas the Introduction has outlined a range of comparative issues that will reappear throughout the thesis, this chapter principally focuses on two matters: the investigation of the *realness* of early modern theatrical dreams and the generic and ideological features of my case studies. The interplay of these two aspects, I argue, contributes to the ambiguous standpoint of performances that stage (*actual* or feigned) dreams within the English and Spanish playhouses. Indeed, the on-stage dreams (and the performance they inhabit) acquire a *phenomenal* tangibility that makes them *look like* life.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the fact that they are *just* dreams facilitates their easy refutation at the end of the performance and, possibly, keeps back censorious threats. This in-between status of dreams enables the (ambivalent) consideration of rank and gender questions that are not clearly answered at the plays' closure. To be sure, the genres of the plays I study dictate their conclusions: comedies have to terminate with marriage, (Spanish) religious drama with the celebration of the Eucharistic mystery, and so on. Nonetheless, the dreams taking place before the end vibrantly show the disturbing ways in which the resolutions are reached and cast doubt on their fairness.

The first half of this chapter consists of two main sections. The opening looks at previous studies of dreams in dramatic literature, shows that the cultural weight of dream performance in the early modern period has been little investigated, and calls attention to the distinctiveness of my own approach. Section II introduces phenomenology as my key probing instrument and the chief research questions the phenomenological attitude, as Maurice Natanson calls it, tries to answer.<sup>2</sup> Following this, subsection II.1 engages with the concept of theatre as experience; it draws on early modern thoughts about the corporeal solidity of performances and on the work of scholars (for instance, Bert O. States) who have employed phenomenology in theatre studies. Through a similar procedure, in subsection II.2 I consider dramatic dreams as sensory phenomena and reflect on the resemblance between dream and theatre as at once *actual* and *illusive* events. Since my

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis I use the adjective 'phenomenal' or the adverb 'phenomenally' as Bert O. States does in *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: the two terms pertain to 'phenomena or to our sensory experience with empirical objects'* (States 1985:21).

<sup>2</sup> See Natanson's *The Erotic Bird: Phenomenology in Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

phenomenological enquiry especially focuses on the bodily attributes of on-stage dreams, section III explores early modern ideas about the senses (sight and hearing above all) and takes into account research that has addressed this subject (for example, Marcus Nordlund's *The Dark Lantern* and Bruce R. Smith's *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*). In subsection III.1 I reflect on the then popular life/dream metaphor and propose that the (literary and philosophical) trope might become *actual* on stage. The blurriness of reality and appearances, rather than fading together with the performance, possibly continues outside the theatres: dreams are written off before the play's resolution; nonetheless, their previous mirroring of socio-political anxieties has been so *tangible* that their alleged futility is at least dubious.

In the second half of this chapter, section IV discusses the generic attributes of the selected plays (romantic comedy, philosophical and religious drama, tragicomedy) and situates them within their time's ideological constraints. I also regard dream visions as a specific genre and speculate on the aesthetic and practical advantages theatrical dreams could offer early modern dramatists. Along these lines, the subsequent chapters will verify the lifelike quality of the on-stage dreams and their (provisional but effective) demystification of the time's ideologies. Finally, in the fifth section I review potential methodological problems of my research strategy, think about issues previously raised by scholars who have used a similar approach, and explain how I intend to tackle these concerns.

### **I: Former approaches to dream representation.**

Previous research on the subject of dreams in early modern culture has rarely located the topic within a historical (and specifically theatrical) frame. Only very recently have the essays in *Reading the Early Modern Dream* and Carole Levin's *Dreaming the English Renaissance* (both published in 2008) addressed the (socio-political) significance of dreams in (English) fictional and non-fictional texts. With the exception of Kagan's *Lucrecia's Dreams* (1990), analogous efforts have not concerned early modern Spain.<sup>3</sup> In the past, scholars have provided formalist and psychoanalytic accounts of dreams in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature; yet, they have said little about the concrete shape dreams take on in performance or about how they engage with contemporary socio-political debates.

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<sup>3</sup> In *The Dreamer of the Calle de San Salvador* (2001), Roger Osborne provides an analysis of the dreams Lucrecia had in the period 1587-88 only.

In his *Dreams in Seventeenth-Century English Literature*, Manfred Weidhorn has summarised the common functions of dreams in English drama: by foreseeing events to come and creating suspense, the dream can serve as ‘a means of motivating character’ (Weidhorn 1970:107). The dream is ‘a brief interlude within a larger unfolding story’ and usually has an influence on plot and characters; dreams might ‘counsel, guide, motivate, warn, prophesy, or demand revenge’; at times, dreams have a ‘celestial or infernal provenience’ (Weidhorn 1970:107).<sup>4</sup> The essays collected in *El sueño y su representación en el Barroco español (The Dream and Its Representation in the Spanish Baroque)* principally focus on (dramatic and non-dramatic) works by Quevedo and Calderón and clarify the formal and philosophical aspects of dreams. Dreams often entail motifs of circularity and repetition (recalling the religious model of ‘creation – original sin – redemption’) and metamorphosis (symbolising personal crisis and the possibility of emancipation from mundane worries) (Cvitanovic 1969:81). In early modern Spanish culture, dreams assist disputes concerning the reality/illusion clash and illustrate the themes of the brevity of time and of death (Cvitanovic 1969:82).

Arguably, the two major studies of (English and Spanish) literary dreams are Marjorie Garber’s *Dream in Shakespeare: From Metaphor to Metamorphosis* (1974) and Julian Palley’s *The Ambiguous Mirror: Dreams in Spanish Literature* (1983), which, respectively, analyse Shakespeare’s plays and various (early modern as well as historically subsequent) Spanish authors. Here I provide a summary of Garber’s and Palley’s methodologies and findings and clarify how my approach differs from theirs and what uncharted areas it intends to explore.

Focusing on dreams as well as on dream worlds, Garber carries out a chronological investigation of the Shakespearean dream, which she especially sees as ‘creative energy’ (Garber 1974:IX). Through textual analysis and psychoanalytic notions, Garber identifies

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<sup>4</sup> McLuskie assigns early modern theatrical dreams to one of the following representational categories: the fully dramatized dream vision (for instance, Queen Catherine’s in *Henry VIII*); the oral or gesticulating description of a dream (Bottom’s narration in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*); the philosophical reflection on the state and nature of dreams (Segismundo’s considerations in *Life is a Dream*). Literary dreams can also express contemporary ideas about the value of oneiric visions, constitute a set of symbolic images, or become a route into the characters’ emotions. For example, McLuskie studies Clarence’s dream of drowning in Shakespeare’s *Richard III*: Clarence’s vision reminds the audience of his past and foreshadows the political importance of his murder; the dream’s poetic strength arouses sympathy for Clarence and remarks his culpable past behaviour. At the same time, the dream is a notable ‘poetic set piece’ and its narrative coherence and fluency greatly differ from the anarchy of real dreams (McLuskie 1999:165).

the dramatic tasks of dreams and their more aesthetic and philosophical reverberations.<sup>5</sup> Shakespeare repeatedly uses dreams to assist both structural and psychological purposes and, for Garber, he thinks of dreams principally in terms of ‘transformation’ (Garber 1974:69).<sup>6</sup> Garber regards the Freudian processes of displacement and condensation as creative acts resembling artistic creation: the dreamers (as artists do) manufacture the material of their oneiric experience into a finished artefact. Upon awakening, the dreamer could feel a sort of spiritual regeneration and the impulse to carry out *ekphrasis*, i.e. the conversion of the dream material into art (as Bottom does when he plans to commission a ballad about his dream) (Garber 1974:81). For these reasons, Garber equates the dreamer to the poet: both employ a spirit of imaginative gaiety to make ‘shapes’ of the ‘forms of things unknown’ (Garber 1974:86).<sup>7</sup>

In the second part of her book Garber analyses the ways in which Shakespeare’s romances portray the life/dream and the life/theatre metaphors and dramatize dreamscapes.<sup>8</sup> Towards the end of his career Shakespeare reverses the ordinary reality/illusion, waking/sleeping, and nature/art relationship and makes the second pillar of

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<sup>5</sup> In Freud’s psychoanalysis, personal change and renewal are fundamental elements of the dream experience. The dream activities of displacement and condensation, in fact, translate or combine subconscious and associative thoughts into visual images (Garber 1974:148).

<sup>6</sup> In *Richard III* (1591-93), for example, oneiric visions anticipate or recapitulate events of the plot and add an aura of mystery and foreboding (Garber 1974:15). In *Romeo and Juliet* (1595) Mercutio’s Queen Mab monologue, overall ‘poetical’ and alive with associations, puns, and riddles, resembles the manner of dream logic (Garber 1974:36). Whereas Romeo sees dreams as portents and troublesome omens, Mercutio’s ‘doctrine of dream’ expresses a belief in the renovating strength of imagination (Garber 1974:38). Mercutio praises the dreamers who develop into mythmakers, i.e. are able to control the reality/illusion problem through their wordplay. The question of dream interpretation dominates in *Julius Caesar* (1599), where dreams and omens are regularly misunderstood and affect the action after having been misinterpreted (Garber 1974:52). Characters who, like Brutus, ignore or misread the dream reveal a lack of self-awareness and are dangerously ‘blind to self’ (Garber 1974:49). The death scene of Cinna the poet (killed because of his homonymy with Cinna the conspirator) summarises the main theme of the play, i.e. the issue of misinterpretation and the duplicity of the real.

<sup>7</sup> Psychoanalytic studies of Shakespearean dreams seem at times to suggest that Shakespeare was a somehow intuitive connoisseur of Freud’s theories. For example, Frankie Rubinstein’s article ‘Shakespeare’s Dream-Stuff: a Forerunner of Freud’s ‘Dream Material’ (1986) explores the sexual connotation of Shakespeare’s oneiric symbolism and looks at its process of inversion and replacement of an element with its opposite. Carefully studying the linguistic choices and arrangement of words in various plays, Rubinstein argues that Shakespeare’s multiplicity and ambiguity of ideas express more than real dreams would. According to Rubinstein, the presence of the ridiculous in dreams encourages us to interpret them: the more dream-works engage with complicated linguistic puns, the more they promise to unveil a deeper significance.

<sup>8</sup> For Garber, in Shakespeare’s tragedies dream almost equals consciousness: the tragic world is ‘subjectively glimpsed through the lens of imagination’ (Garber 1974:90).

these dichotomies epistemologically more significant (Garber 1974:59).<sup>9</sup> When reason is open to imagination, sleep can serve as the 'gateway' to a world offering revelation and reordering (Garber 1974:60). As a result of a process of metamorphosis (for example, Hermione's statue coming alive in *The Winter's Tale*, 1610), in the romances the figurative life/dream and life/theatre association seems to reach 'identity' of form: life *is* dream and theatre (Garber 1974:220).

Palley's *The Ambiguous Mirror* begins by drawing attention to the formal likeness between the dream and the theatre: 'a dream is [...] a drama that our unconscious mind creates nightly, and in which you are the protagonist' (Palley 1983:17). On the mind's stage the dreamer normally acts as the main character and puts on a performance whose plot and meaning are typically ambiguous. Rather than considering the (personal and communal) implications fictional dreams could have in early modern Spain, Palley explores them through Freud's terminology and findings. He regards all the dreams analysed in his book as 'ultimately a matter of wish-fulfilment' and classifies them via various categories (Palley 1983:24).<sup>10</sup> Wish-fulfilment dreams express desires that the dreamers (or the characters of a play) do not dare to voice in their waking life. Prophetic dreams (as in the Biblical tradition) anticipate subsequent events. Mourning dreams allow the dreamers to see or speak to a dead person and offer a way to lament his/her death. Lucid dreams are visions of which the dreamer is aware and often occur immediately before awakening.<sup>11</sup> Lastly, anxiety dreams show the dreamer's fears and prompt him/her to confront specific issues.

Palley also stresses the formal similarities of dream and metaphor: in oneiric visions, the tenor is the latent content and the vehicle is the manifest content (the images we see and

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<sup>9</sup> Tennenhouse links the romances' ideology to James I's opposition to representations that reduce the royal family to 'the status of another household within the state' (Tennenhouse 1986:181). Unlike the Elizabethan chronicle histories, the romances do not stage the power of the monarch as menaced by 'any legitimate power rising from below'; in the romances the various families triumph momentarily only to attest to 'an authority that is outside of and superior to the natural family' (Tennenhouse 1986:179). The dreams of Shakespeare's romances, perhaps, provide astonishing and utopian resolutions because they respond to a specific socio-political situation; see section IV of this chapter, where I discuss the genres of the case studies and their ideologies.

<sup>10</sup> Among other works, Palley investigates Lope's *El caballero de Olmedo* (*The Knight from Olmedo*, 1620-1625). For Palley, the oneiric vision Alonso (the knight from Olmedo) has at the end of the second act strengthens the play's love/death motif and is 'symbolic and premonitory': it announces the main character's future death (Palley 1983:105). I think, however, that Alonso's dream has also important connections with the (fictional and actual) socio-cultural context of its performance. It comments, in fact, on the crisis of the chivalric code the knight believes in and on the spectators' polluted society.

<sup>11</sup> The lucid dream, or 'dream-within-a-dream', resembles the theatrical play-within-a-play: within it 'we dream that we are dreaming' (Palley 1983:25).

perceive while dreaming). Drawing on Jacques Lacan's combination of linguistics with psychoanalysis (*Écrits*, 1966), Palley argues that doubleness is a vital feature of dreams. In fact, dreams have a dual content (a manifest and a latent subject matter) and deliver their messages in a dual way (via an evident vehicle and a more implicit tenor). Dreams, in addition, feature linguistic doubleness, the same Ferdinand de Saussure points at when distinguishing between the signified and the signifier of a word (Palley 1983:20). Palley's examination, like Garber's, remarks the 'natural' link between dreams and human imagination: both scholars relate creative products to dreams and their *modus operandi*.

I believe that neither formalist nor psychoanalytic descriptions fully explain the significance of dreams on the London and Madrid stages. The former neglect the socio-political concerns delineated in the Introduction: the drama of Tudor and Stuart England and Habsburg Spain acts out tensions regarding, for example, individuality, class and gender. As James C. Bulman warns in *Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance*, theatrical performances are radically contingent: their interconnection of 'history, material conditions, social contexts, and reception' vitally impinges on their meaning (Bulman 1996:1). The case studies this thesis examines are no exception and have been preferred particularly because of their preoccupation with (patriarchal) power within the family and the state. Psychoanalytic readings, on the other hand, tend to assume the existence of an 'ultimate and inalienable' possession of identity which is only beginning to mature in early modern times (Greenblatt 1986:215).<sup>12</sup> The notion of a fixed-value self traceable within theatrical dreams represses history: it neglects the manifold facts and ideas that set in motion, shape, and affect dream performances and their reception among early modern audiences. Most of the dreams within the case studies do not speak of the dreamer's exclusive individuality: rather, they handle the public worries of the communities on- and off-stage.<sup>13</sup>

The selected plays this dissertation analyses stand for past performances that have gone forever: plausibly, one cannot fully reconstruct them from a present perspective. With a view to recapturing the past, critics themselves (perhaps inevitably) become performers

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<sup>12</sup> See Stephen Greenblatt's article 'Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture' for an examination of the problems linked with psychoanalytic studies of early modern culture. Greenblatt proposes that Lacan's psychoanalytic theories may be more appropriate than Freud's. Lacan's procedures are historicized and, for instance, consider identity in a (very early modern) theatrical way: identity is always 'the identity of another' and is always 'registered [...] in language' (Greenblatt 1986:221).

<sup>13</sup> Discussing Hermia's dream in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Holland maintains that her vision has obvious causes: 'it did not need Freud to identify the serpent of Hermia's dream as a phallic threat' (P. Holland 1994:13).

who play at piecing together long-gone events. Nevertheless, in the individual chapters I explore the case studies considering the 'interplay' between the scripted drama and the social and political debates dream performances address (Worthen 1998:1094). Clearly, the play-texts and their stage directions constitute a fundamental source of information for my research. In fact, they evoke the ways dreams take place on stage, the sensory experiences the dreaming characters go through, and the visual and aural features audiences attend to. In addition to the scripts, however, contemporary dream theories and controversies about gender and rank vitally contribute to the production and the significance of on-stage dreams. As Victor Turner has pointed out in his essay 'Are There Universals of Performance in Myth, Ritual, and Drama?', socio-economic structures have their 'dominant form of cultural-aesthetic 'mirror'' in which they achieve 'a certain degree of self-reflexivity' (Turner 1990:8). Accordingly, early modern English and Spanish societies - gradually moving from feudalism to capitalism - use theatre to allocate meaning to 'macro-processes' (i.e. economic and socio-political changes and concerns) (Turner 1990:8). Theatrical performances are reflecting instruments through which various (and competing) social groups can take a look at their everyday circumstances. To borrow the definition of the authors of *Theatre Histories*, the chosen case studies - 'cultural performances' more than 'plays' - are 'expressive events' that flow from and partly shape the 'individual and collective identities' of their participants and spectators (Zarrilli, et al. 2006:XX).<sup>14</sup>

In conclusion, the import of the dream experience within early modern theatres could be brought back through a (formal) analysis that does not overlook the historical context of that experience. Certainly, the dreams of the selected plays exercise narrative tasks and facilitate the dramatization of surreal and eye-catching subjects.<sup>15</sup> However, I contend that they primarily serve to: 1) uncover alarming policies of power legitimisation and maintenance; and, 2) deny subtly that those policies have been imposed on socially low characters. Early modern dream theories ambivalently fluctuate between regarding dreams as a robustly physical (and at times spiritual) experience and a negligible

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<sup>14</sup> Turner has argued that stage drama is a (explicit or implicit) 'metacommentary' on the most relevant social dramas of a specific context (Turner 1990:16). The dream performances I study, accordingly, originate from a cultural milieu, mirror its controversies, and perhaps influence the audiences' view of those issues. As cultural performances, they speak for complex and historically specific 'kinds of communal reflection and communication' (Zarrilli, et al. 2006:XXVIII).

<sup>15</sup> For instance, Hermia's dream somewhat anticipates Lysander's betrayal in the woods. All the case studies stage fantastic or implausible events and perhaps draw attention to the dramatists' and the acting companies' ability to shape (apparently) 'airy nothing'. If, as Garber reasons, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Shakespeare's romances present dreams and theatrical illusion as epistemologically more important than reality, the historicizing of those works may clarify why that happens in that epoch.

nonentity. Early modern theatre, I argue, plays with this vague nature of dreams: first it exploits them to assemble troubling circumstances on stage and afterwards it conveniently disclaims their weight. In view of that, I bring together various research strategies to endorse my contention: the historicizing of theatrical dreams fosters an appreciation of their socio-political importance within the early modern playhouses of England and Spain; phenomenology assists a reconstruction of the sensory shapes dreams shoulder in performance; awareness of genre allows me to reflect on the ideology the case studies champion and on their (momentary) disapproval of it through dreams. The next sections further explain my methodology, its foreseeable benefits and its possible limitations.

## **II: Why and how phenomenology?**

In his introduction to *Reading Dreams*, A. C. Spearing defines dreaming as a form of sleeping occurrence that imitates waking experience (Spearing 1999:1). Analogously, theatre is an aesthetic happening that somehow replicates everyday experience; in particular, the case studies this thesis explores embody dreams (i.e., a portion of real life) via performance. All performances bristle with meaning and encourage an investigation of the *actual* ways in which their components *make sense* literally and metaphorically. Theatrical enactments endow dreams with a perceivable (though temporary) body and give dreams concrete space and time dimensions along which to discharge their content. I hence intend to look into the constituents that physically fabricate dream performance on the stages of early modern London and Madrid. The sensory properties of dreams are central to my study for two main reasons: 1) they prove the density of the dream experience within the playhouses; and, 2) that density makes theatrical dreams lifelike and, consequently, culturally relevant also outside the theatres.

In *Critical Theory and Performance* Joseph Roach supplies a valuable synopsis of phenomenological practices of analysis: phenomenology (from the Greek *phainomenon*, ‘that which shows itself’) offers an ‘intuitive apprehension’ and ‘penetrating description’ of events as they purely show themselves, ‘prior to interpretation’ (Roach 1992:353). Other scholars, however, underline the difficulty of providing a stable definition of phenomenology. John O’Neill’s study *The Communicative Body*, for instance, remarks this deficit as well as appreciates it: phenomenology approves of a method independent of ‘all categorization and predication’ (O’Neill 1989:25).<sup>16</sup> According to O’Neill, the

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<sup>16</sup> Stephen Priest makes a similar point and underlines that phenomenology is ‘a style or manner of doing philosophy’, not a series of dogmas (Priest 1998:28).

phenomenological approach illustrates space, time and the world as 'lived experiences' and necessarily depends on 'the facticity of existence' (O'Neill 1989:25). Similarly, Don Ihde's *Sense and Significance* sees phenomenology as investigating 'the full ranges and possibilities of human experience' and defines it as a 'science of experience' (Ihde 1973:13-14). Ihde writes that phenomenologists should discard (or put on hold) customary ideas about things and start thinking anew.

In terms of tangible methods and results, Priest explains that phenomenology offers thick descriptions of things rather than causal explanations. A phenomenological exploration endeavours to disclose 'metaphysical and commonsensical assumptions' about the world and offers a fresh perspective on it (Priest 1998:28). The practical exercise of phenomenology, consequently, should permit the re-cognition of things implicitly already known: as O'Neill proposes, phenomenology ('a genealogy of being') studies how being comes into consciousness without taking its possibility for granted (O'Neill 1989:31). In *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty advocates a 'return to the things themselves': a return to the actual setting (or context) within which all our thoughts and perceptions take place (Merleau-Ponty 1962:IX). The world in which we act is 'always already there' and therefore precedes our knowledge (Priest 1998:33). As a result, our understanding is more a physical than a mental phenomenon and phenomenology unearths the 'umbilical cord' binding us to the world (O'Neill 1989:27).<sup>17</sup> Priest's reading of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological method further clarifies how phenomenology operates:

Doing phenomenology requires perceiving the world in a new way; just as it is presented to consciousness and without taken for granted beliefs about what is perceived. [...] phenomenology discovers afresh our contact with the world (Priest 1998:29)

Through a (ideal) technique of perception devoid of preconception, phenomenology tries to adopt a 'different perspective' and look into 'the whole realm of experience' and its 'shape' (Ihde 1973:15 and 18). Phenomenologists strive to rob experience of its habitual justifications and ask *what shows itself* while we go through sensory happenings (i.e., while we see, hear, touch...) (Ihde 1973:15). Interrogating these events, phenomenologists attempt to de-familiarise the everyday and make it surprising (Ihde 1973:19).

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<sup>17</sup> In O'Neill's reading, to become a subject means to move towards the world: consciousness is 'a project of the world' and is constantly 'directed' towards it (O'Neill 1989:31).

My own phenomenological analysis aims to show the physical attributes of theatrical dreams and delivers a dense account of how they come to life on the stages of early modern England and Spain. Leaving aside their narrative functions and their (possible) psychoanalytic readings, I revisit the deeply *phenomenal* site where dreams take place and disclose them to a novel (literal and metaphorical) *perception*. I attempt to recreate the *actual* forms through which the dreams at issue reveal themselves and propose a comprehension of enacted dreams as principally bodily and convincing events. In his article 'Sound and Senses', Lawrence E. Sullivan has defined all performances as a specific cultural mode of existence: 'a way of moving the senses in space while evaluating the meaning of existence in time' (L. E. Sullivan 1986:28).<sup>18</sup> Along these lines, I suggest that early modern performances are bodily events that make dreams *look* real and, via dreams, engage in socio-political disputes. This thesis, then, explores the 'rootedness' of dreams (and dreaming characters) inside the playhouses and speculates about the ways actors and spectators *make sense* of dreams as 'intensely *situated*' experiences (B. R. Smith 1999:31, emphasis original).

My phenomenological investigation of early modern theatrical dreams is also endorsed by the fact that the phenomenological attitude recalls some of the philosophical concerns of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century culture.<sup>19</sup> In Maurice Natanson's words, phenomenology studies 'what happens in this world': its crucial theme is 'the primal epistemic assumption', the presupposition that our world is 'real, self-subsistent, intersubjective, lasting' (Natanson 1998:82). In common-sense terms our world is a 'reliable home', as we believe we can trust our sensorial perceptions. However, phenomenology is in this regard a 'proven spoilsport': it places in doubt and assesses 'the very foundation stone of our believing-in the world' (Natanson 1998:82). Indeed, phenomenology wants to enter and bracket the taken-for-granted world of everyday existence; it tries to bring to light what common sense 'is content to leave in the twilight of consciousness' (Natanson 1998:82). A similar approach is valuable to the study of theatrical dreams and the

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<sup>18</sup> As Smith argues in *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, the senses exercise existential force in the shaping of communities: cultures develop their individuality 'through things seen', as well as 'heard and said' (B. R. Smith 1999:48).

<sup>19</sup> The phenomenological attitude is counterpart to Husserl's concept of 'the natural attitude'. As Priest explains, the natural attitude is the series of 'commonsensical beliefs' people retain before attempting a phenomenological investigation; for Husserl, transcendental phenomenology demands the 'suspension' of the natural attitude to perform its tasks (Priest 1998:18-19). This deferral of belief (and disbelief) in the natural attitude (also known as phenomenological or 'transcendental reduction') aids the phenomenological description of 'what appears to consciousness just as it does appear' (Priest 1998:20).

life/dream likeness the case studies put forward. Like phenomenology, the life/dream and life/theatre theories put to the test the actuality of the world and the trustworthiness of the senses. This sceptical stance does not imply that reality does not exist; rather, the being of the everyday world is what allows contemporary phenomenologists (and, I would add, early modern artists) to exercise the 'transcendental reduction' (Priest 1998:21). In other words, the world can be inhabited 'unreflectively' (and is hence termed as 'world of the natural attitude'); or, as in early modern times, it can be put in brackets by (temporarily) refusing to believe its concreteness (Priest 1998:21).

### **II.1: Theatre as experience.**

'Experience' represents the chief object of study of phenomenology: for this reason, this subsection and the next one focus on both theatre and dream conceived of as primarily sensory experiences. The soundness of a phenomenological exploration of early modern dream enactment results from a consideration of performance as a predominantly bodily occurrence. Accordingly, here I bring together various contemplations of theatrical enactments as *actual* happenings and thus herald the forthcoming study of theatrical dreams as *real* experience.

Heidegger's reflections on the art/truth relationship in 'The Origin of the Work of Art' may be a useful starting point for delineating the experiential quality of theatre:

the sculpture of the god [...] is not a portrait whose purpose is to make it easier to realize how the god looks; rather, it is a work that lets the god himself be present and thus *is* the god himself. (Heidegger 1971:43, emphasis original)

In view of that, art (theatre in our case) does not simply represent something; art physically allows 'something' (dreams, for example) to be in attendance before the viewer's eyes. Heidegger sees art as 'the setting-into-work of truth' (Heidegger 1971:77). The road to the discovery of verity in art - the 'thingness' of the art work - sets off from the art work to the thing itself, and not vice-versa (Heidegger 1971:69). In the art work, truth ('the clearing and concealing of what is') reveals itself and then guides one towards the truth regarding the thing itself (Heidegger 1971:72). Heidegger wants to find 'the equipmental being' (the essence) of, for instance, a pair of shoes (Heidegger 1971:32). He finds it in Van Gogh's painting of a pair of peasant shoes: a work of art that speaks and lets us see the thingly character of the thing (the shoes) (Heidegger 1971:35). The painting (the art work) somehow adjusts our perception of the reality of the shoes:

In the vicinity of the work we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be. [...] The art work lets us know what shoes are in truth. [...] Van Gogh's painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, *is* in truth. [...] In the work of art the truth of an entity has set itself to work. 'To set' means here: to bring to a stand. (Heidegger 1971:35-36, emphasis original)

Bert O. States has employed Heidegger's aesthetics to reflect on 'the theatre phenomenon' and analyse personification in dramatic enactment (States 1985:1). As the god's sculpture allows the god himself (his *reality*) to be at hand, the characters of a play are *actually there* (in performance, on stage). Theirs is not a literal presence, yet it makes it unnecessary to look for them elsewhere. Theatre, in fact, features a 'consubstantiality of form between its subject and its process': it deals with the life of communities and is *truly* made of the bodies constituting those communities (States 1985:39). Borrowing Jerzy Grotowski's considerations in *Towards a Poor Theatre*, the actors are the audience's delegates: they are not on stage *for* us, but *instead* of us (Grotowski 1969:131).

States clarifies the difference between the 'sign' (studied by semiotics) and the 'image' on which phenomenology focuses (States 1985:23). Theatrical signs (situated within illusionary space and time) create an event (the dramatic performance) that only refers to the outside world: they are a 'pretence' of the world (States 1985:19). In contrast, phenomenal images do not simply signify the world, they are '*of* it' (States 1985:20, emphasis original).<sup>20</sup> In other words, theatre is a language 'whose words consist to an unusual degree of things that *are* what they seem to be' (States 1985:20, emphasis original). On-stage phenomenal images are bodies, movements, voices, gestures, and objects that exert 'affective corporeality': their phenomenological exploration may therefore help the recovery of their initial perceptual quality (States 1985:27). Whereas semiotic approaches regard the art object (or sign) as always 'something else', phenomenology considers it as 'nothing but itself': self-given, genuine, and densely expressive (States 1985:8).

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<sup>20</sup> There are several affinities between oneiric visions and the on-stage phenomenal images of which States talks. Jackson I. Cope's *The Theatre and the Dream*, for instance, describes dreams (and theatre in general) as a 'point for viewing': dreams are images that, uplifted in the dreamer's mind, both make themselves seen and make one see something (Cope 1973:6). For phenomenologists, our perception of people and objects changes when they are 'uplifted to the view', as it happens on stage (States 1985:37). The theatricalisation of people and objects can affect our reception of them: as States suggests, it may blur the boundaries between the real thing and its image. The theatrical dreams in my case studies, accordingly, are phenomenal images that, in the *here* and *now* of the performance, are seen and let the audience see. The (*actual* or made up) dreams are hyper-visible and hyper-audible components that, I argue, temporarily exhibit disturbing rank and gender issues. The dreams evaporate before the end of the performances, yet their substantial quality somewhat contradicts their apparent nothingness.

Other scholars who have adopted a phenomenological methodology have emphasised the 'affective corporeality' of the art object: to carry out her phenomenological analysis of film, Vivian Sobchack begins *The Address of the Eye* describing film as 'an expression of experience by experience' (Sobchack 1992:3).<sup>21</sup> Film theory, for Sobchack, is the effort to re-establish the film's signification through a consideration of that experience (Sobchack 1992:3). Theatre too (or perhaps above all) is the articulation of experience via experience: theatrical enactments make themselves 'sensuously and sensibly manifest' (Sobchack 1992:3). The theatrical occasion is a communicative system founded on 'perception as a vehicle of conscious expression'; it relies on visible, audible, and kinetic features *to make sense* sensually (Sobchack 1992:9). As P. A. Skantze has proposed in *Stillness in Motion*, 'the state of performance is motion': the motion of the on-stage bodies, the motion of voices and noises in the air, the motion of 'time passing', the motion of an actor's breathing (Skantze 2003:3). Performance has 'physical consequences' (think of the actor's spitting and the audience's 'being sprayed') and is a material affair made of bodies that move, talk, touch, watch and are watched, hear and are heard (Skantze 2003:3).<sup>22</sup>

Theatrical performances, therefore, consist of real people who *actually* live on stage. Their actions (and the objects, the space and the time through which they materialise) concretely engage the performers' bodies in the stage world. Objects especially anchor the actor's body to the *here* and *now* of the performance and make it the centre of a spatial concern: to sit down on a chair is *to be*, to declare one's existence in the material world (States 1985:45).<sup>23</sup> The acts of lying down to sleep or awakening in a bed may acquire a considerable importance within performances that dramatise dreams. For instance, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the audience sees Hermia and Lysander choosing a spot where to spend the night in the woods. In effect the two lovers relate to the performative space around them: this could prompt the spectators to conceive of that space as *authentic*. In addition to their previous actions, by sitting down Hermia and Lysander offer further evidence of their existence within a concrete (whether realistic or not) space. Equally, the wood setting secures the lovers to an *actual* place and increasingly manifests

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<sup>21</sup> Sobchack actually borrows Merleau-Ponty's description of philosophy in *The Visible and the Invisible*: 'in a sense the whole of philosophy [...] consists in restoring a power to signify, a birth of meaning, [...], an expression of experience by experience' (Merleau-Ponty 1968:155).

<sup>22</sup> Simon Shepherd writes that 'theatre is an art of body and an art grounded in body'; he introduces seeing, speaking and hearing as 'always 'bodied', [...] mediated and affected by the physical mechanisms' with which they are done (Shepherd 2006:7).

<sup>23</sup> For States, the on-stage chair justifies its own presence by enabling the actor to be a true body in a material world (not a mere representation of a body).

its own and their bodies' phenomenal solidity. As Stanton B. Garner writes in *Bodied Spaces*:

A point of independent sentience, the body represents a rootedness in the biological present that always [...] escapes transformation into the virtual realm. [...] [The body is] the activating agent of such dualities as [...] reality/illusion, and that which most dramatically threatens to collapse them. (S. B. Garner 1994:44-45)

Plausibly, the interaction between bodies and things (for instance, a woody ground to lie on or a bed in which to sleep) renders on-stage sleeping and dreaming *factual*. On the English and Spanish platforms the performers physically experience various oneiric events and the theatregoers attend to those bodily occurrences. The fabricated-ness and the thinness of dreams are repeatedly asserted in the case studies; nonetheless, their substantial quality is perceptibly visible and audible to everybody.

To be sure, theatrical performances are only 'a certain kind of *actual*': they are self-contained illusions, not *genuine* reality (States 1985:46, emphasis original). However, theatre is particularly open to the world of objects and to actuality. When we theatricalise an object (i.e. we locate it within an intentional space), we present it more as the likeness (the representation) of something than as the thing itself. We make this object more visible (hyper- or meta-visible) than it normally is and somewhat neutralise its own objectivity. Even so, the ontological difference evident between the real object and its image in, for example, a sculpture, does not so obviously exist in performance. An on-stage dog, as States remarks, is the same dog outside the theatre, once the performance is over (States 1985:32-33).<sup>24</sup> The dog could remind the audience of its own presence as a real dog in everyday life and draw attention to the tolerant attitude of theatrical enactments toward true elements: performances normally borrow something *actual* for their purposes. According to States, the on-stage presence of something recalling its own existence outside the theatre reduces the degree of 'internal' and 'illusionary signification' of the performance (States 1985:36). Looking at on-stage animals, the spectator may think of the theatrical action he/she perceives as more real than fictitious. The on-stage dog is likely to cooperate with the actors unintentionally; nonetheless, we cannot exclude the possibility that it might not do so.

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<sup>24</sup> Most likely, the dog is just itself on stage and provides an example of natural behaviour within a culturally programmed system. Likewise, on stage a clock or a child would have a degree of 'self-givenness' clearly bigger than that of other images: hence, they could give the sensation of *factual* events happening autonomously inside the illusion (States 1985:30).

In performance, therefore, the real is never entirely subdued and transcended; the two orders of signification (the internal/external and the illusionary/real) can meet. This last point interestingly relates to the presence of characters who fall asleep and dream on stage. In theory, the actors could actually fall sleep and dream; the spectators could see in their actions a pretence of sleep or, conversely, a sleeping and dreaming of the kind that also takes place daily. To early modern audiences, the appeal of characters falling asleep and dreaming on stage may rest in the fact that in reality one cannot look at him/herself while dreaming. The controversies surrounding the nature and value of dreams (explained in the Introduction) are taken up also within the English and Spanish playhouses: characters consider their and other people's dreams as either irrelevant fancies or revealing visions.

As I have pointed out in the first chapter, dramatic performances in the early modern playhouses of London and Madrid are repeatedly attacked. Significantly, for the theatre detractors the dangerousness of performances chiefly lies in their physical actuality. In *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583), Philip Stubbes catalogues the sensuous, evil activities which are fulfilled on stage, where:

such wanton gestures, such bawdie speaches, such laughing and fleering, such kissing and bussing, such clipping and culling, such winckinge and glancinge of wanton eyes, and the like, is used, as is wonderfull to behold. (Stubbes 1583:144, quoted in Lopez 2003:23)

More than fifty years later, the Spanish friar Jerónimo de la Cruz similarly criticises the bodily carry on (the female one in particular) taking place on the theatrical platform: 'embracing, stretching forth one's hands, bringing them to the mouth, and other such things, for it's amazing to see such obscene actions performed publicly' (de la Cruz 1635:203).<sup>25</sup> Also, in *The Excellences of the Virtue of Chastity, Part I* (1600) friar José de Jesús María condemns the physical contact between men and women on stage: he writes that the actors 'pretending to represent feigned adulteries, they *truly* performed them' (de Jesús María 1600:380b, quoted in O'Connor 2000:39, emphasis added). The stages, in

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<sup>25</sup> I am using Jerónimo de la Cruz's *Job evangélico stoico ilustrado (Illustrated Evangelical and Stoic Job, 1638)* as translated and quoted by Thomas Austin O'Connor (see O'Connor 2000:47-49). Don Navarro Castellanos' *Discursos políticos y morales (Political and Moral Discourses, 1683)* highlights the difference between classical and contemporary Spanish drama: 'With these [Greek and Latin plays] the understanding was delighted [...] more than the senses; ours please [...] more *the senses* than understanding; sensuality [...] accomplishes in ours what artifice accomplished in ancient [plays]' (O'Connor 2000:66, emphasis added).

fact, are busy with the actors' doings. The audiences/spectators (importantly, words that refer 'to specific modes of perceptual experience') are receiving, as it were, *in the flesh* performances (Folkerth 2002:24). The concreteness of the theatrical event preoccupies the antitheatricalists, as it implies that the playgoers observe *real* (and often disreputable) affairs.<sup>26</sup>

To conclude, the bodily character of performances encourages, I think, the phenomenological investigation this thesis carries out. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century on-stage enactments grant dreams a physical body and allow the spectators to see themselves (or the actors *instead of* themselves) in the act of sleeping and dreaming. Furthermore, in the selected case studies dreams put on view unsettling strategies of power manipulation and preservation. The phenomenal on-stage dreams bring the audience into contact with 'what exists' (sleeping and dreaming, as well as questions of status and gender) and, to some extent, colonize the real world (States 1985:37). In other words, theatrical dreams question the life/dream (and the life/theatre) boundaries: they suggest that the on-stage socio-political issues also pertain to the audiences' everyday. Both characters and spectators experience dreams tangibly and perhaps reflect on what these dreams say about their lives outside the playhouses.

## II.2: Dream as experience.

The dream's still here. Even when I wake it is  
without me as within me; not imagined, *felt*.  
(*Cymbeline*, IV.ii.306-307, emphasis added)

As the previous two sections have remarked, this thesis adopts a phenomenological approach in that it focuses on the sensory features of the dreams in the chosen case studies. This section completes the discussion of my phenomenological method by considering theatrical dreams as sensual events performed for the eyes and ears of gathered communities. Given the significance of the concept of *experience* for phenomenological enquiry, I underscore that numerous (modern as well as early modern) discourses on dreams have argued for the experiential (and hence performative) nature of the dream event. These premises support my argument that early modern performances

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<sup>26</sup> As Michael O'Connell maintains, on-stage actors and objects body forth the fiction they represent: 'the actor is a man portraying another man who 'played the king' in a political sense. The stage throne is a chair portraying another chair' (O'Connell 2000:20).

*tangibly* manufacture oneiric occurrences. Furthermore, they allow me to propose that the life as dream belief actually becomes embodied on stage.

In *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms* States observes the ontological analogy between the theatre and the dream, a correspondence noted also by early modern dream theorists. Theatrical performances and dreams are ‘intensely real’, but do not endure as reality does; they personify absolute stories and yet are ‘contained in a ‘local habitation’ (States 1985:202).<sup>27</sup> The phenomenal resemblance of dream and theatre may encourage one to see the enacted play as an ‘induced dream, the communal version of the dream journey to the other reality, that private exception to the rules of the possible’ (States 1985:202). The breaching of what is possible, importantly, features within all the case studies: for instance, the beggar Sly and the destitute Segismundo and Orsames suddenly become lords or princes; the mortal Bottom has a rendezvous with the Queen of Fairies Titania; a character embodying Dream acts in Calderón’s *Sometimes Dreams Come True*.

In *The Pleasure of the Play* States maintains that the theatre and the dream phenomena are ‘actual’: they ‘minimize the distinction between real (actual) space in the world and the theatrical and fictional space of a stage’ (States 1994:151). Likewise, in *Seeing in the Dark* States sees dreams more as lived experience than as purely mental constructs:

Dreams are about [...] the thrill of visual experience, [...] the pain of grieving, the joy of moving, seeing, [...] knowing things, and being alive: in short, everything that waking life is about at its best and its worst (States 1997:17-18)

Dreaming, accordingly, keeps one in ‘a state-of-experience condition’ and owns a highly performative potential: dreams are imaginative events that make available ‘a way of rehearsing waking behaviour’ (States 1997:27 and 20). The happenings within dreams resemble everyday things, yet our perception of them is different: oneiric occurrences are ‘charged with affect’ and come about more ‘vividly’ (States 1997:6).<sup>28</sup> Dreams (and

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<sup>27</sup> Howard D. Pearce writes in his article ‘A Phenomenological Approach to the *Theatrum Mundi* Metaphor’: ‘stage and dream – the two most pervasive manifestations of the imaginative, imaginary, subjective, ideal dimension, as opposed to the actual and material – become easily linked as metaphors and implicitly invoke each other’ (Pearce 1980:42). However, also dream and performance are *actually real*, as sections II.1 and II.2 argue.

<sup>28</sup> According to States, dreaming and art-making (theatre, for example) share ‘a ‘technique’ of purification of waking experience’ (States 1997:6). In other words, dreams and theatre are ‘essentializing processes’: they purge affairs from familiarity, make them new, and put on view a reality that is fascinating to look at (States 1997:6). Like performances of a play, dreams are at once ‘a recollection’ (they display something we have already seen or lived) and ‘an original event’ (they show this something in an unprecedented way) (States 1997:10).

performances) are, in summary, 'a de-temporalized past reappearing as a never-before-experienced present' (States 1997:10).

As performances do, in early modern times dreams *feel like* reality and produce impressive physical sensations. Thomas Nashe remarks that dreams affect one's sight: 'The glasses of our sight in the night are like the perspective glasses [...] which represented the images of things far greater than they were' (Nashe 1594:168). He also presents the oneiric experience as an aural phenomenon ('our dreams, the echoes of the day, borrow of any noise we hear in the night') and as an event alive with emotions ('for of the overswelling superabundance of joy and grief we frame to ourselves most of our melancholy dreams and visions') (Nashe 1594:154 and 169).<sup>29</sup> The Spanish Barrientos also emphasises the bodily quality of dreams:

the images and figures that are kept and preserved within memory or imagination materialize or reappear before the organs or the instruments of the five exterior senses, in such a way that things are felt from the outside as if they were present, according to the fact that in dreams [things] seem experience (*Tractado del dormir et despertar*:10)<sup>30</sup>

The dreaming mind, accordingly, truly goes through sensory occurrences that, transitory yet powerful, resemble the performances within the English and Spanish playhouses. Furthermore, both Nashe and Browne compare dreams to theatrical events and underline the structural similarities between oneiric and dramatic productions:

on those images of memory whereon we build in the day comes some superfluous humour of ours [...] in the night, and erects a puppet stage, or some such ridiculous idle childish invention. (Nashe 1594:154)

Nashe strongly dismisses dreams' 'puppet stage' as insignificant; Browne is less severe, though he too calls dreams 'innocent delusions' and admits that there may be a 'sinfull state' of them (*On Dreams*:401). Browne especially emphasises that the oneiric imagination transforms 'nothing' into marvels, as the theatre audience's mind could do while watching a performance:

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<sup>29</sup> Insisting on the sensory dimension of sleeping, Thomas Browne writes that 'night-walkers, though in their sleepe, doe yet enjoy the action of *their senses*; [...] they seeme to heare, see and feele' (Browne 1643:84-85, emphasis added).

<sup>30</sup> The translation of the Spanish text is mine: 'las ymágenes et figuras que están retenidas et conservadas en la memoria o ymaginativa ocurran o se representen a los órganos o instrumentos de los çinco sesos exteriores, por tal manera que sienten de fuera las cosas commo si fuesen presentes, segunt que en los sueños paresçe por experiencia'.

sulphur kindled in the blood may make a flame like Ætna, and a small spark in the bowells of Olympias a lightning over all the chamber. (*On Dreams*:401)

It is in *Religio Medici* (1643) that Browne explicitly depicts the dream as a theatre in which plays take shape:

in one dreame I can compose a whole Comedy, behold the action, apprehend the jests, and laugh my selfe awake at the conceits thereof (Browne 1643:84)

The dreaming mind, therefore, is able to stage plays and to enjoy them phenomenally. In fact, it watches how the plot develops, captures the story's tricks and jokes, and finally awakens once the performance is over. Browne reasons that dreamers are relieved at the discovery that the oneiric drama is but a futile and ephemeral occurrence. However, laughing at dreams' (or at plays') 'conceits' might also hide a certain preoccupation with their frequently disturbing images.

As the above quotations confirm, early modern thinkers agree on the phenomenal likeness of dream and theatre: this fact, I believe, further validates my phenomenological study of on-stage dreams. I would like to conclude this section by calling attention again to the position of early modern theatrical dreams as cultural performances. In his essay 'Sound and Senses', Sullivan explains that certain societies see performance as an act of interpretation, a fact that becomes obvious in their treatment of dreams. For example, members of the Avá-Chiripá communities of Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil first assemble to see one of their own fall asleep and dream and then cooperatively supply a reading of the dream. They start singing a song while the chosen person begins to sleep and dream; their song should stimulate the dreamer to play a specific role inside his/her dream (L. E. Sullivan 1986:20). Sullivan, importantly, does not contend that the dream 'can become real if performed in real life' (L. E. Sullivan 1986:21). Rather, he maintains that both dreams and conscious life *are* real, though they belong to different 'dimensions of reality' (like theatre and life) (L. E. Sullivan 1986:22). As Sullivan points out, the people he studies express the need to 'translate the oneiric experience into a mundane one' (L. E. Sullivan 1986:20). By performing the dream experience in front of other people, the selected (South-American) dreamers attempt to transport the dream reality ('the reality experienced in another kind of time and space') into the everyday world (L. E. Sullivan 1986:22).

One may suppose that, through performance, the dramatists and the acting companies of early modern London and Madrid transfer the dream event to the *actual* world of the

playhouses. My introductory account of early modern dream theories has proved that dreams are the object of curiosity and dispute: possibly, theatre makes the oneiric event available to the eyes and ears of the audiences, turns it into a tangible experience, and satisfies the spectators' appetite for dreams. Via performance, the actors put on view dream occurrences that would otherwise fully appear only during the actual oneiric phase. They transfer the energies of the dream dimension into *reality* (as embodied by theatre) and perhaps 'empower the world of everyday existence' (L. E. Sullivan 1986:22). Theatre gives early modern communities a space wherein the dream is *actually* visible and audible. It enables the observation of dreams in a genuinely dual way: consciously, as actors and spectators are aware of doing so; and communally, as all the people gathered in the playhouse can share the oneiric experience.<sup>31</sup>

With regard to interpretation, traditional text-based methodologies, Sullivan argues, may not capture the complexity of dream performances:

dream, sound, performance [...] cannot be fully understood as 'text', [...] nor even should they be viewed as language, [...] They are meaningful images expressed in modes of human action. [...] The mode of action (dance, song, performance) bears directly on understanding. (L. E. Sullivan 1986:22)

Sullivan's point, I believe, corroborates my choice of reading early modern theatrical dreams as cultural performances and through phenomenology. The selected case studies, in fact, use various 'modes of human action' to sculpt dreams. Therefore, early modern dream enactment is less a text to be read than a performance to be watched, heard, and felt: it is something 'created in the doing', a combination of words, movements, dance, music and other forms of human behaviour (L. E. Sullivan 1986:24). This is why a reflection on their phenomenological facets, together with an analysis of their historical bearings, illuminates the cultural role theatrical dreams play within the theatres of early modern London and Madrid.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> In *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* Mikel Dufrenne suggests that the work of art 'must offer itself to perception': in order to move from a latent to a tangible existence, it has to be performed in front of receptive viewers (Dufrenne 1973:19) Dramatic literature especially asks for this 'concretisation': the play-text only cannot bring forth 'the soul of lively action', as John Marston complains in his preface to *The Malcontent* (Dufrenne 1973:19 and Marston 1967:6, quoted in Folkerth 2002:23). Performance, accordingly, turns the script into an aesthetic, i.e. perceivable, object. In particular, theatrical enactments grant dreams a concrete milieu in which they offer themselves to the (internal and external) spectators' perception.

<sup>32</sup> In her article 'Performing Show and Tell', Shannon Jackson has put forward that the 'embodied, durational, tactile and environmental' quality of (dream) performance and its 'addressive' nature (the fact that it necessitates an audience to work properly) constitute an apt object of phenomenological

### III: The senses in early modern culture.

Because my phenomenological enquiry concentrates on the sensory garments dreams take up in performance, this section investigates early modern ideas about the senses, sight and hearing above all. After a discussion of the beliefs concerning physical sensations in early modern England and Spain, in subsection III.1 I draw attention to the widespread life/dream (and life/theatre) metaphor and argue that performance makes this philosophical stance become *flesh* on stage.

The publication in 1543 of Andreas Vesalius' *De humani corporis fabrica* marks the beginning of modern anatomy (based on the direct observation of the human body and no more on possible analogies between animal and human bodies) and the gradual modification of previously held notions of the human body. Before Vesalius, the European medical system mainly depends on Galen's (129-199 A.D.) theory of the *pneuma* and the four humours.<sup>33</sup> In *Anatomía y escenificación*, Patricia A. Marshall explains that the Galenic system is predominantly metaphorical, since it views the human body as a microcosm that tidily mirrors the coherence of the macrocosm. In contrast, with Vesalius' treatise and, later on, with William Harvey's discovery of blood circulation in *Exercitatio Anatomica de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis in Animalibus* (1628), the inspection of the human body reveals asymmetry, discrepancy and a messy assemblage of separate pieces. The Neoplatonic body as an image of harmony and repetition slowly develops into the (Baroque) 'conflicting and fragmented body' (Marshall 2003:48).<sup>34</sup> As David Hillman

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and cultural investigation (Jackson 2005:172-173). Jackson believes that performance analysis is especially open to the investigation of 'outside issues', such as the contextual (the space where theatre and its surround intertwine) and the permeation of art object and world (Jackson 2005:168). As my Introduction has shown, the inspection of 'the contextual' enriches the study of early modern theatrical dreams: indeed, the art object (the theatrical dream) responds to its social and extra-aesthetic surround by addressing questions that are debated also outside the theatres (Jackson 2005:171).

<sup>33</sup> The *pneuma* is a vital mouthful of air that enters the human body during inhalation, mixes with the blood, and becomes natural spirit. This natural spirit reaches the heart and the brain and turns them respectively into vital spirit and animal spirit; these spirits (made of air and warmth) run through the body and are responsible for the life and movement of human beings. As for humoral theory, Galen believes that all objects are constituted by the four elements (fire, air, earth and water) and take form through the union of matter and its four qualities (warmth, coldness, dryness and humidity). During digestion, food is transformed into the four corporal humours: blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. Within the human body, the elements of fire, earth and water respectively correspond to yellow bile, black bile and phlegm, while air goes into the body directly through respiration. Blood, a combination of the other three humours, is thought to be the predominant humour inside the human body. According to Galen, the excess or the scarcity of one of these humours causes physical or emotional diseases (see Marshall 2003:33-35).

<sup>34</sup> The translation of the Spanish text is mine: 'El cuerpo conflictivo y fragmentado del Barroco'. As Hillman writes, the idea of an actual correspondence between the universe and the individual body

suggests in his *Shakespeare's Entrails*, the Galenic concept of the body is 'permeable', in that it regards sensory activity as dependent on 'something (eye-beams, rays, waves) entering and leaving the interior of the body' (Hillman 2007:7). On the contrary, Harvey's circulatory body is a more closed, self-contained and monadic organism: the human being becomes 'increasingly cut off, both from a powerful sense of access to and by God, and from the surrounding cosmos' (Hillman 2007:10).

Importantly, as both Marshall and Hillman underline, the new ideas about the body (and the senses) do not take precedence immediately after the publication of Vesalius' work. Seventeenth-century European culture is conventionally thought of as the reign of Cartesian perspectivalism: that is to say, of the separation between subject and object and of the consideration of the former as transcendental and the latter as inert. However, as Marcus Nordlund explains in *The Dark Lantern*, Cartesian dualism becomes prominent only towards the second half of the seventeenth century. The transitional years between 1550 and 1650 mostly regard sight traditionally, as either 'an active and participational extension of the self which bound the observer to the surrounding world' or as 'a strictly passive and neutral reception of preordained images into the eye' (Nordlund 1999:VII-VIII). The original concept of sight, then, relies on the 'extramission theory': the eye both sends light forth (extending itself out spatially) and receives a 'corresponding movement of effluences, likenesses, or simulacra from the visual object' (Nordlund 1999:49). In view of that, sight is a cooperative process: the eye can influence what it sees and, in turn, can be influenced by the viewed objects or people.<sup>35</sup>

In his article 'Taming the Basilisk', Sergei Lobanov-Rostovsky calls attention to the fact that in Galenic theory (as in Plato's philosophy) the eye is 'both sovereign and implicitly *male*' (Lobanov-Rostovsky 1997:198). Specifically, the eye is 'a privileged servant of the soul' (mediating between world and spirit), emanates an inner fire, and imposes form (as the male is thought to do during the act of sexual generation) (Lobanov-Rostovsky 1997:197). However, the sixteenth century sees the development of anxieties regarding the duplicity of the eye: the eye who looks renders the viewed an object; yet, if the object

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was declining: 'no longer did each part of the body reflect the elements, the signs of the zodiac, the planets, the hierarchy of the entire cosmos' (Hillman 2007:10).

<sup>35</sup> James F. Burke writes in his study of the senses in the Spanish novel *Celestina* (1499): 'because the viewer was thought of as a more or less empty vessel to be filled from something outside through a process involving the senses, he or she could be permeated by the *species* multiplying forth from such images' (Burke 2000:57). In my case studies the characters in power often manipulate the sight of socially low characters from within (actual or fake) dreams.

returns the gaze, the previous subject is changed into an object.<sup>36</sup> The new anatomical practices, indeed, increasingly expose the eye's double position as perceiving subject (for instance, the anatomist's gaze) and object of scrutiny (the anatomised eye). Scientists insist on the eye's limitations – the eye does not reproduce an impartial reality, what one sees may be different from what others see – and highlight that the eye is flesh, i.e. a fragile organ defenceless before the anatomist's inspection (Lobanov-Rostovsky 1997:196).<sup>37</sup>

The belief that the eye may affect what it sees as well as be affected by it lies beneath the assumption regarding the 'evil eye'. In classical, medieval and early modern times, this is a hostile and invidious eye whose visual ray can 'harm or even kill' the one who is looked at (Nordlund 1999:53).<sup>38</sup> The eyes of a beautiful woman, accordingly, can project their splendour on the things she looks at; however, from Medusa on, a woman is also normally supposed to be 'the most common possessor' of the dangerous evil eye (J. F. Burke 2000:65).<sup>39</sup> The disturbing nature of the eye as at once (potential) subject and object resounds in love poetry of Petrarchan tradition. Lobanov-Rostovsky maintains that the female gaze (wanting to be seen) must be disciplined: it can turn the male lover's eye into a weak orifice and hurt him through the power of its beauty (Lobanov-Rostovsky 1997:202). To avoid being objectified and emasculated, the male reacts by ensnaring the woman's gaze (her desire to be seen): the poet's eye asserts its own power to 'disseminate the woman's form in verse' (Lobanov-Rostovsky 1997:205). In other words,

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<sup>36</sup> Lobanov-Rostovsky relates the story of Andres de Laguna, the Spanish anatomist author of *Anatomica Methodus* (1535). As a child, de Laguna found himself in a dark room and began to look at a man who was there, thinking that the man could not see him. De Laguna was then shocked when he realised that the man was actually seeing him, i.e. was returning the gaze and objectifying him.

<sup>37</sup> With his scientific discoveries in 1604 Kepler theorizes the unreliability of the eye and its nature as 'a completely passive receptacle' (Nordlund 1999:78). Kepler explains how the eye (separated both from the soul of the perceiver and from the world) inertly receives the external light. Likewise, Copernicus' heliocentric theory (1543) denies the evidence of everyday perception (the earth moves) and bans the human being from the centre of the cosmos (see Nordlund 1999:93). It is perhaps significant that Calderón's Segismundo is the Prince of Poland, Copernicus' country.

<sup>38</sup> Burke points out that there exists also the 'slandering tongue' theory, somehow the aural equivalent to that of the 'evil eye' (J. F. Burke 2000:102).

<sup>39</sup> Lobanov-Rostovsky also writes of the figure of the basilisk of classical bestiaries, a serpent with the power to kill both by seeing and by being seen. The basilisk personifies fantasies about the eye's power, yet its eye is lethal to itself: because the basilisk cannot be seen, it cannot be known. As Lobanov-Rostovsky argues, to see the basilisk (i.e. the eye itself) means to destroy 'the eye's claim to power' (Lobanov-Rostovsky 1997:197).

the woman's gaze (a threat to the poet) can be subjugated by being endlessly reproduced in poetry for male consumption.<sup>40</sup>

In the Introduction as well as in other sections of this chapter I have drawn attention to the anti-theatrical polemics that flourish both in early modern England and Spain. We may consider these attacks as a condemnation of the (sinfully) sensory quality of performance in general, and of its visual properties in particular. In *The Idolatrous Eye* O'Connell remarks that one of the key consequences of the Reformation is a 'concern over idolatry' that instigates literal iconoclasm (O'Connell 2000:17). Protestantism insists on the fact that the Scriptures only can bond the believer to God. The growing unease regarding the visual expresses itself especially in religious devotion: for example, anything that pleases the eyes or physically represents God's image is removed from the churches. Analogously, English antitheatricalists often condemn the stage as an idolatrous place: they abhor 'the possibility of seeing a god' (his *actual* presence) embodied by the performance's bodily *realness* (O'Connell 2000:20). Theatre must be censured because it tempts the spectators' eyes, and the eyes are sinful. As Anthony Munday writes in *A second and third blast of retrait from plaies and Theaters* (1580): 'there commeth much evil in at the ears, but more at the eies, by these two open windowes death breaketh into the soul' (Munday 1580:95, quoted in O'Connell 2000:19). Clearly idolatry does not trouble Catholic Spain to the same extent: the Catholic Counter-Reformation confirms the adequacy of visual art in religious worship. All the same, the theatre detractors reprove the immoral actions taking place on stage and underscore how theatrical sight may prompt the spectators to sin in real life. For instance, in 1672 Don Pedro Núñez de Guzmán recommends the queen regent to keep the young Charles II's gaze away from the stage: 'during the tender years of the King our

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<sup>40</sup> Debates about the eye's (ambiguous) power also belong to the employment of linear perspective in early modern painting (and in other arts). Ernest B. Gilman in *The Curious Perspective* and Alison Thorne in *Vision and Rhetoric in Shakespeare* elucidate the paradox behind perspectivism: perspective has 'deceptive properties', in that it makes art-objects *look* real via artificial proportions (Thorne 2000:75). Perspective converts two-dimensional surfaces into 'an illusion of three-dimensional solidity' and endows non-existent things with virtual actuality (Thorne 2000:75). Accordingly, perspective tricks the human eye and (like the new anatomy and scientific theories) further undermines sight's status as the most privileged of the senses. Perspectival space indicates 'the radical incompleteness of our vision': the more flawless the image of reality shown in a perspectival painting, the greater the deception done to the viewer's eye (Gilman 1978:31).

Lord [...] it is advisable to remove his *sight* from such a dangerous diversion' (Núñez de Guzmán 1672:389b, quoted in O'Connor 2000:63, emphasis added).<sup>41</sup>



FIGURE 2: Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, *Self Portrait*, c. 1670-73.

The public theatres of early modern England and Spain embrace visual as well as acoustic communities. The (anti-visual) Reformation states that the Word is the only (safe) intermediary between the faithful and God and, consequently, deems hearing as more morally reliable than sight.<sup>42</sup> As Burke stresses, in early modern culture the mass is a strongly auditory experience and listening to the liturgy should produce a real (spiritual) change within the listener (J. F. Burke 2000:82). In Bartolomeo del Bene's poem *Civitas Veri sive Morum* (1609), Bruce R. Smith explains, the human mind is portrayed as a

<sup>41</sup> In 1635 friar de la Cruz writes: 'how many mortal sins will be committed in a theatre and how many inducements will exuberant youth draw from *seeing* an actress perform' (de la Cruz 1635:203, quoted in O'Connor 2000:47, emphasis added).

<sup>42</sup> According to Thorne, in England it is Sidney who establishes the superiority of the word over the image: images (with their mimetic qualities) riskily charm the senses, whereas words enable the poet to communicate a moral lesson (Thorne 2000:72-73).

walled, circular city. Five gates in the city walls represent the five senses and, importantly, del Bene and his patroness enter the city (the mind) through the gate of hearing. As Smith observes, this choice 'points up the primacy of hearing over seeing, at least where learning is concerned' (B. R. Smith 1999:101).<sup>43</sup> Listening to the Word of God in the church is expected to stimulate doctrinal obedience: the political authorities of early modern England employ the aurality/compliance link in a similar way. In *The Sound of Shakespeare*, Wes Folkerth maintains that in the Elizabethan and early Jacobean period 'an effective preventative measure against civil disobedience was the dissemination of propaganda directly into their subjects' ears' (Folkerth 2002:18). For instance, upon Queen Elizabeth's order the sermon 'An Homily Against Disobedience and Wilfull Rebellion' is preached once per year and suggests that obedience to the monarch is 'a natural and holy state' (Danson 2000:108 and Folkerth 2002:19).<sup>44</sup> Likewise, in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain the congregations listening to sermons are incited to observe God's commandments; this call often implies avoiding the visually and aurally corrupt experience of play-going (O'Connor 2000:77).<sup>45</sup> As Friar Juan de Santa María complains in 1615:

at no other time did one see so much boldness and shameful behaviour [...] as after each day that there are performances, and in the places where there are many *listeners*, there is much more dissolution of customs (de Santa María 1615:540b, quoted in O'Connor 2000:76, emphasis added)

As the use of sermons in both Protestant and Catholic communities indicates, the ears are deemed 'a privileged point of entry to the heart, and by extension to the soul' (Folkerth 2002:47). Folkerth analyses the Biblical parable of the sower: God's Word is the seed the sower (God Himself) plants into (four) different kinds of soil, i.e. into ears whose 'perceptual interest' varies from low to high (Folkerth 2002:46). Whereas in early modern culture sight, as previously mentioned, is considered 'male', hearing is typically gendered

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<sup>43</sup> Aristotle will lead del Bene, his patroness and the poem's reader into the city. As Louise Vinge makes clear in *The Five Senses*, 'it is by speech and hearing that teaching is transmitted' (Vinge 1975:83).

<sup>44</sup> As Nordlund emphasises, in the Middle Ages there exists continuity between earth and heaven and sacred images can connect the material world to the divine through the viewer's active contemplation (Nordlund 1999:111). In Christian Neoplatonic theory, the sublunary world is but an imperfect reflection of the ideal world; sight and hearing may link the person with the world that is beyond, while the other senses are considered inferior as well as treacherous (see J. F. Burke 2000:35). Folkerth points out that rightful hearing can echo in the inferior world of resemblances 'the perfect harmony produced in the music of the spheres' (Folkerth 2002:19).

<sup>45</sup> As remarked in the Introduction, Protestant England puts greater emphasis on private readings of the Bible than Catholic Spain. For most Spaniards, the communal and more physical experiences of theatregoing and public recitations of the Scriptures continue throughout the seventeenth century.

'female': 'the ear is either the vaginal gateway through which the seed must travel on its way to the earth/heart/womb, or it is the womb itself' (Folkerth 2002:47). The connection of hearing to penetration makes sound (music especially) 'more physically assaultive' than sight and, consequently, more able to enter the listener's spirit directly (B. R. Smith 1999:103).<sup>46</sup> To sum up, early modern culture mainly associates hearing with ideas of duty, penetrability, and transformation: in the church and on the public square the persuasive oratory of preachers should ignite the subjects' (religious and political) obedience. Within the playhouses, however, 'the immediacy of spoken address' and its engagement with controversial (and allegedly immoral) issues may seriously infect the ears and minds of the listeners (Skantze 2003:35).

### III.1: The *actuality* of the life/dream metaphor.

The preceding analysis of early modern ideas regarding the senses has verified that: 1) sight is misleading as it displays concrete images that *look* what they are not; and, 2) hearing is a *physical* penetration into one's ears which can *actually* transform his/her mind. The dreams of my case studies *seem* to be life thanks to their sensory qualities; this point may as well suggest that life outside the playhouses *is* but a very phenomenal dream (or fiction). Therefore, in addition to the rank and gender issues I have presented in the Introduction, the subsequent chapters of this thesis also analyse how the life/dream trope is *made flesh* by means of performance. I argue that on stage the metaphor acquires a sensuous body and becomes a kind of *actuality*: its visual and aural features are not, strictly speaking, real, yet they decidedly *appear* so.

Numerous (dramatic but not only) works hint at the equation between life and a stage on which human beings perform a part; equally, life is often portrayed as a (vain) dream that terminates when one dies. In seventeenth-century Spain, Calderón's *Life Is a Dream* (1634–1635, analysed in chapter 4) openly articulates the life/dream trope: 'the experience teaches me / that the man who lives dreams / his reality until he awakes', Segismundo says (II:121).<sup>47</sup> Similarly, in his *Religio Medici* Browne emphasises the unimportance of the

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<sup>46</sup> As both Smith and Folkerth observe, in *Sylva Sylvarum* (1626) Bacon maintains that hearing grants the most immediate entrance into one's spirit and has the most visceral impact on the perceiver (see B. R. Smith 1999:103-105 and Folkerth 2002:51-57).

<sup>47</sup> Lope's *Lo fingido verdadero* (*What You Pretend Has Become Real*, 1604-1618) also portrays life as a dream or a stage on which one performs a part (see the article by Haydée Bermejo Hurtado in Cvitanovic 1969:177-188). Towards the end of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611) Prospero draws attention to the correspondence of life and dream: 'we are such stuff / as dreams are made on; and our little life / is rounded with a sleep' (IV.i.156-158).

preoccupations of everyday life vis-à-vis those regarding the afterlife: 'surely it is not a melancholy conceite to thinke we are all asleepe in this world, and that the conceits of this life are as meare dreames to those of the next' (Browne 1643:84).

Early modern performances concretely demonstrate the life/theatre correspondence through their repeated employment of meta-theatrical strategies, such as the play-within-the-play and the *palpable* role-playing of their characters. My case studies often present identity as performative, as a role one chooses rather than as something innate. Thus they expose the (ideological) fabricated-ness of social positions and, as I have suggested in the Introduction, show that performance is an actual 'way of life', not just a literary trope (Blue 1989:23). As Blue proposes, the continuous meta-theatricality of early modern English and Spanish plays makes it difficult to differentiate between *reality* and fiction: no level of representation can fix 'what is *really* going on' when more and more performances accumulate on stage (and outside the playhouses) (Blue 1989:27).<sup>48</sup> The above factors, importantly, point at the phenomenal authenticity of performance and authorize my phenomenological reading of the selected plays. Indeed, the case studies insinuate that life *is* dream (or theatre) by physically and intensely enacting everyday situations *as if* they were dreams (or performances): those situations *look like* real life primarily because they are actually bodily.

As for the life/dream similitude, in his essay 'Deconstructing the Metaphor' Friedman stresses the religious foundation of the life/dream (and life/theatre) convictions in the Spanish context:

The world is a stage because in life we take recourse to the devices of drama and in death we are judged by our performance. Extending the theological metaphor, life is a dream because the only valid existence comes on awakening to the eternal (Friedman 1988:36)<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> States too reasons that 'a self-conscious theatricality [...] makes us forget we are in a theatre almost as soon as it reminds us that we are'; Pearce writes that hyper-theatrical performances make the 'solid world' stand back, while they speculate about reality (Pearce 1980:44). Specifically referring to the many life/dream enactments within Spanish plays, Edward H. Friedman agrees with Blue that even the eventual movement from illusion to disillusionment (*desengaño*) 'can never erase the dream, the illusory' (Friedman 1993:50-51). The amassing of dreams on stage complicates a clear discrimination between them and *actual* life. Similarly, the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century copious production of illusionistic and *trompe l'oeil* paintings makes fictions *seem* like reality and testifies to the emerging notion of sight as deceptive and unreliable.

<sup>49</sup> Calderón's religious play *El gran teatro del mundo* (*The Great Theatre of the World*, mid 1630s) allegorically portrays life as a temporary performance on the world's stage: God is the theatrical impresario, the World is the prompter and people are characters who are given a part and then judged at the end of the show (life) (see Robbins 1998:38-39).

This religious dimension of the metaphor in early modern Spain derives from the mystical experiences of holy figures such as St Teresa and San Juan de la Cruz: for them, the actual world is dream, while the ecstatic encounter is reality. The term 'dream', as a result, acquires a negative connotation: it designates a sensory reality that cannot be level with the spiritual one.<sup>50</sup> In the English context, the growing anxieties about sight and the inaccuracy of visual images trigger the life/dream comparison: 'what *is* must be discovered beneath the deception of what *appears*', as lifelike dreams *appear* real but actually are another kind of reality (O'Connell 2000:117).

Recent studies of metaphors (tropic meaning) have stressed the cultural weight and *physical concreteness* of literary figures, as I intend to do in my own investigation of the life/dream trope. In *Metaphor and Material Culture* Christopher Tilley defines metaphor as a way of *seeing* (i.e. understanding) some entity (life, for instance) from the perspective of another (dream, for instance). Although metaphors are usually thought to belong to the imaginative faculties and to subjectivity, Tilley argues that they *solidly* endow human understanding with a *tangible* form unattainable through literal language (Tilley 1999:4).<sup>51</sup> Metaphors truly put the imaginative faculties into action; likewise, theatrical performances (themselves embodied metaphors of real life) flesh out the life/dream trope on early modern stages. According to Tilley, the human mind functions in a material way: our understanding is 'directly implicated in bodily experience and action' (Tilley 1999:34).<sup>52</sup> As a result, he advocates the analysis of (literal and cultural) metaphors through a sort of ontology of bodily experience and perception.<sup>53</sup> Importantly, also scholars of early modern culture have argued that, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, cognitive processes develop within and around the body and the senses. For example, Hillman maintains that in Shakespeare's plays learning is a question of 'knowledge experienced *in* as well as knowledge *of* the interior of the body'; Marshall contends that Calderón's works display the (visually and aurally solid) human body as 'a ground where the conflicts concerning the

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<sup>50</sup> See Giuseppe Mazzocchi's article 'Il sogno dei mistici' (1998), especially pages 73-76.

<sup>51</sup> See Tilley's *inexpressibility* and *vividness* theses (Tilley 1999:7-8). Metaphors link subjective and objective experience in an unparalleled way: they create 'vivid and memorable images of the world' and help one seize an understanding of reality in a sort of visceral way (Tilley 1999:8).

<sup>52</sup> The experience of seeing something *as* something else (i.e., grasping things via metaphors) is 'grounded in culturally mediated bodily experiences' (Tilley 1999:35). Borrowing George Lakoff's and Mark Johnson's argument in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), Thorne underlines that (early modern and modern) conceptual systems are structured by metaphors. Metaphors 'dictate how we perceive, experience and relate to the world at the most basic level' and they 'typically translate mental activities into concrete or sensory forms' (Thorne 2000:16).

<sup>53</sup> According to Tilley, speech itself is an extension of the human body in the world: it is a means of extending ourselves in the world, knowing the world, and altering it.

transition to modernity are staged' (Hillman 2007:1 and Marshall 2003:52, emphasis original).<sup>54</sup>

To conclude, the spread of the life/dream trope in early modern culture and its corporal facet further corroborate my phenomenological study of on-stage oneiric events. By means of performance, dreams and the life/dream belief are phenomenally incarnate on stage and invite a sensory exploration of their *actual* body. The performances take dreams and the metaphor out of (imaginative and linguistic) abstraction and bring them to life: for this reason, my individual chapters look at the perceptual attributes of dreams and of the life/dream principle and sound their lifelike embodiment of socio-political controversies. This embodiment 'is all like a dream, but dreams [...] can be very, very real' (Blue 1989:33).

#### **IV: Genre as ideology, the dream as genre.**

The chapters of this thesis focusing on the selected plays study dreams that are enacted within dissimilar genre frameworks: respectively, two comedies (*The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), a philosophical play (*Life Is a Dream*), a religious play (*Sometimes Dreams Come True*) and a tragicomedy (*The Young King*). These labels do not mean to define the various genres precisely, as if they were 'an essence': as Barbara Simerka points out in her article 'Dramatic and Discursive Genres', literary and theatrical works inevitably entail a 'mixing' of forms (Simerka 1996:192). The (broad) definitions, however, suggest that the plays at issue assume different stances on the world they enact on stage: by and large, comedy implies no deaths and a happy ending; philosophical and religious drama involves reflections on ethical and spiritual questions; tragicomedy first displays perilous situations, then puts an end to them and concludes with (socio-political) harmony and reconciliation.<sup>55</sup> Genres relate to their time's ideology and offer us 'incursions [...] into history'; as Tennenhouse puts it, the 'political imperatives' of an age are also 'aesthetic imperatives' (Snyder 1991:205, quoted in Simerka 1996:191, and Tennenhouse 1986:6). In *Shakespeare's Dramatic Genres*, Lawrence Danson writes:

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<sup>54</sup> The translation of Marshall's Spanish text is mine: 'el cuerpo se presenta como terreno donde se escenifican los conflictos inherentes de la transición a la modernidad'. Agreeing with Hillman and Marshall, Skantze writes that in early modern times 'sensuous reception' is a manner of 'discerning' and that the theatrical experience of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century spectator can be understood by 'thinking through the body' (Skantze 2003:22).

<sup>55</sup> Danson sees genres both as formal and philosophical categories; the latter definition means that genres express 'different visions of the world, different ways of being in it' (Danson 2000:4).

[notions regarding genre] entail ideas about gender, sexuality, and politics; about marriage within a patriarchal regime; about monarchy and other forms of social organization; about all the ingredients that would make a play's ending normatively happy or unhappy (Danson 2000:14)

Consequently, the dreams I analyse echo assorted values that derive from their specific socio-political circumstances; in the individual chapters, I show that the concerns they voice are in fact quite similar. This section briefly reflects on the ideologies my case studies manifest (to which I return in the subsequent chapters) and begins to argue that the on-stage dreams both challenge those beliefs and (finally) *seem* to sanction them. I also consider the formal properties of literary (and dramatic) dreams and speculate about the practical advantages they may give to playwrights and acting companies who display them on stage.

When he is about to watch some players enact 'a pleasant comedy', Sly, the beggar turned lord in *The Taming of the Shrew's* Induction, wonders whether the performance is 'household stuff' (Induction II, 127 and 137). Indeed, the English romantic comedies of the second half of the sixteenth century tackle domestic themes such as marriage, procreation and (marital and economic) agreements between families. Two main purposes guide the patriarchal authority within the family, the church and the state in sanctioning marriage: first, the nuptial union must bring financial advantages ('I come to wive it wealthily in Padua; / if wealthily, then happily in Padua', says Petruchio) (I.ii.74-75).<sup>56</sup> Second, male rule puts an end to the (potentially endangering) free expression of female desire and controls it by allowing it exclusively within the conjugal bond ('Am not I thy lord?', reminds Oberon to a 'wanton' Titania who has 'forsworn his bed and company') (II.i.62-63). Analysing the role of the (initially unruly) female characters in (Shakespearean) comedy, Barbara J. Bono writes:

[the female heroine] resubordinates herself through marriage to masculine hierarchy, giving herself to her father to be given to her husband, and thus serves the socially conservative purpose of Shakespearean romantic comedy. And 'she', of course, acts out a fiction of femininity on an exclusively male stage, her part played by a boy. (Bono 1986:194-195)

The heroines on the Elizabethan stage, in fact, exist inside a male-dominated universe: as to the fictional plot, their fathers or lords normally choose a husband for them; as to the live

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<sup>56</sup> The connubial agreements between families, as Danson puts it, serve to 'maintain and extend the Elizabethan household' (Danson 2000:57).

performance, boy actors, and not real women, enact their roles. Specifically, *The Taming of the Shrew* focuses on a husband's disturbing indoctrination of his rebellious wife (the Petruchio/Katherina relationship): it shows how male supremacy works within the marriage and celebrates the wife's (apparent) surrender to that power. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* also deals with the taming of riotous female characters (Hippolyta and especially Titania), the problem of (female) disobedience (Hermia against her father), and issues of female enslavement to an unfaithful male.<sup>57</sup> In addition to gender-related questions, the two comedies: 1) stage the surreal rise to power of a (socially low) male character (Sly and Bottom); and, 2) suggest that lords and monarchs (the Lord in *The Taming of the Shrew* or Oberon) have the power to make their subjects believe whatever is (socio-politically) convenient for them in certain circumstances. In both comedies, the dream makes possible a turning upside down of customary circumstances: for instance, Sly has only dreamt of being a beggar, but he is *actually* a lord; inside the play-within-the-play (or, perhaps, Sly's dream) Katherina *seems* first an exceptionally shrewish woman and then a 'model' wife; Hermia and Helena chase their lovers and duel for love, whereas the Fairy Queen Titania falls in love with a commoner.<sup>58</sup> The comedies' closures re-establish order and present patriarchal authority as legitimate and even desirable: apparently, Katherina sanctions the subjugation of wife to husband (and 'of subject to sovereign') with her last speech (Tennenhouse 1986:52). Whereas Egeus is 'a feudal patriarch' claiming total ownership of his daughter, Duke Theseus tries to 'rule by consent': with Oberon's help, Theseus finally re-matches the lovers 'correctly' and restores social harmony (Hall 1995:99).<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, the dreams have revealed the disturbing ways in which that assent has been obtained; the dreams have *looked* and *felt* so authentic that they cannot easily be reduced to petty fancies.

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<sup>57</sup> Within the woods, Hermia and Helena continue to be devoted to their lovers: according to Hall, 'female desire only becomes an active force because of male inconstancy, and it seeks only to restore a prior state of harmony' (Hall 1995:106).

<sup>58</sup> Danson underlines that Shakespeare's comedies often tolerate 'an unsettling of gender boundaries', yet they do not normally allow a disruption of 'class boundaries' (Danson 2000:85). Though momentarily, the dream of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* breaks social limitations by staging the Bottom/Titania relationship, the device (Oberon's) male authority employs to discipline the rebellious female.

<sup>59</sup> For Danson, Shakespeare's comedies 'accommodate a complex of competing interests'; this accommodation dramatically 'constructs authority as beneficent to individuals' desires' (Danson 2000:62). I believe that the dream episodes of the case studies: 1) make Katherina, Titania, Hermia, Helena, Segismundo, Cleomena and Orsames at last 'suitable' to their own society (they become, as Hall says, 'suitably recontained desiring subjects'); and, 2) vividly reveal how patriarchal command has obtained that seeming appropriateness (Hall 1995:27).

The first two case studies this thesis investigates mainly illustrate male strategies of subjugation of female unruliness and desire; Calderón's *Life Is a Dream* also acts out practices of socio-political brainwashing, yet it focuses on what a father/monarch does to a son/subject who inherits the kingdom at the end of the performance. I see the contemplation and staging of life as (apparently vain) dream as the central concern of Calderón's play: hence I regard it as a 'philosophical' drama that tangibly illustrates some moral codes on stage (see Benabu 2003:7, Heiple 1993:131 and Maraniss 1978:14). Traditional interpretations of Calderón's best-known play start from its Counter-Reformation context and highlight the decline of Spanish political power in Europe in the first decades of the seventeenth century: other European countries threaten Spain's empire; the involvement in the Thirty Years War (1618-48) costs countless lives and resources; the monarchs Philip III (1598-1621) and Philip IV (1621-1665), as Kagan explains, seriously neglect their duties (Kagan 1990:166).<sup>60</sup> In Spain the socio-political crisis and the new scientific discoveries (as seen in the Introduction and in section III) cause a growing pessimism that translates into a deep suspicion of 'surface appearances (*parecer*)', an awareness of the limitations of the individual, and a recognition of the 'absolute vanity' of all belongings (Robbins 1998:14 and 17). Accordingly, the ideology behind *Life Is a Dream* professes the futility of human things (life is but a hollow dream) and leads the protagonist Segismundo to reject 'all thoughts of revenge, of victory in war, and of political power' (Parker 1988:15).<sup>61</sup> Scholars usually agree that the play teaches the unimportance of earthly gains in comparison with the value of the afterlife: McKendrick points out that Prince Segismundo, prompted by his dream experience, decides to follow 'the path of duty rather than that of inclination' and so enters 'his princely inheritance' (McKendrick 1989:154-155). Friedman too maintains that Segismundo 'gains a place in the world by [...] acknowledging the illusory. [...] The dream experience teaches him [...] to project his energy towards higher goals, and to give up immediate gratification of his desires in favour of spiritual satisfaction' (Friedman 1993:49).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Chapter 4 will further elucidate the political and moral controversies concerning especially the figure of Philip IV, king when Calderón composes *Life Is a Dream* in 1635-36.

<sup>61</sup> Daniel Heiple elucidates the historical meaning of two terms Segismundo repeatedly implies in the play: in seventeenth-century thought, *engaño* (deceit) consists of 'an infatuation with the things of the world, believing them to be real when their existence is precarious and transitory'; *desengaño* (disillusionment) is 'an act of realization that the things of the world cannot be held, for they decay and pass into ruin' (Heiple 1993:119).

<sup>62</sup> Everett W. Hesse also observes that at the closure Segismundo 'perceives life as a fiction: nothing lasts and nothing is for real, everything changes'. The dream experience has taught him 'a

Probably, the title of the play itself moulds the audience's expectations by suggesting that the life/dream metaphor is about to be demonstrated on stage. Nevertheless, my reading emphasises the contradictions at work before the harmonious resolution. For example, King Basilio fears his son's predicted despotism, yet he himself has behaved tyrannically for many years. The *dream* Prince Segismundo lives in the royal palace blatantly puts on (public) view his hunger for political and sexual dominion. At the end Segismundo conveniently forgives his father and lawfully becomes the new sovereign; however, he does not hesitate to punish a soldier who asks to be rewarded after the civil war. Certainly Segismundo's conversion to the Catholic 'to do good' principle *appears* admirable and defends his political succession. All the same, the paradox persists: life may be a dream, but King Basilio's behaviour has rather shown that earthly things (political power in particular) matter very much. Life may be a dream, yet Segismundo actually gains authority the moment he *seems* to renounce it by stating its unimportance. The dreamer's awareness that the *dream* of power may not last does not mean that he will not enjoy the advantages of his (allegedly vain) command.

The fifth chapter of this thesis studies a religious play, Calderón's *Sometimes Dreams Come True*: because of its genre, this work might be assumed to serve its underlying ideology more frankly than the other case studies. In her *Theatre in Spain*, McKendrick presents the *autos sacramentales* (religious plays) as a direct product of the Counter-Reformation and of Spain's 'concerted, militant reassertion of its own beliefs' (McKendrick 1989:244). In early modern Spain, the *auto* is a *phenomenal* sermon that turns theology into 'actable ideas'; 'a lesson' which publicly elucidates and restates various aspects of Catholic doctrine; 'an act of faith and devotion' that annihilates the beliefs of both Protestants and Muslims (McKendrick 1989:244).<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, the *autos* assist Spain's national interests: their battle against the 'anti-Christ' strengthens Spain's role as the defender of Catholic faith in Europe, while their approval of spiritual hierarchy also supports the monarch's supremacy as God's representative on earth.

*Sometimes Dreams Come True* stages a few dreams different individuals have and enlists a character named Dream among its protagonists. My analysis underscores the sensory properties of the dreams (and of the whole performance) and the importance of

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philosophy of life that borders on nihilism, for he denies reality but saves himself from chaos by finally accepting a belief in '*lo eterno*' [the eternal]' (Hesse 1984:60 and 72).

<sup>63</sup> Parker remarks the public character of the *autos*, performed on the feast of Corpus Christi; their purpose is 'to expound the truths of the Christian faith, in their Tridentine Catholic form' by insisting on the centre of Catholic theology, i.e. the mystery of the Holy Eucharist (Parker 1988:344).

the spectators' sensuous participation: the play repeatedly invites the audience to look at and listen to the dreams and the mystery they embody. Because of this bodily quality and the socio-political scenario in which it functions, the play at issue is not merely symbolic. As Margaret Rich Greer observes in 'Constituting Community', Calderón's *autos* come from and possibly shape the material and spiritual needs of their community: for this reason, they cannot exclusively be conceived in terms of 'absolute transcendence' (Greer 1997:41).<sup>64</sup> Accordingly, I call attention to the ironic undertones of *Sometimes Dreams Come True* and argue that its ideological intentions may not be as uncomplicated as normally assumed. For example, the *auto's* protagonist (the Jew Joseph) is a miserable man, yet God Himself sends him prophetic dreams and clearly prefers him to other socio-politically advantaged figures. Joseph's Jewish-ness might subtly counteract the anti-Semitic feelings of the time's spectators; moreover, the arrogance and malevolence of Joseph's brothers may point to similarly despicable attitudes among the (aristocratic and lower-class) audiences. The Egyptian Pharaoh is a pagan who finally converts to Christian faith: his sincere commitment and moral integrity possibly contrast with the behaviour of the Spanish monarchs (and of their subjects). In particular, in this *auto* the character of Dream and the spectacular oneiric episodes bring to life the Eucharistic mystery in a very physical way: the audience's necessity to see and hear it *in the flesh* strongly diverges, I argue, from Joseph's spontaneous and effortless devotion.

The last chapter analyses a Restoration tragicomedy, Behn's *The Young King*, that also stages the abrupt social ascent of a male character: Orsames (the young king of the title) recalls Sly, Bottom, Segismundo and Joseph. Though I have chosen to consider *Life Is a Dream* as a philosophical play, Calderón's work may also be seen as a tragicomedy. Indeed, both Calderón and Behn select an exotic setting (respectively, Poland and Dacia) and show the political crisis of its reigning aristocracy. Through the death of one character in each play, the plots briefly touch upon tragic elements; afterwards, they veer towards romance and assert the future, 'triumphant adaptation' of the aristocratic class (Cohen 1985:390).<sup>65</sup> As Nancy Klein Maguire underlines in *Regicide and Restoration*, most

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<sup>64</sup> I will return to Greer's analysis of Calderón's religious and court plays in chapter 5.

<sup>65</sup> Danson sees (Shakespearean) romance as a kind of comedy creating new surprises: magical islands, mysterious mountains, pastoral retreats, remorse-ridden fathers, lost children, torn families looking for 'wholeness' (Danson 2000:56). *The Young King* also presents: 1) an imaginary and bucolic location; 2) a son (Orsames) who has been hidden for years in a castle; and, 3) the final reunion of a mother and a sister (the Queen and Cleomena) with their son/brother (Orsames). On the one hand, Behn seems to reproach a woman (the Queen who has dethroned Orsames) for the ('unnatural') divisions inside the family and the state; on the other, for most of the performance

English dramatists of the 1660s undertake the dissemination of a pro-Stuart myth. The return to power of Charles II somewhat erases the tragic death of his father Charles I, and the tragicomic genre suitably repeats this dual picture. In Maguire's words, the regicide/restoration, idealism/pragmatism, and past/present 'crashing polarities' call for a genre allowing 'multiple perspectives' and tolerating 'a sense of change and flux' (Maguire 1992:42). 'Reconciliation and regeneration' guide tragicomedy and drive its tragic and chaotic beginning towards a fully utopian happy ending (McMullan and Hope 1992:10).

Behn's *The Young King* is no exception and predictably closes with Orsames' reinstatement on the throne and Cleomena's abandonment of her previous ambitions. The finales of *Life Is a Dream* and *The Young King* put on view the (seemingly) natural and lawful succession of the reigning dynasty. Nevertheless, I contend that, until that time, the various dreams within the plots have questioned the serene conclusions: the vivid dreams have displayed the manufactured-ness of gender and rank hierarchies and, possibly, their lifelike *actuality* still haunts the stage. As chapter 6 shows, the two main dreams Orsames lives intensely uncover his illicit sexual appetites and political inexperience. In contrast, Cleomena's dreams possess a more private dimension: they reveal to her that the political enemy she struggles against is also the man she loves. The Princess' dreams lead her towards a (most likely) happy marriage that overcomes the clash between 'the public business of familial alliance and the private business of emotional and sexual compatibility' (Danson 2000:64). However, the dreams have also suggested that Cleomena would be a better monarch than her brother and thus cast doubt on the final reestablishment of male authority.

Having reflected on the ideologies behind the case studies, I would like to clarify why I think on-stage dreams successfully manage to destabilize (if only temporarily) those ideologies. As a genre, the dream vision offers stylistic and thematic benefits to the authors who employ it. As Peter Brown explains in his study of dream visions in medieval (English) poetry, dreams capture the reader's interest by 'appealing to a common experience'; dreams make possible the introduction of eccentric material and impressive images into the main frame; dreams can engage with several subjects (divine prophecy, political or philosophical conjecture, apocalyptic vision) through a representational style much less constrained than, for example, the realistic mode (Brown 1999b:25). However, it

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Behn's Cleomena is an active heroine who holds political power and bravely fights on the battleground.

is the dream's concurrent actuality and insubstantiality that makes it so popular on early modern stages and allows its engagement with and dismissal of troubling rank and gender issues. In her analysis of oneiric visions of Elizabeth I, Hackett writes:

Both real dreams and the literature which imitates them [...] lent themselves readily to the veiled expression of ambivalence towards or criticism of Elizabeth and her régime. Elizabethans were well acquainted with dream theories reaching back to classical times which recognised that dreams may be meaningless [...] or profoundly meaningful. [...] Dream, then, gave a certain freedom to express divergent views about Elizabeth. (Hackett 2008:45-46)

The early modern dream theories taken into account have indeed presented dreams as either very important or negligible. Authors like Lyly, Spenser and Shakespeare, Hackett argues, have created oneiric visions of Queen Elizabeth that first criticise her subtly and afterwards disappear as inconsequential dreams. The genre of dream visions profitably create images that: 1) *look* tangible and meaning-laden; and, 2) can fade away apparently leaving no trace of their (perhaps disturbing) content. Hackett suggests that oneiric apparitions craft a 'double vision': they exhibit the real and the imaginary as simultaneously separate and identical and bring about what is 'so utterly impossible in real life' (Hackett 2008:47 and 53).

My Introduction has listed a few examples of dreams actually lived by early modern people and stressed their explicitly political concerns. Public matters visibly figure within the private dreams of early modern individuals: reasonably, we expect similar concerns also in on-stage dreams performed in front of socially heterogeneous audiences and (at times) the monarch him/herself. All my case studies gain from the enigmatic attributes of dreams: the lifelike dreams enable a deep reflection on divisive ideologies and social practices. At the same time, the dreams' deceptive irrelevance makes any criticism *seem* trifling and might save playwrights and acting companies from possible censorship. The paradoxical realness and frothiness of dreams call to mind the nature of theatrical performances, as underlined in section II.2.<sup>66</sup> The general similarity between drama and dream 'as mere fantasy and illusion' can be employed to put forward worrying messages and deny them safely at the end of the performance (Hackett 2008:61). The theatre and the dream are misleading as they *appear* as everyday life. However, we may reverse this

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<sup>66</sup> According to Brown, however, for medieval artists the life/dream frontier, though not insignificant, is not 'an absolute division but a party wall within the same house, a wall with a connecting door' (Brown 1999b:33).

sentence and say that life itself *looks like* (or perhaps *is?*) a performance or a dream: as Hall argues in *Anxious Pleasures*, the point may be that no stable truth is easily reachable (Hall 1995:179). By displaying various circumstances as both *intensely real* and *illusory*, the dreams at issue insinuate that also the ('natural') sexual and social hierarchies inside and outside the playhouses are a forceful fiction (Hall 1995:179).

#### **V: Possible problems of my methodological approach.**

As the above sections have explained, my analysis of the case studies will investigate the phenomenal corporeality theatrical dreams gain in early modern performance. My consideration of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century ideas about sensory experience and the oneiric event will, I believe, enable me to place myself in the (ideal) position of a spectator of and listener to the (imagined) dream performances. In other words, to demonstrate their lifelike solidity and grasp their on-stage effectiveness, I have thought about possible ways of viewing and hearing the on-stage dreams at issue.

The Introduction and this second chapter, crucially, have assisted a *re-membering* of the (plausible) historical and phenomenal background against which the case studies operate. All the same, I am conscious of problems such as the inaccessibility of the past and the partiality of my own interpretation. The dream performances I attempt to reconstruct are absent and other critics have already somehow filtered the various traces relating to them (Postlewait 1991:160).<sup>67</sup> As Bulman clarifies, performance criticism has normally shown two opposite attitudes towards its object of study. Researchers interested in historicism have tried to recover the original performative contexts and determine what implications a particular play could generate on different occasions. That is to say, performance history has allowed them to find out 'what, and how, meanings are produced' (Bulman 1996:4). The other main trend in performance analysis has been ideological, in that it has sought to outline 'interpretive options' without looking into performative frameworks (Bulman 1996:4). This approach is thus more devoted to socio-political enquiry than to practical investigation of the past. The historicist method may seem more objective than the ideological one; nonetheless, Bulman warns that the critic's own socio-cultural standpoint always somewhat affects performance criticism and advises him/her to be alert to his/her own

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<sup>67</sup> As Andrew Gurr has pointed out, in the long procedure between the acquisition of a playwright's draft and the final production of a fixed script the play texts themselves were always 'in flux' (Gurr 2004:77). The texts we have access to today only roughly suggest how the plays may have been originally staged and created meaning for their spectators.

position as 'historically mediated' interpreter (Bulman 1996:5).<sup>68</sup> Accordingly, I am aware of reading different past performances from the viewpoint of a spectator chronologically and culturally extraneous to the selected contexts; this fact perhaps makes my interpretation (inevitably) imperfect (Bulman 1996:5). My thesis tries to rebuild the *actual* shapes through which the chosen plays create meanings for historically specific (early modern in this case) audiences. Surely those meanings are unsteady and audience reception has fluctuated. Even so, I want to put my case studies side by side in order to: 1) show that they put on view sensory dreams and, through them, interrogate socio-political issues; and, 2) argue that, thanks to the on-stage dreams, the case studies oscillate between being tools of cultural 'contestation' and of cultural legitimisation (Bulman 1996:8).

General concerns about the application of phenomenology to past experience also pertain to my dissertation. The Introduction and this chapter have clarified the (historical and phenomenological) research questions guiding my thesis; still, the main risk is that of taking for granted the concept of 'experience'. As Dorothea Olkowski explains in her article 'The End of Phenomenology':

the acceptance of experience as unproblematic criterion for the assessment of knowledge overlooks the fact that experience is already determined by the cultural and theoretical milieu and so is not ideologically free. (Olkowski 2000:74)

In her preface to *The Address of the Eye*, Sobchack too elucidates the main controversial points concerning phenomenological investigation. First, 'experience' seems a squashy term, unconnected to the scientific investigation and theoretical vocabulary of academic research (Sobchack 1992:XIV). Second, phenomenology has at times been considered as 'idealist, essentialist, and ahistorical' (Sobchack 1992:XIV). Phenomenology might be seen as making assumptions about direct experience and opposing the findings of semiotics and structuralism about the seclusion of unmediated experience. All the same, Sobchack expresses her view that psychoanalytic or Marxist theory does not exhaust the 'pleasure and plenitude' of film experience, her own field of study (Sobchack 1992:XV). By underlining 'the sexual and material economy' of the subject or the sign producing

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<sup>68</sup> Bulman also questions the possibility of achieving a stable comprehension of audience response: the different factors contributing to the production of a specific performance cannot assure that each spectator has gone through it exactly in the same way. The material circumstances of a show, the factors determining the spectators' response, the chance of inaccuracy or mistake in live performances and the unstable quality of the actors' bodies make performance criticism faltering and open-ended (Bulman 1996:6).

meaning, psychoanalysis and Marxism have normally neglected the vibrant, dialectical and 'lived-body situation' of the cinematic or the theatrical event (Sobchack 1992:XVI).<sup>69</sup> Psychoanalysis may be useful to reveal the 'unconscious' of patriarchal texts or describe the condition of 'an experienced 'lack'' (Sobchack 1992:XV, emphasis original). On the other hand, Marxist theory can offer an analysis of 'social relations' and of the ideological purposes of theatrical or cinematic systems (Sobchack 1992:XV). However, Sobchack maintains that Marxist investigation does not account for the personified, alive experience of 'engagement' or 'transformation' that the individual spectator may go through (Sobchack 1992:XV).

The task Sobchack proposes to fulfil in her book partly resembles the intentions of this dissertation. Through 'a thick and radical description of experience', Sobchack interrogates (cinematic) vision in its incarnate, performative and signifying qualities. More plainly, she examines vision as it thoroughly involves subjects and objects 'to make sense of them and of itself as it is lived' (Sobchack 1992:XVII). In a similar way, this thesis portrays the theatrical dream experience of early modern times 'as an embodied and meaningful' activity; it speculates about how the 'sensing' and 'enworlded' dreams might be seen, heard, and generally gathered on and off stage (Sobchack 1992:XVII).<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, as Folkerth remarks, the dream experience I study originates from a specific cultural context and communicates 'a great deal of information' about that context (Folkerth 2002:20). Borrowing Smith's words, phenomenological enquiries into past events should be 'an amalgam of biological constants and cultural variables' (B. R. Smith 1999:8). In view of that, I address theatrical dreams through sixteenth- and seventeenth-century discourses regarding: 1) sensory experience in general; 2) the oneiric occasion itself; and, 3) status and gender hierarchies. I have reconstructed the cultural and historical scenarios within which the dream occurrence takes place and I hunt for the socio-political anxieties the dreams exemplify on stage. I see (early modern) dream enactment more as a communal than an individual happening and I regard it as principally disciplined by public concerns rather than by subjective needs. In particular, as anticipated in section IV, I consider the generic frames within which the on-stage dreams perform as symptomatic of

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<sup>69</sup> Sobchack suggests that Marx's dialectical materialism originally shared with existential phenomenology similar concerns. In contrast, contemporary Marxism has usually overlooked the pre-rational life of the body-subject and has hence devalued sensuous experience to 'commodity fetishism' (Sobchack 1992:XVI).

<sup>70</sup> Folkerth analyses sound in the Shakespearean corpus and aims to identify what different sounds 'would have meant'; he shows 'how their meanings would have been received by the people who heard and understood them in specific contexts, with early modern ears' (Folkerth 2002:9).

early modern socio-political ideologies and I ask to what extent the dreams at issue criticise or champion them. In this way, I believe, the teamwork of historical and phenomenological questions will drive the thesis towards an investigation of the subject matter as un-biased and wide-ranging as possible.

In summary, early modern theatrical productions of oneiric occurrences are not culturally untamed, as my first two chapters have shown. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century dream performances in England and Spain are *actual* phenomena whose features are well illustrated by a phenomenological enquiry. At the same time, their engagement with issues of (monarchical, patriarchal and religious) authority requires a historical reading of the way they deliver these concerns on stage. Crucially, this combined approach helps me not to think of (dream) experience as universal or uncomplicated, encourages me to look at it from within a specific cultural frame, and makes me negotiate the distance between past and present perspectives in an appropriately objective manner.

### Chapter 3

## Dreams that Domesticate: *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

This chapter compares *The Taming of the Shrew* (1592-1594) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595-1596), two early Shakespearean comedies that stage dreams and dreaming and employ the dream as a frame to the core action. My analysis proposes three key points: 1) the dreams at issue are sensually *real* and *feel like* reality; 2) the dreams being considered mainly dramatise anxieties about gender roles as well as the strategies employed to placate those anxieties; and, 3) because of their sensory *actuality* and cultural relevance, the dreams under discussion might not be easily put aside towards the end of the performance. Focusing on two specific examples, this chapter seeks to flesh out the importance of dream performance in the playhouses of early modern London and to answer questions that also pertain to my other case studies. My discussion unfolds through five distinct sections. The first one delineates the generic and ideological features of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; it begins to suggest that, thanks to the staging of dreams, the predictable finales of these plays may not be as clear-cut as they *seem*. Section II analyses the Induction of *The Taming of the Shrew* and the first act of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and speculates about the fact that the key action of both comedies might be seen as a dream; in spite of the dreamlike frame, I argue, the two works tangibly bring in contemporary socio-political concerns. The third section studies the (pretend or *real*) dreaming of the two case studies and proves its phenomenal (especially visual and auditory) quality; paradoxically, the dreams at issue are as sensory as reality and the on-stage *reality appears* to be as bizarre as a dream. Section IV concentrates on the cultural aspects of the dreams in question and shows that they facilitate the staging of disturbing male practices that *look* inflated and implausible (i.e. dreamlike), but are not. Because these worrying habits of sight and hearing indoctrination occur within a *dream*, they could finally be dismissed as vain fancy; however, what the dream shows is *authentic* and may remind the theatregoers of their own everyday situation. By analysing chiefly the last act of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the last section of this chapter discusses the state of dream and performance as that of 'shadows' that, albeit fickle, might easily transcend the boundaries of what can be represented and might do so in a very perceptible way.

**I: Romantic comedies with a farcical evolution: *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.**

At the end of his first meeting with Katherina, Petruchio, I believe, summarises the main ideological goal of both *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: 'for I am he am born to tame you, Kate, / and bring you from a wild Kate to a Kate / conformable as other household Kates' (II.i.275-277, emphasis added).<sup>1</sup> These two Shakespearean comedies, as Sly says in *The Shrew's* Induction, certainly deal with 'household stuff': they mostly stage the troublesome processes that lead to the marriage between a young man and a young woman (Lucentio and Bianca, Lysander and Hermia, Demetrius and Helena) and to the (re)institution of harmony between wedded couples (Petruchio and Katherina, Oberon and Titania) (Induction II, 137).<sup>2</sup> In both comedies the 'taming' of women to which Petruchio refers is central to the resolutions: powerful men (Petruchio and Oberon) put an end to the unruly behaviours of female dissenters (Katherina and Titania). Furthermore, women like Hermia and Helena do see that their betrothed may just be 'things base and vile': however, in the end they accept the marital bond and, presumably, the principle of masculine supremacy within the family (and society in general) (I.i.232). Whereas *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has normally been regarded as a standard romantic comedy, much attention has been devoted to the ambiguous generic features of *The Taming of the Shrew*. I would like to suggest that both comedies end romantically (i.e. with a banquet/wedding scene which 'incorporates the whole range of social elements within a celebration of state power'), but progress in a rather farcical way and do so mainly because of their dream-laden shape (Tennenhouse 1986:44).<sup>3</sup>

Generic definitions of *The Taming of the Shrew* have variously fluctuated between farce and 'proper' comedy. Scholars who see the play as farce draw attention to its realistic and satirical aspects, to its inflated display of 'aggression and hostility' and to its emphasis on 'the amusing difficulties' involved in overcoming social isolation

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<sup>1</sup> Natasha Korda has observed that Petruchio's taming of Katherina is equated to 'a domestication of the emergent commodity form itself' (Korda 2001:192). As an early modern housewife, Katherina must 'spend enough' in order to preserve her husband's rank ('cultural credit'), but she must not overspend 'his income or economic credit' (Korda 2001:207). Throughout this chapter all quotations are from the Oxford editions of *The Taming of the Shrew* (edited by H. J. Oliver, 1982) and of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (edited by Peter Holland, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> Katherina and Petruchio get married in the third act of *The Taming of the Shrew*, yet the sexual consummation of their marriage is (most likely) procrastinated until the end of the play (see Addison Roberts 1988:56). In other words, they are truly married only once Katherina has (apparently) acknowledged 'the view of the dominant male and the submissive female' (Addison Roberts 1988:63).

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Freedman has indeed labelled Shakespeare's early comedies as 'farcical' (Freedman 1991:5).

through marriage (Charney 1988:15 and McDonald 1988:81).<sup>4</sup> In particular, farcical plays seem to deny their own complexity and meaning through their 'humorous acceptance' of social antagonisms usually regarded as intolerable (Berek 1988:99). *The Taming of the Shrew*, in fact, depicts a city with its citizens and their vices, highlights the male/female enmity by means of hyperbolic verbal (and at times physical) aggressiveness, and emphasises the various ludicrous obstacles that keep deferring its conclusion.<sup>5</sup>

The central action of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* takes place in a wood populated by supernatural spirits and, hence, may seem unrealistic. However, the events occurring in Oberon's forest might actually remind one of the chaotic plot of *The Taming of the Shrew*: for instance, the love juice erroneously couples the four young lovers and lead them 'up and down' throughout the woods; Demetrius and Lysander openly manifest their hatred of either Helena or Hermia; the two women fiercely argue and nearly wrestle; Oberon frankly reveals that he wants to castigate Titania in a malicious way (III.ii.396). Katherina's scolding tongue has a companion in Hermia's verbal aggressiveness: as Helena says, when Hermia is angry 'she is keen and shrewd'; both Katherina's and Hermia's anomalous articulacy will be either corrected or suppressed by male control (III.ii.323).<sup>6</sup> Because of their uncertain status (are they dreams or not?), the worrying, misogynistic episodes happening in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* might finally be downgraded to a nonsensical 'jest' and 'a fruitless vision' (*TTOTS*, IV.v.72 and *AMND*, III.ii.371). On the one hand, the dreamscape of both comedies enables anything to happen, even surreal events that *look like* a 'froth of the fancy' (Nashe 1594:153). On the other, these events (exaggerated and unreal as they may seem) *tangibly* put on view male customs of

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<sup>4</sup> In her essay 'Coming of Age' Coppélia Kahn maintains that *The Shrew's* farcical traits lie in its satire not of a woman, but of 'the male urge to control woman' (Kahn 1988:41).

<sup>5</sup> Danson labels *The Taming of the Shrew* as the first of the 'new (romantic) comedies'; yet he underlines that this play also resembles a traditional 'old comedy' (see Danson 2000:28 and 57-62).

<sup>6</sup> Linda Bamber defines the Shakespearean comic heroine as a woman who does not take things 'so personally' and who has 'a continuous, reliable identity' and 'self-acceptance' (Bamber 1982:41). Yet this definition does not seem to fit Hermia and Helena: they take their feelings solemnly and their self-confidence is distressed within the wood *dream*. Consider for instance what Helena says to Demetrius: 'Use me but as your spaniel: spurn me, strike me, / neglect me, lose me' (II.i.205-206). As a second point, Bamber delineates the comic world as a 'both/and' cosmos where characters are not forced to make choices (Bamber 1982:112). However, in the first act it seems that Hermia will have to sacrifice either her love for Lysander or her obedience to Egeus; in the end she marries Lysander more because of Oberon/Theseus' decision than her own. As Bamber recognises, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is an exception among Shakespeare's comedies, for instance because it deals with 'a conflict for women between friendship and love' (Bamber 1982:119). Being a comedy (a universe in which 'things are predictable') *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has to reach a (seemingly) joyous ending; nonetheless, its dreamlike plot particularly emphasises that things may have gone another way and shows a hidden, more disturbing side of reality (Bamber 1982:127).

female subjugation; everyday life in Padua and Athens (or Elizabethan England) may hide from plain view those customs, yet they *do actually exist*.<sup>7</sup>

To be sure, *The Taming of the Shrew* may also be regarded as a romantic comedy: for instance, Tennenhouse underscores this play's mockery of the Petrarchan love code (through the Lucentio/Bianca plot); the 'social chaos' Katherina provokes with her behaviour, which blocks her own and her sister's marriage; and the final tribute paid to the patriarchy (Tennenhouse 1986:47). In his introduction to this play, H. J. Oliver suggests that early modern audiences would approach the performance with certain expectations: the title refers to classical folk tales and Shakespeare recycles some of their typical incidents (for example, the husband arriving at the wedding in poor clothes) (see Oliver 1982:49-50). On the other hand, Petruchio's domesticating goes without the 'physical brutality' of traditional shrew-taming and Katherina is a wealthy and feisty young woman, not the conventional 'poor' and 'nagging wife' (Boose 2001:170). Oliver also reasons that the spectators may 'sympathize' with Katherina: while farce does not try to arouse the audience's emotional response, *The Taming of the Shrew* shows why Katherina is shrewish and what she feels ('I will go sit and weep') (II.i.35) (Oliver 1982:51).

As for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Robin underlines its 'natural' and 'inevitable' comic conclusion when he releases the lovers from the juice's spell: 'every man should take *his own*, / [...] the man shall have his mare again, / and all shall be well' (III.ii.459-464, emphasis added).<sup>8</sup> Comedy normally terminates with 'an order of lovers appropriately paired' and with the celebration of a society 'newly in accord with itself'; at the same time, comic plots usually grant each male possession over a female and, hence, endorse the patriarchal structure of (on- and off-stage) communities (Danson 2000:51).<sup>9</sup> *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* end conventionally, in that they focus on post-wedding revels and on the return from (female-bred) chaos to (male-enforced) order. Nonetheless, I propose that the dreams and dreamlike aspects of these two (quite farcical) comedies expose the cruelty of masculine systems of (female) containment and that they do so in a very *phenomenal*

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<sup>7</sup> Freedman associates farce with dreams: 'like dreams, farce couples a functional denial of significance with often disturbing and highly significant content [...] a taboo is always broken and not broken' (Freedman 1980:236). The finales of the plays I study, likewise, may repudiate the meanings of the *dreams* they have shown; nonetheless, those meanings have previously *looked* and *felt* very convincing.

<sup>8</sup> In *Social Shakespeare* Peter J. Smith writes that the youngsters of Shakespeare's comedies are invited 'to share themselves [...] with another person and [...] with a universal social structure'; female rebellion can be short-term only and marriage finally makes the women 'harmless' (P. J. Smith 1995:31 and 33).

<sup>9</sup> Kahn remarks that in comedy, paradoxically, only a woman can 'authenticate' a man's social respectability by recognizing him as her master (as Katherina does in the *The Taming of the Shrew's* finale) (Kahn 1988:51).

(and perhaps not easily forgettable) way. Furthermore, both comedies stage dreamlike episodes in which unprivileged male characters (Sly and Bottom) are at once the unaware victims of mockery and the protagonists of a (momentary) social ascent. As a result, together with exploring issues of gender roles, the dreams of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* fulfil another two important functions: 1) they further reveal the enormous make-believe faculties of powerful males; and, 2) they make possible, albeit temporarily, the reversal of supposedly fixed class positions.

## **II: Actions framed by dreams and actions that may be dreams.**

Shakespeare encircles the action of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with a dreamlike frame: the former begins with an Induction in which Christopher Sly falls asleep and perhaps dreams of the events of the Petruchio/Katherina plot; the latter play reminds one of its own surreal condition immediately through its own title. On the whole *The Taming of the Shrew's* Induction and *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* first act establish a dreamlike atmosphere that, however, *feels* extremely *real*.

### **II.1: A real pretence: the Induction of *The Taming of the Shrew*.**

In terms of performance the chief problem of *The Taming of the Shrew* is what to do with Sly and his retinue (the Induction's characters) at the close. Several efforts have been made to justify the lack of an appropriate ending to Sly's story and clarify the relationship between *The Taming of the Shrew* (1592-94, printed in the First Folio of 1623) and *The Taming of a Shrew* (1593-95). Unlike Shakespeare's, this latter play ends with Sly waking up and saying he has dreamt the best dream of his life (Petruchio's taming of Katherina): 'I know now how to tame a shrew: I dreamt upon it all this night till now'.<sup>10</sup> Oliver suggests that *A Shrew* with its full Induction is an account of an earlier version of Shakespeare's *The Shrew*; the script we now have probably stems from Shakespeare's own manuscript, a text with 'signs of change of mind' (Oliver 1982:10).<sup>11</sup> Passages similar to the additional Sly's scenes at the end of *A Shrew* probably existed in Shakespeare's original text, but subsequently the dramatist decided to discard them.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Passage 5, quoted in Appendix A of *The Taming of the Shrew* (1982:235).

<sup>11</sup> Holland shares Oliver's hypothesis about the Induction and remarks that some productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* have used the additional scenes of *The Taming of a Shrew* to conclude the performance (P. Holland 1994:18).

<sup>12</sup> In his article 'Was There a 'Dramatic Epilogue' to *The Taming of the Shrew*?', Richard Hosley suggests that the return to Sly's story would produce an anti-climatic effect after the end of the Katherina's story; also, in Shakespeare's time it had become standard practice not to write any corresponding dramatic epilogue to the Induction (Hosley 1961:29-30).

According to Jayne, the best way to deal with the Induction problem is as follows: 'the inner play should be played as though it were Sly's dream, with Sly playing Petruchio'; for Jayne at the end of the inner play Sly should wake up and try to decipher his *dream* through a comic pantomime (Jayne 1966:43). Sly's final scenes in *A Shrew* emphasise the moral of the shrew-taming, whereas the Folio text with its discharge of the Induction might complicate one's understanding of the events.<sup>13</sup> However, as Freedman observes in her *Staging the Gaze*, Sly's disappearance could interestingly stress the problem of dividing frame from vision, performance from reality, role-playing from naturalness:

Since the frame plot with Sly and the Lord as audience to a play is not picked up, since both 'plays' end at once, the characters of the frame plot are no longer outside of the play that they witness; the frame is subsumed by the vision. (Freedman 1991:123)

The difficulty of dividing play (or dream) from reality is the problem Sly, Katherina and the audience have to tackle. The onlookers do not exactly know when the Induction ends and the main play begins, or whether the inner play is Sly's dream or *reality*. Possibly, the spectators are uncertain about the duration and worth of Sly's and Katherina's dreamlike experiences: could the dream (or the role-playing) go on forever, and is it a mere jest or something more upsetting?<sup>14</sup>

The Induction takes place first before the alehouse out of which Sly is thrown, then within the Lord's house where Sly awakes to a new *reality*.<sup>15</sup> Introducing the sort of playfulness that Petruchio will also employ, Sly partially creates for himself a fake identity ('the Slys are no rogues. [...] we came in with Richard Conqueror'); the hostess (perhaps anticipating Katherina) has a fiery temperament and, Sly says, sleeps in a 'cold bed' (Ind. I, 3-8). As soon as the hostess leaves the stage, Sly falls asleep for the first time; 'a winding of horns' alerts the audience's attention to the entrance of 'a Lord from hunting, with his train' (Ind. I, p. 90).<sup>16</sup> The act of sleeping is *there*, on the stage,

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<sup>13</sup> Hosley believes that the Folio version better amalgamates the inner play and the Induction through the 'supposes' theme and so underscores the relationship between appearance/dream and reality (Hosley 1961:29).

<sup>14</sup> Richard A. Burt maintains that the Induction cannot return at the end of *The Shrew* because it would draw attention to 'the artificiality of the play'; Petruchio's role-playing is coercion and will probably continue even after Katherina *seems* to be tamed (Burt 1988:83). Joel Fineman believes that the absence of a formal conclusion to the Sly story is a sign of 'a desire for closure that the play calls forth *in order* to postpone' (Fineman 2001:142, emphasis original).

<sup>15</sup> 'The Sleeper Awakened', a story in the *Arabian Nights*, is the basic source for Sly's and Segismundo's story in, respectively, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Life Is a Dream* (see Addison Roberts 1988:55).

<sup>16</sup> Jeanne Addison Roberts observes that the mention of hunting usually signals a transition from the city to the forest, from 'history' to romance (Addison Roberts 1988:55). Both the Lord

for all to see; this very act sets in motion the initial intersection of *reality* and dream. To begin with, *reality* itself seems indefinite, and the Lord wonders about Sly's condition: 'What's here? One dead, or drunk?' (Ind. I, 28). Shortly afterwards, the Lord's authority and the disparity between social classes come into full view. For the hunt-lover Lord, in fact, Sly is but a 'monstrous beast' and 'a swine', the ideal prey of a 'pastime passing excellent':

What think you, if he were conveyed to bed, / wrapped in sweet clothes, rings put upon his fingers, / a most delicious banquet by his bed, / and brave attendants near him when he wakes, / would not the beggar then forget himself? (Ind. I, 31, 64 and 34-38)<sup>17</sup>

The Lord wants to 'practise on' the 'drunken man' by making fiction look like *reality*; actual sensations – the touch of 'sweet clothes' and 'rings', the taste of a 'delicious banquet' – will deceive Sly and force him to believe that he is 'a mighty lord' (Ind. I, 33 and 62).<sup>18</sup> Though Sly may find his new circumstances 'a flattering dream or worthless fancy', the performance of the people around him will prove that 'he hath been lunatic' for seven years and has only dreamt of being a beggar (Ind. I, 41 and 60). These first scenes clearly reveal that dream and performance can be mistaken for truth and that truth itself may be dubious: as Donald Stauffer asks, 'how can Christopher Sly be sure he is a drunken tinker when all those around him assure him that he is a lord?' (Stauffer 1949:46).<sup>19</sup> Importantly, the 'manufacturer' of an incontestable *reality* (which is but an invention) is somebody who holds social and economic privileges: the Lord determines what is *true* and *false*, directs his subjects' behaviour (or performance), and moulds Sly's perception of contiguous things. The beggar's status (perhaps like that of all the commoners on- and off-stage) appears to depend on the will of a superior: Sly 'is no less than what we say he is' (Ind. I, 68). On the other hand, the positive outcome of the Lord's mischief relies on sleeping and dreaming: deadening Sly's awareness and

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and Theseus have terminated their hunting when they find respectively Sly and the four lovers asleep on the ground; in both comedies the sound of wind horns heralds the distinctiveness of the situation. While Sly is about to shift from misery to dreamlike luxury, the lovers are leaving an oneiric territory in order to go back to everyday Athens.

<sup>17</sup> We may trust that the Lord and the huntsmen are not a product of Sly's sleeping imagination: the Lord himself explains how he wants to ridicule the beggar.

<sup>18</sup> Giving other orders to the servants, the Lord enlists other objects whose sensorial richness should delude Sly: 'wanton pictures', 'warm distilled waters', 'sweet wood', 'music [...] to make a dulcet and a heavenly sound', 'a costly suit' (Ind. I, 43-59).

<sup>19</sup> Jayne also remarks that Sly has no choice but to believe what he is told: 'between his drink and the persuasion of the lord, he [Sly] is in no condition to make clear distinctions between kinds of reality. The difference between actual experience, dream experience, and dramatic experience is thoroughly blurred in his mind' (Jayne 1966:51). Also in the play proper Petruchio's wilful language brings into being what he desires: for instance, Petruchio persuades Baptista that Katherina has agreed to marry him.

sense of time, sleeping prevents him from understanding what has happened meanwhile; dreaming may justify Sly's new rank and his eventual loss of it (once the deception is over, Sly might think he only dreamt of it). Here as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and in Calderón's *Life is a Dream* (1636) a powerful male alters the physical, psychological, or social attributes of characters of inferior gender and grade who are asleep on stage. Dream helps the manipulations take place and possibly makes the onlookers attentive to the existence of these manipulations inside and outside the playhouse.



FIGURE 3: William Quiller Orchardson, *Christopher Sly*, 1867.

At the beginning of the second scene of the Induction, Sly enters 'aloft', i.e. from the gallery over the rear façade of the stage.<sup>20</sup> Sly's elevated position in the performing space may allude to his abrupt social rise and, perhaps, to his dazed appreciation of an *actuality* located somewhere in between *truth* and *dream*.<sup>21</sup> The servants, the luxurious food, drinks and clothes materialise a dream of wealth and belie what Sly considers

<sup>20</sup> Oliver notes that the upper stage, probably curtained, offered the possibility to remove Sly from sight when his part in the performance had terminated (Oliver 1982:97).

<sup>21</sup> Unlike Sly, Bottom accepts his new identity (and benefits) as Titania's lover promptly; yet at first he tells the queen that she 'should have little reason' to love him (III.i.135-136). Segismundo, Joseph and Orsames (the male protagonists of my other case studies) all live an unexpected social ascent.

actual (his being 'a pedlar', 'a cardmaker', 'a bear-herd', and 'a tinker') (Ind. II, 16-19).<sup>22</sup> Albeit with a comic attitude, Sly well remembers his quotidian deprived condition, the same that probably afflicts a great number of the contemporary spectators: he has never drunk 'sack' in his life, he has 'no more doublets than backs, no more stockings than legs, nor no more shoes than feet' (Ind. II, 6-9). Refuting the verity of what Sly states, the Lord invites him to 'banish [...] these abject lowly dreams' and to abandon his 'strange lunacy' (Ind. II, 27-30). The Lord lists a series of pleasant activities (hearing music, sleeping on a couch 'softer and sweeter' than Semiramis' 'lustful bed', riding, going hawking or hunting) that Sly could take advantage of: predictably, the nobleman's eloquence erases Sly's certainties about his *actual* identity and makes him gradually accept the pretence (Ind. II, 33-44).<sup>23</sup>

The tinker interrogates the reality/dream relationship in a way that recalls Segismundo's considerations in *Life is a Dream*:

Am I a lord, and have I such a lady? / Or do I dream? Or have I dreamed till now? / I do not sleep: I see, I hear, I speak, / I smell sweet savours and I feel soft things. / Upon my life, I am a lord indeed, / and not a tinker nor Christopher Sly. (Ind. II, 66-71)

Sly's reasoning might be considered phenomenological: he discards his previous beliefs and begins to think anew by looking at what shows itself (i.e. at what he can *now* see, hear, smell, and touch). Initially Sly asks about his own (financial and civic) state (is he rich and married?) and about his own psychosomatic condition (is he dreaming or has he just woken up?). Subsequently, he affirms what appears obvious (the fact that he is *not* sleeping) as if to prove to himself the *realness* of what he feels: how could he employ all his senses if he were asleep? As seen in chapter 1, for early modern dream theorists sensory perceptions are invalidated when one dreams: Sly seems to fall back on this belief to demonstrate his *actual* participation in the on-stage events. Yet those same theories claim that the dreaming imagination could create the impression of vivid and lifelike sensations and thus delude the dreamer. Sly's argument may not be enough to exclude the possibility that he is dreaming: the bustle of his five senses insinuates reality, but does not completely remove the dream. At times dreams

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<sup>22</sup> In order to prove his identity, Sly tells the servants to ask 'Marian Hacket, the fat ale-wife of Wincot, if she know me not' (Ind. II, 19-20). The rich pictures in the house portray erotic scenes taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and perhaps hint at the transformation that invests both Sly and Katherina. See for instance what the second servingman tells Sly: 'We will fetch thee straight / Adonis painted by a running brook, and Cytherea all in sedges hid' (Ind. II, 47-49).

<sup>23</sup> The mention of hawking maybe foresees the taming strategy Petruchio will employ in the play proper.

are as meaty as reality, and the Katherina plot, if we see it as Sly's dream, confirms this point.

Chronological confusion characterises Sly's *dreams*: he is unsure whether his *dream* of being a poor tinker has already ended or his *dream* of wealth has just begun. The servants around him further bewilder the spatio-temporal layers of the events:

SECOND SERVINGMAN: These fifteen years you have been in a dream, / or *when you waked, so waked as if you slept*. [...]

FIRST SERVINGMAN: Yet would you say ye were beaten out of door, / and rail upon the hostess of the house, [...]

THIRD SERVINGMAN: Why, sir, you know no house, nor no such maid, / [...] which never were nor no man ever saw. (Ind. II, 77-94, emphasis added)

According to the second servant, being awake, sleeping or dreaming resemble each other. The servant claims that every time he woke up Sly would behave exactly as *if* he were dreaming: the problem of determining where the dream ends and reality starts theoretically implies that one cannot secure any steady viewpoint. The first servant moves events that have happened *for real* (at least in the dramatic dimension) to the dream world: he nullifies the evidence that Sly used to declare he was just a tinker. The servant's words relocate the alehouse and the hostess within Sly's (bogus) long dream: as a result, the beggar is left with no proof to demonstrate their existence. Although the last servant insists that nobody has ever seen the maid and the alehouse and that they have never been at all, the spectators could object to his statement: in fact, the audience *actually* saw Sly arguing with the hostess before the house.

As Theseus does in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the Lord welcomes the performance of a play in his residence and reflects on its purpose: the performance is 'some sport' with which to make fun of Sly; the Lord also orders his page Bartholomew to play the part of Sly's wife (Ind. I, 89).<sup>24</sup> The Lord unmasks the mechanisms of induced fiction which the real audience is observing in the theatre: some of the actors in the Induction perform the part of servants who perform before Sly to help the Lord fool him; other actors play the role of professional players ready to entertain the on-stage (*fictive*) audience (the people in the Lord's house) and the off-stage (authentic) audience. At once actors and spectators, characters such as the page and the servants relate to the sense of sight passively and actively. Together with the Lord, the servants

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<sup>24</sup> Imagining, in a long speech, how the page should play Sly's wife, the Lord may remind the audience that on-stage male actors 'well usurp the grace, / voice, gait, and action' of real women (Ind. I, 128-129). As Marianne Novy reasons in *Love's Argument*, the boy-actor convention reminds one that the femininity on stage is always somehow counterfeit: the despotic Katherina of the inner plot is more a fictional construct than a 'naturally' unruly woman (Novy 1984:192-193).

observe Sly's response to a dreamlike world; Sly, in contrast, is an unconscious player inside their camouflaged performance. All the characters of the Induction start watching the opening of 'a pleasant comedy'. At the same time, they are watched by the actual theatregoers, who are soon to be entertained by a quadruple *illusion*: the Induction itself, the joke against Sly, the performance in the Lord's house and the main taming plot (or, perhaps, Sly's dream) (Ind. II, 127). The fact that these four very *phenomenal* fictions look and feel like reality possibly indicates that reality itself is but a fabrication.

When the 'pleasant comedy' begins in the Lord's house, Sly and his retinue start watching it from the upper stage. The presenters (the characters within the Induction) briefly stop the internal performance at the close of its first scene, once the main problem of the inner plot (to find a husband for Katherina) has been set.<sup>25</sup> The presenters penetrate the inner play when one of the servants reveals that Sly is nodding and does not seem to be interested in the performance below. The beggar's last words ('would 'twere done!') corroborate the supposition that Sly is about to fall asleep and, maybe, to carry on the rest of the plot within his dreaming imagination (I.i.251-252). When a play featuring Petruchio starts afterwards, the off-stage viewers might consider it as the continuation of the one that started before; alternatively, realising that Sly has fallen asleep right after talking about that first scene, the spectators may regard what they *now* see as either a new play or Sly's *dream*.

To conclude, within the Induction pretence feels like reality and reality itself is but a fiction enforced by a socially dominant male character, the Lord. Thelma Nelson Greenfield has proposed that Sly is 'the unimaginative subject in a test of the power of imagination' and that he accepts his altered status because he is unable to envision another possibility (for instance, a trick devised by the Lord) (Greenfield 1954:42). In contrast, this section has argued that through the Sly experiment the Lord publicly unveils his (almost almighty) influence. More than creative, the Lord's power is ideological: it leaves no chance to Sly but playing the role the Lord assigned to him. Rather than simply enclosing the core action, the Induction seems to be soaked up by it: as a result, the audience might be unsure about what includes and what is included, about what is *reality* and what is *dream/fiction*. Perhaps the viewer feels like Sly when he asks himself: 'Do I dream? Or have I dreamed till now?' (Ind. II, 66-67).

## **II.2: Framing the *dream*: the first act of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.**

In *The Taming of the Shrew* the Induction brings in the *factual* circumstances (the Lord's house and his trick against Sly) that set in motion the inner play. The first act of

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<sup>25</sup> To be successful in their courting of Bianca, Gremio says to Hortensio that they need a man who can 'woo her [Katherina], wed her, and bed her, and rid the house of her' (I.i.141-142).

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* with its portrayal of the trouble at Theseus' court has a similar function: it constitutes a sort of case that forestalls and then encloses the events in the woods. Unlike in *The Taming of the Shrew*, the core action of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is not explicitly introduced as a performance; however, Oberon and Robin may be seen as the internal directors and spectators of the lovers', Bottom's and Titania's farcical incidents. Certainly one cannot expect to describe the attitude every viewer may have toward the performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; yet one can imagine that the word 'dream' of the title would somehow shape the reception of this work.<sup>26</sup> Chapter 1 has detailed the ambivalent connotation of dreams in early modern culture: dreams are either dismissed as 'insignificant or irrational fantasies' or appreciated as predictive visions of great import (P. Holland 1994:6). Accordingly, the spectator watching a play called 'dream' might have difficulties in categorizing its events in a clear-cut way. The various meta-theatrical moments of the action could remind the audience of the fictitious nature of the on-stage events *and* of reality: the chaotic play is a *dream* that mirrors life's own fictitiousness.<sup>27</sup>

The first act at once introduces an oneiric-like atmosphere and concrete socio-political questions that will be addressed within the forest. Two mythological characters, Theseus and Hippolyta, enter the stage and picture both the nocturnal milieu that will prevail in the woods and the marital theme of the play. The Duke thinks that the 'old moon' is somehow procrastinating the day of his wedding; in contrast, Hippolyta presents the moon as a sort of spectator of their nuptial night ('the moon [...] shall behold the night of our solemnities'); she connects dream to brevity of time: 'four nights will quickly dream away the time' and the on-stage action will be 'short as any dream' (I.i.4, 9-11 and 8).<sup>28</sup> In spite of the surreal milieu of 'antique fables' that Theseus and

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<sup>26</sup> In her essay 'Our Nightly Madness' Greenfield writes that 'the title implicates the audience from the start'; for her the fairies, *visible only* to the audience and to Bottom, create 'an hallucinatory aura' from the second act till the end of the performance (Greenfield 1998:338).

<sup>27</sup> As Kathryn Lynch clarifies, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Shakespeare reviews as well as parodies the medieval tradition of the dream vision: he names his play 'a dream', but locates it within the world of actual experience. In the high Middle Ages the philosophical dream frequently is an objective and authoritative instrument allowing the artist to reach the abstract (and divine) truth beyond the concrete world. In contrast, in the later Middle Ages Chaucer and other artists express 'a lack of confidence' in the power of dream visions (and of the poet's imagination) to reach this truth (Lynch 1999:102). Though Shakespeare seems to fashion his dramatic dream through Chaucer's ironic tone, I would argue that he also trusts his dreamlike creation to convey something of crucial significance.

<sup>28</sup> The moon (an attribute of Diana and, hence, a symbol of chastity) exemplifies the theme of 'virginity as power' and possibly refers to Elizabeth I's (problematical) status as 'unmarried female ruler' (Patterson 1996:175). The 'old' moon may allude to Elizabeth's advanced age and to her nation's desire for a 'masculine succession' bringing 'marriage to the court' (R. Wilson 1996:208). As Selene, the moon has a fertilizing effect on both men and land; as Hecates or Persephones, it is seen as revengeful and presides over necromancy. A dreamlike cadence appears to beat the temporal dimension of the play that, with its seven scenes, is

Hippolyta may entail, their relationship is the first instance of the play's preoccupation with quotidian marital customs (V.i.3). The Duke, in fact, has 'wooded' the Amazon with his sword and has 'won' her love 'doing [her] injuries'; Hippolyta's suggestion that the four days and nights before their wedding will 'quickly dream away' might convey her fear and (inner) rejection of Theseus as future husband (I.i.16-17 and I.i.8). The Amazonian Queen, whom Titania in act 2 depicts as 'bouncing' and as a 'warrior', embodies a 'matriarchal society' that has been brutally defeated when the play begins (II.i.70-71 and Hawkes 1996:224). Amazons upset 'patriarchal logic' by being physically and sexually belligerent; their reversal of traditional gender positions threatens the patriarchy (epitomised by Theseus and Egeus) and must be repressed (Schwarz 1997:158).<sup>29</sup>



FIGURE 4: Pieter Paul Rubens, *The Battle of the Amazons*, c. 1615.

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Shakespeare's shortest (P. Holland 1994:103). Yet this play also insists on 'repetition' and keeps procrastinating its end: the artisans' performance is followed by a Bergomask dance, by the exit of the Athenian court, by the fairies' entrance and by Puck's epilogue (Hawkes 1996:228).

<sup>29</sup> Cleomena in Behn's *The Young King* (analysed in chapter 6) is portrayed as an Amazon and clearly menaces male socio-political ambitions. Shirley Nelson Garner maintains that Theseus' conquest of the 'androgynous' and 'powerful' Hippolyta 'fulfils his need for the exclusive love of a woman while gratifying his homoerotic desires' (Garner 1996:90).

Whereas Hippolyta does not talk much during this first scene, Hermia is atypically 'bold': in order to 'plead [her] thoughts', she does without the 'modesty' normally recommended to women (I.i.59-61). Theseus voices the patriarchal ideology of the Athenian (and Elizabethan) community: god-like fathers ('to you your father should be as a god') mould their daughters as 'a form in wax' and imprint (or 'disfigure') their figures; should Hermia persist in disobeying her father, she will have either to die or live the 'barren' life of a nun (I.i.47-51 and 72).<sup>30</sup> The cruel inconsistency of the patriarchal system is plain when Lysander says that Demetrius has Hermia's father's 'love' and, hence, had better 'marry him' (I.i.93-94).<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, this opening scene begins to expose the Petrarchan stereotype of male enslavement to a disdainful woman as false: before falling in love with Hermia, Demetrius 'hailed down oaths' that he would love Helena forever (I.i.243). Yet his promises and feelings 'did melt' and, paradoxically, 'the more' Helena loves him, 'the more he hateth' her (I.i.245 and 199).

In opposition to the three female figures who are suffering because of patriarchal codes, Theseus, Egeus and Demetrius (and Lysander in the woods) act for those codes. Egeus wants to 'estate' his property 'right' of Hermia unto Demetrius; in addition, he underscores that the monarch's (Theseus') absolute authority must be followed 'with duty and desire' (I.i.97-98 and 127).<sup>32</sup> Theseus embodies the (male) habit of infidelity (like Demetrius and, in the forest, Lysander) as well as of violent behaviour. At the beginning of the second act, the spectators are informed that Theseus 'ravished' Perigouna, left Ariadne for Aegles and the Amazon Antiopa for Phaedra; also, Titania reveals that Hippolyta is Oberon's 'mistress', whereas Oberon discloses that the Fairy Queen loves Theseus (II.i.78 and 71). This scenario of masculine despotism, meanness and unfaithfulness is amplified within the forest *dream*, where Lysander and Demetrius repudiate Hermia for Helena and Oberon (a male ruler like Theseus) punishes Titania for her defiant behaviour. The 'debate' between the King and the

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<sup>30</sup> Egeus may 'disfigure' Hermia as he likes; similarly, Grumio says that Petruchio will 'throw a figure' in Katherina's face and 'so disfigure her with it, that she shall have no more eyes to see' (I.ii.112-114). Inside the dream frame of both plays, male figures deform the *viewpoint* of dangerously unruly females.

<sup>31</sup> Jonathan Hall highlights that Lysander's joke about the 'love' between Egeus and Demetrius briefly exposes 'the normal order [...] as monstrous' (Hall 1995:100). The 'widow aunt' who lives 'seven leagues' from Athens, Hall explains, represents a (potential) threat to Theseus' (or Elizabeth's) central control of marital alliances (i.e. alliances of blood and property) (I.i.157-159 and Hall 1995:101). Granting Lysander the moral and financial power to marry Hermia, the aunt may appropriate (Theseus' and Elizabeth's) 'patriarchal prerogative to oversee the exchange of women' (Tennenhouse 1986:27).

<sup>32</sup> As Elliot Krieger observes, Athenian law 'subordinates human qualities and subjective judgements to the abstract systems of hierarchy and possession' inside the family (Egeus) and the state (Theseus) (Krieger 1996:39). Hermia's refusal to obey the law sends us 'off into the forest', where the social situation is 'metaphorically repeated': also Oberon's rule, as Theseus', is temporarily troubled by the feminine (Bamber 1982:29).

Queen of Fairies sprang from Oberon's desire for Titania's 'attendant', the changeling boy, and caused a 'progeny of evils' in the natural world (II.i.116, 21 and 115).<sup>33</sup> The Oberon/Titania conflict in the fairy world mirrors the hostility between Theseus and Hippolyta in Athens: since the Indian boy is the son of one of Titania's votaresses, Oberon's final attainment of the boy will break the Queen's exclusive bond with her all-female order. Likewise, the obligation to marry Theseus forces Hippolyta to leave the matriarchal and non-conformist Amazonian community. Furthermore, the reconciliation of Oberon and Titania, together with the Theseus/Hippolyta nuptials, is meant to restore harmony in nature and between rival 'nations': as Krieger points out, 'the state permeates and controls nature' and its rule *looks* natural and indisputable (Krieger 1996:55).

Both the central action of *The Taming of the Shrew* (the Katherina plot) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (the events in the wood) could be considered as, respectively, Sly's and Theseus' dream (or, perhaps, Hippolyta's nightmare). James Calderwood has cautiously put forward the idea that the action in the forest may be Theseus' dream:

perhaps he [Theseus] dreams about his plight, or rather has a nightmare about it. [...] since Hippolyta's body *is* every bit as visible in Titania's as Theseus' is in Oberon's, is she not dreaming too? [...] Hence what happens to Titania is as much Hippolyta's nightmare-dream as it is Theseus'; and as a result affairs in fairyland must be interpreted from two perspectives. (Calderwood 1991:414)

Calderwood reasons that the early modern techniques of anamorphism and role-doubling may validate an interpretation of the play's chief events as the dream of one of the characters who appear in the first act. As mentioned in chapter 2, early modern anamorphism – or the 'curious perspective', as Ernest B. Gilman calls it – begins as a painting practice and subsequently also becomes a literary and theatrical device able to create 'visual complexity through its ability to distort, reflect, conceal, and superimpose images' (Gilman 1978:66). The curious perspective makes the viewer/spectator realise that he/she 'is not longer able to see the world unequivocally'; in order to comprehend the anamorphic work of art fully, the onlookers must watch it from various viewpoints (Gilman 1978:66). The use of doubling, common in Elizabethan performance, is one of the practical ways to achieve anamorphism on stage. Thanks to this expedient, the actors playing Theseus and Hippolyta in the first act could correspondingly interpret Oberon and Titania in the wood.

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<sup>33</sup> The years 1595-96 saw 'bad weather and bad harvests' in England, a fact that may be echoed by the natural disorders Titania describes (Patterson 1996:176)

In conformity with early modern dream theories, one's daily concerns may surface within the dream. The Duke's preoccupation about his sexual dominance might give life to the forest *dream*: Hermia's insurgence against Egeus represents a bad example for Hippolyta, a woman who was already leading an irregular existence before being 'won' by Theseus.<sup>34</sup> Theseus' anxiety about his future wife's behaviour could therefore be resolved through the forest *dream*, in which Oberon (or Theseus) chastises a defiant Titania (or Hippolyta).<sup>35</sup> Whether or not the forest incidents are Theseus' dream, they will be mostly received as an unimportant vision; nevertheless, this *dream* materialises and then rapidly expunges sexual conflicts that mirror those present within the Athenian community.

As a last point, in *The Taming of the Shrew* the Induction and another *actual* performance intermingle, as some characters of the former briefly appear in the latter. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the artisans' initial preparation of the Pyramus and Thisbe performance inhabits the second scene of the first, framing act. As the Induction and the play-within-the-play in *The Shrew* begin to explore a similar problem (male sexual desire collides with female denial), so the first and the second scene of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* bring in the (typically comic) subject of parental opposition to young lovers.<sup>36</sup> In addition, the presence of commoners in both comedies significantly broadens the on-stage social spectrum.<sup>37</sup> The beggar Sly enters the Lord's house and in it is the protagonist of an unexpected social ascent. The mechanicals will also be admitted into the Duke's court to perform their 'lamentable comedy'; one of them, the weaver Bottom, will like Sly change his degree (and actual shape) and live a dreamlike yet very tangible experience (I.ii.11). Why is there so much emphasis on theatre-making processes in a play explicitly associated with the dream? Lynch has argued that the dream framework of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* questions 'categories of experience' that disregard 'the truly visionary and transformative' (Lynch 1999:100).

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<sup>34</sup> Calderwood writes that throughout the course of the action the spectator is unsure whether Hippolyta is *really* submissive or not (Calderwood 1991:412-413). Orgel stresses the Elizabethans' obsession with cuckoldry and observes that 'we tend to ignore how one-sided the triumph represented in the classic nuptial was, a victory for the husband with the bride as the prize' (Orgel 2003:87).

<sup>35</sup> Orgel points out that in the wood Oberon (the powerful male) constructs Titania's (a rebellious woman's) libido as a way of castigating and restraining her (Orgel 2003:92).

<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Hermia and Lysander plot a way to evade Egeus' will, while Bottom and his mates articulate the topic of the 'lamentable comedy' they will rehearse: Pyramus is the lover who 'kills himself [...] for love', Thisbe is 'the lady that Pyramus must love' (I.ii.11, 20 and 40).

<sup>37</sup> As Richard Wilson explains, during the London Midsummer season of 1595 there occurred a dozen riots provoked by food scarcity; Quince's reading of the artisans' names in I.ii might sound like 'the indictment of a conspiracy trial' (R. Wilson 1996:211). *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seems to exorcise this threat of violence within the London community by granting the commoners recognition and economic support (as Snug says, they would like to be 'made men') (IV.ii.17).

However, I would like to stress that the dream frame and the *dream* in the woods possess a phenomenal tangibility and address issues which, rather than 'visionary', are socio-politically crucial. The forest *dream* and the artisans' performance, so plainly brought together in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, are 'shadows' (V.i.414). All the same, they intensely re-embodiment the tensions present within the Athenian *reality* and show that the 'natural' gender and rank hierarchies inside that *reality* are but a cultural construction.

### **III: The phenomenology of the on-stage dream.**

In this third section I look at the sensory ways through which *actual* dreams and dreamlike events occur within *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The palpable dreams or dreamlike episodes *look* and *feel real* and, accordingly, portray a *reality* which *seems* as illogical as a dream.<sup>38</sup>

#### **III.1: The tangible dreamlike occurrences of *The Taming of the Shrew*.**

Substantial happenings manufacture a dreamlike environment especially in the third and fourth acts of *The Taming of the Shrew*. A few critics have hypothesised that these happenings are actually Sly's dream and begin when he appears to fall asleep at the end of I.i.<sup>39</sup> In this section I draw attention to the bizarre sight and hearing Katherina is exposed to in the third and fourth acts: her bodily perceptions are real, yet they totally deny the Petruchio she has previously seen and heard. Katherina's physical awareness may ensure that she is not dreaming, yet Petruchio comes into sight and hearing as a *dream* that did not exist before. Consequently, my contention is that Katherina and the spectators 'cannot choose' whether the new, very *perceptible* Petruchio is a *dream* or *reality* (Ind. I, 39).

Inside the Lord's house, Sly *appears* to have an apparently flawless 'wife' ('my lord and husband, / I am your wife in all obedience') (Ind. II, 104-105). However, the 'wife' easily manages to elude Sly's orders ('undress you and come now to bed') and, as the audience knows, the consummation Sly desires will never take place: in fact, she is 'a

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<sup>38</sup> As Greenfield points out, the dreams of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are 'valid verbal, visual, and emotional constructs' and are 'autonomous and significantly experiential in themselves' (Greenfield 1998:333).

<sup>39</sup> Jayne believes that Sly, having observed Katherina's behaviour in the first scene and having an indisposed 'wife', 'dreams that he himself volunteers to become the suitor for Katherina, under the name of Petruchio' (Jayne 1966:48). J. Dennis Huston does not reject the idea that Petruchio is 'a wish-fulfilling self dreamed into existence' by Sly, who himself wants to discipline his supposed wife (Huston 1981:63). Also Garber argues that the Induction's importance lies in the fact that 'it purports to tell a dream' and thus guarantees 'a lightness of tone' to the events of the play proper (Garber 1974:28).

he in drag disguise' (Ind. II, 115) (Fineman 2001:142).<sup>40</sup> Having to postpone the needs of 'the flesh and the blood' is the only inconvenience Sly faces within the Lord's house (Ind. II, 125). Soon after, he begins to watch a play dealing with shrew-taming, probably falls asleep, and perhaps dreams of domesticating his own disobedient 'wife': his 'undigested' thought of sexual gratification may resurface within the Katherina story (or dream) (Nashe 1594:153).<sup>41</sup>

What does Sly allegedly see in his dream? As a spectator of the inner play's opening, Sly witnessed Katherina's public mortification ('is it your will / to make a stale of me amongst these mates?'); his supposed dream re-materialises a similar sight during the wedding ceremony (I.i.58). As Schneider notices, in *The Taming of the Shrew* 'the representation of marriage rituals suggests that they may be associated with shaming rituals' (Schneider 2002:241). In fact, Katherina believes that Petruchio 'never means to wed where he hath wooed' and that the world will 'point' at her and laugh at this 'mockery' (III.ii.17-18 and III.ii.4). Tranio/Lucentio reassures her by presenting an image of Petruchio as *twofold*: 'Though he be blunt, I know him passing wise; / though he be merry, yet withal he's honest' (III.ii.24-25). The alleged dream, hence, portrays its characters as difficult to interpret: 'everyone is 'really' someone else' and making choices about them is hazardous (Freedman 1991:122-123, emphasis original).

Petruchio's arrival at the wedding is anticipated by Biondello's description of him. The detailed narration allows the audience to pre-visualize Petruchio, with his 'new hat', 'old jerkin', 'old breeches', 'boots [...] one buckled, another laced', and 'rusty sword' (III.ii.43-46).<sup>42</sup> The thickness of this telling embodies on stage another far-fetched image of Petruchio; Biondello's final words confirm Petruchio's paradoxical quality and the impossibility of pinning him down: 'A horse and a man / is more than one, / and yet not many' (III.ii.81-83). As soon as Petruchio shows himself in the flesh, he reproaches the other characters' way of looking at him: 'Gentles, methinks you frown, / [...] as if they saw some wondrous monument, / some comet, or unusual prodigy?' (III.ii.92-95). The other characters are indeed watching something 'unusual', but Petruchio tries to correct

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<sup>40</sup> As Karen Newman suggests, the elusiveness of the actor's sexuality (the fact that Sly's wife and Katherina are played by boys) and the homoeroticism that it causes (Sly and Petruchio desire a transvestite boy) subvert 'the play's patriarchal master narrative by exposing it as neither natural nor divinely ordained, but culturally constructed' (Newman 2001:161).

<sup>41</sup> Jayne suggests that the audience should keep seeing two Slys on stage: one who sleeps on the upper stage and another who performs Petruchio's part on the lower stage. Role-doubling may be used in the inner play: for instance, the Lord of the Induction could play Petruchio's servant Grumio in the *dream*. This way, a set of double and triple identities would interconnect the *real* life in the Lord's house and the play/dream (Jayne 1966:47-50).

<sup>42</sup> Petruchio's horse and lackey are illustrated equally well: around twenty lines depict the animal's saddle, stirrups, and numerous diseases, and the footman's poor clothes, which make him look like a dreamlike 'monster' (III.ii.67).

their point of view. Tranio seems to sense the value of the optical lesson: 'He [Petruccio] hath some meaning in his mad attire' (III.ii.123).<sup>43</sup>

What an allegedly sleeping Sly hears next is Gremio's relating of the wedding ceremony: Petruccio has performed Katherina's part by being 'a devil, a very fiend' (III.ii.154). Upsetting traditional etiquette, Petruccio has sworn in the church, beaten the priest, and kissed his bride with 'a clamorous smack'; in Gremio's words, 'such a mad marriage never was before' (III.ii.177 and 181). Furthermore, Petruccio hastens towards home with Katherina without attending the banquet and, to oppose her and the other guests' complaints, plays the role of a knight defending his lady: 'and here she stands, touch her whoever dare!' (III.ii.235). Momentarily being somebody he *is not* (or *is he?*), Petruccio enforces his will: though Katherina tries not to give in to his orders ('I see a woman may be made a fool / if she had not a spirit to resist'), Petruccio expresses and implements the ideology behind heterosexual marriage in a patriarchal community ('I will be master of what is mine own') (III.ii.222-223 and 231). Gremio warns the other characters saying that 'Petruccio is Kated' and perhaps they and the audience wonder whether it is *really* so (III.ii.247).<sup>44</sup>

Which Petruccio is *real*, the one who previously *seemed* to abide by Paduan manners, or the one who ridicules as well as heightens them? One may have the impression that two disagreeing images of Petruccio have surfaced on stage; however, I think that the (plausible) dreamlike frame simply makes more tangible and possibly censures the accepted beliefs and behaviours of Paduan society. On the one hand, Petruccio is hyper-divulging the economic stakes and male-centred condition of his (and other men's) conjugal agreement ('she is my goods, my chattels, [...] my any thing') (III.ii.232-234). On the other, Petruccio is mocking the opulence and superficiality that govern Padua: for instance, Baptista says that 'there wants no junkets at the feast' and, unconcerned about Katherina's fate, asks Lucentio (Tranio) and Bianca to take the groom's and the bride's place (III.ii.250).

According to Huston, the shrew's journey to and confinement into Petruccio's house remind one of 'the fluid actions of dreams – where the self is strangely powerless to repel violence; the object world of food and clothes keeps slipping into insubstantiality; persons from the outside world [...] appear suddenly and are appropriated for particularly limited uses; and time passes illogically and indeterminately' (Huston 1981:87). In terms of sensory perceptions, Katherina's (and the spectators') sight and

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<sup>43</sup> Jayne argues that the theme of dress (with its oneiric juxtaposition between seeming and being) further connects Sly and Petruccio. Sly wears rags when he sleeps in front of the alehouse and rich clothes when he wakes up in the Lord's house (Jayne 1966:52).

<sup>44</sup> Paradoxically, as Joel Fineman has observed, Petruccio is 'never so patriarchal as when he speaks the language of woman' (i.e. Katherina's language) (Fineman 2001:129).

hearing are instructed about what is proper to do and what is not; correctness or incorrectness exclusively depend on Petruchio's interpretation of things. Whereas in public places Petruchio has hyper-reflected Paduan (despicable) conducts, in the private space of his house (a patriarchal microcosm) he serves as a mirror to Katherina. He is the surface upon which she sees her own nonconformist self reflected; as one of the servants comments, 'he kills her in her own humour' (IV.i.168).<sup>45</sup> The sight of a 'Kated Petruchio', perhaps, will prompt Katherina to modify her unorthodoxly female self by making it less overtly visible.<sup>46</sup>

In Petruchio's house Katherina's and the spectators' hearing is especially stimulated. Before he reports how Petruchio and Katherina fell off their horses, Grumio says to Curtis: 'lend thine ear'; when Curtis prepares himself to do so, Grumio cuffs him, and the other exclaims: 'this 'tis *to feel* a tale, not to hear a tale' (IV.i.52-55, emphasis added). With his violent act, Grumio concretely makes Curtis attentive; possibly, he also arouses the spectators' perceptions and invites them to *feel* deeply what has happened to Katherina. Indeed, Grumio repeatedly spurs their ears: 'thou shouldst have *heard* how her horse fell, [...] thou shouldst have *heard* in how miry a place' (IV.i.64-66, emphasis added).<sup>47</sup> Reflecting on auditory phenomena, Don Ihde writes that sound is "spatially rich' in its fluid ability to flood and intrude itself upon [one's] consciousness' (Ihde 1973:30, emphasis original). He points out that speech is part of sound and argues that 'spoken and heard language is the enticer of visual imagery' (Ihde 1973:32). Accordingly, Grumio's recounting might break into the spectator's mind and almost force him/her to imagine the unseen events; the heard-of incidents perhaps appear more dreamlike (have they happened *for real*, and *how?*) and belong to the audience's own imagination more fully.

As discussed in chapter 2, early modern culture connects hearing to notions of obligation, penetrability and metamorphosis. The ear is understood as 'a feminized perceptual organ'; hearing is seen as 'an opening up of the self', as a sort of 'receptivity and radical vulnerability' (Folkerth 2002:10). During their first night in the house Petruchio preaches a 'sermon of continency' to Katherina (and the audience) (IV.i.170).

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<sup>45</sup> After his arrival, Petruchio brutally scolds and insults his servants, kicks one of them, and refuses the meal they give him. Jayne argues that the recurring presence of physical and psychological violence in the inner plot validates the thesis of the dream play: Sly's sleeping mind, uncontrolled by social conventions and fears, may thus express his desire to punish the women who do not obey his will (Jayne 1966:51-52).

<sup>46</sup> Freedman remarks that, by watching Petruchio, Katherina learns 'to be a spectator to herself as an actor' (Freedman 1991:23). Therefore, Katherina is at once inside and outside of the play world and at the end of the performance she may – or may not – pretend to be tamed.

<sup>47</sup> Grumio's use of synaesthesia (he invites the audience to hear events that are mainly visual) recalls Bottom's account of his dreamlike experience in the forest: 'The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen...' (IV.i.207-208).

The deeply phenomenal experience of Katherina (and the theatregoers) in the house is, perhaps contradictorily, presented as a senseless dream: while Petruchio 'rails, and swears, and rates', she 'knows not which way to stand, to look, to speak, / and sits as *one new risen from a dream*' (IV.i.171-173, emphasis added). The importance given to Katherina's bodily (auditory in particular) perceptions within what *looks like* a dream might underline her defencelessness against Petruchio's verbal attacks; it may imply that she is gradually turning into a 'proper' wife who unconditionally obeys her husband. In fact, the remaining episodes in Petruchio's house intend to instruct Katherina in humbleness and frugality. Whereas Paduan society is a 'mere show without substance' (a community where appearances and money count more than everything else), in his house Petruchio preaches different values (Freedman 1991:143).<sup>48</sup> He obliges Katherina to fast, does not let her sleep, and does not buy the cap and gown made for her, because the 'honest mean habiliments' they have suffice (IV.iii.167).

Within the house, the spectators look at and listen to a new Petruchio, a man completely different from the one who, in the first two acts, only seemed to appreciate 'gold's effect' (I.ii.92). Katherina's and the audience's response to Petruchio's folly (or wisdom?) recalls Sly's reaction in the Lord's house: 'Do I dream? Or have I dreamed till now?'<sup>49</sup> How has the materialistic Petruchio of the first two acts turned into a sort of moralistic philosopher? Have we just dreamt of what we saw before, or are we dreaming *right now*? Katherina and the audience are watching and hearing a metamorphosed Petruchio; their senses (as Sly's did in the Induction) assure them that this cannot *simply* be a dream. Or can it? The paradox of a dream as sensory as reality and of a reality as absurd as a dream cannot be answered with certainty.<sup>50</sup> The dramatic embodiment of (supposed) dreams could make the spectators concretely perceive that life *may be* a dream (or a performance). At the same time, it entraps them in a Chinese box of 'impossible alternatives': when has the dream begun, and is it ever going to end? (Freedman 1991:122).

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<sup>48</sup> See for instance what Tranio/Lucentio tells Vincentio, who is angry seeing that his servant is dressed as his son: 'Sir, you seem a sober ancient gentleman by your habit, but your words show you a madman' (V.i.64-65).

<sup>49</sup> I believe Curtis' words put forward the similarity between Sly and Katherina, rather than between him and Petruchio: both the tinker and the shrew are subjugated to a powerful male who directs the part they play in the world. They risk becoming, as Katherina says, 'a puppet' manipulated at will (IV.iii.103).

<sup>50</sup> Paradoxical is also the nature of Petruchio's taming method, as he himself puts it: he makes his wife believe that 'all is done in reverent care of her' and states that his strategy is 'a way to kill a wife with kindness' (IV.i.191 and 195).

### III.2: The dreaming of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Numerous characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* fall asleep (and at times dream, literally or metaphorically) on stage; the various oneiric (or oneiric-like) occurrences are intensely sensual and *feel like* reality. With regard to their hearing, as Folkerth emphasises, in the woods allusions to sound serve to 'chart physical and emotional proximity' (Folkerth 2002:96). For instance, in the third act Hermia finds Lysander again thanks to her hearing which 'dark night [...] more quick of apprehension makes'; since in the forest 'the seeing sense' is impaired, her ear leads her towards Lysander's 'sound' (III.ii.177-178 and 179-182). Overall, Hermia and Helena cannot believe what they see and hear in the forest, as it totally contradicts the reality they knew, or thought to know, in Athens. Within the perplexing *dream*, the two young women do not trust their own senses: Helena cannot understand how both Lysander and Demetrius are in love with her, while Hermia cannot make sense of Lysander's betrayal. As this section shows, the characters' sensory experiences within the very phenomenal forest *dream* are puzzling, but not necessarily *false*.

Titania is the first character to fall asleep, lying down while her fairies dance and sing.<sup>51</sup> In their song the fairies list numerous poisonous animals (snakes, hedgehogs, blindworms, spiders), as if to picture the forest with its possible dangers concretely. Whereas they warn these beasts to stay away from their queen, they cannot protect her from Oberon's intention: 'What thou seest when thou dost wake, / do it for thy true love take; / [...] Wake when some vile thing is near' (II.ii.33-40, emphasis added).<sup>52</sup> To be effective, Oberon's castigation of Titania needs the act of sleeping (she is momentarily unconscious and cannot protect herself) and needs to blight her vision. Waking up, Titania will mistake Bottom for her 'true love', i.e. she will incorrectly *look at* him.

While Titania lies asleep on stage – for the rest of the second act and during almost the entire first scene of the third one – Hermia and Lysander enter the forest; the young woman lives the events that precede and probably determine her dream. Lysander wants 'one turf' to 'serve as pillow' for the two of them, but Hermia asks him to 'lie further off, in human modesty' (II.ii.47 and 63). Before falling asleep, she wishes that his love may 'ne'er alter', and he reassures her about his feelings (II.ii.67). Puck's entrance puts an end to Hermia's hopes and helps the audience to envision the place

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<sup>51</sup> Music – 'such as charmeth sleep' – also plays when Titania wakes up from her *dream* of love for Bottom (IV.i.82). Music surrounds the performance's sleeping and waking moments and further blurs the two conditions: the four young finally wake up hearing the sound of wind horns, while Theseus and Egeus 'wonder of their being' *there*, asleep, together (IV.i.130).

<sup>52</sup> As Calderwood remarks, Oberon mentions different animals 'all noted for their ferocity': ounce, cat, bear, pard, and boar (Calderwood 1991:420). Helena will soon compare herself to 'a bear', while Lysander will call Hermia 'vile thing', using Oberon's same words (II.ii.100 and III.ii.260)

where she is sleeping more concretely: 'the dank and dirty ground' (II.ii.81). Scared after Demetrius has left her 'darkling', Helena first manifests her anguish ('I am as ugly as a bear'); afterwards, she is relieved to find Lysander 'on the ground': 'Dead, or asleep? / [...] Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake' (II.ii.92-108).<sup>53</sup> Helena makes Hermia's previous fears come true: Lysander abruptly and cruelly repudiates Hermia's love ('not Hermia but Helena I love. / Who will not change a raven for a dove?') (II.ii.119-120). The magical juice has provoked in Lysander love at first sight for Helena: it has transformed his visual perception of Hermia, who has now become 'a raven'; Lysander bans Hermia from his sight and abandons her in the forest to pursue Helena.<sup>54</sup>

Before falling asleep, Lysander – Hermia's external object of perception, as Aristotle would term him – has imprinted on Hermia's mind the 'problem of his sexual desire', and this impression persists in her dream (P. Holland 1994:13). Hermia has revealed her anxiety about his possible inconstancy, a fear that clearly emerges within her dream.<sup>55</sup> The place where Hermia lies may also be responsible for the visualization of a serpent in her dream: the fairies have mentioned 'spotted snakes with double tongue', and perhaps Helena's reference to 'a bear' and 'a monster' has reached Hermia's ear when she was sleeping (II.ii.9 and 100-103).<sup>56</sup> Bearing in mind Elizabethan dream theory, one can see Hermia's vision as determined by what she lived prior to lying down and notice that her dream will affect her subsequent waking life. If in *The Taming of the Shrew* Sly's problems with women may give birth to the inner dream play, Hermia's worries in *real* life manufacture her dream experience. Furthermore, Hermia's dream works as the engine of the action that follows, as it carries out in imaginative terms what will tangibly take place on stage.

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<sup>53</sup> The Lord and Flute/Thisbe use similar words when they find Sly and Bottom/Pyramus on the ground: 'What's here? One dead, or drunk?' and 'Asleep, my love? / What, dead, my dove?'; Oberon also calls sleep 'death-counterfeiting' (Ind. I, 28; V.i.318-319; III.ii.364). The blurriness of sleeping, dreaming and being dead is a concern present also in *Life Is A Dream*. Continuous is the reference to the eyes as source of love: 'happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies / for she hath blessèd and attractive eyes' (II.ii.96-97). Ironically, the very place where Hermia lies will – momentarily – dispossess her of her fortune, Lysander's love.

<sup>54</sup> In the woods sight technically activates the feeling of love, but both Lysander and Demetrius motivate it in terms of objective reason: Lysander says that he is drawn to Helena by reason, 'the marshal' to his will (II.ii.126).

<sup>55</sup> In his Freudian interpretation of Hermia's dream, Norman Holland underlines the ambiguity of Lysander's name (Lies-under) and the puns on 'lie' he made before sleeping. Lysander's vague behaviour 'might have helped Hermia to split and double her representation of Lysander' in her dream (N. Holland 1980:6).

<sup>56</sup> Nashe describes sleep in a way that evokes Hermia's dream experience in the forest: 'the rest we take in our beds is such another kind of rest as the weary traveller taketh in the cool soft grass in summer, who [...] layeth his fainting head unawares on a loathsome nest of snakes' (Nashe 1594:146).

Immediately after Lysander's exit, the performance offers the audience the chance to see Hermia – an actress and therefore a real person – dreaming. Her dream *feels like reality*:

Help me, Lysander, help me! Do thy best / to pluck this crawling serpent from my breast! / Ay me, for pity. What a dream was here? / Lysander, look how I do quake with fear. / Methought a serpent ate my heart away, / and you sat smiling at his cruel prey. / Lysander – what, removed? / [...] What, out of hearing, gone? No sound, no word? (II.ii.151-158)<sup>57</sup>

Hermia perceives the serpent on her bosom and desperately implores Lysander to remove the repulsive beast from her body. Hermia's imagination, in keeping with the dream theories of the time, reproduces genuine physical sensations and *tangibly* terrifies her. Waking up, Hermia realises that what seemed to be reality was *only* a dream; nonetheless, that same dream assumes right away the contours of reality. Her report stresses the physical impact the dream had on her (she is still trembling 'with fear') and pictures images compatible with the surrounding ambience: double-tongued snakes are perhaps somewhere in the wood, not far from her. Furthermore, the supposedly *unreal* Lysander who unkindly ridicules her dread within the dream will before long materialise in the wood. The fact that Hermia's perception of her dream is very physical seems to contradict what Sly says in *The Taming of the Shrew*. In the Lord's house Sly relies on his senses' activity to determine that he is not dreaming – and indeed, literally speaking, he is not. In contrast, Hermia's acute sensorial sufferance proves that her senses function in her dream as much as in the forest, a fact that blurs the borders between the two worlds. As Hermia could feel the serpent and see Lysander inside her dream, she *now* sees that her lover has left and repeatedly calls his name. Hermia wants to test her sense of hearing and prays Lysander to answer her: but she hears nothing and this phenomenal void makes her almost faint 'with fear' (II.ii.160).

Demetrius is the character who falls asleep next, exhausted after having chased Hermia. He lies down to rest his 'sorrow's heaviness', while Oberon and Puck take advantage of his unconsciousness to 'charm his eyes' (III.ii.84 and 99). The love juice completely alters Demetrius' sight: when he first entered the forest, he could not stand Helena's vision ('I am sick when I do look on thee') (II.i.212). After Oberon's correction, he sees Helena as a 'goddess' and especially praises her eyes ('To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?') (III.ii.137-138). In terms of the dream motif, Demetrius's

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<sup>57</sup> For Artemidorus a snake in a dream signifies 'sickness and an enemy'. If the wife of a dreamer happily conceals a reptile in her bosom, 'she will commit adultery'; if she is afraid of the snake, she 'will grow ill' (*Oneirocritica*: book 2, section 13).

story is particularly significant. Puck will 'crush' a remedial herb 'into Lysander's eye', 'to take from thence all error with his might, / and make his eyeballs roll with wanted sight' (III.ii.366-369). Lysander's sight will thus regress to its previous custom and will again see Hermia as lovable. On the contrary, thanks to the juice Demetrius will go back to the situation he supposedly was in *before* the performance started (his being in love with Helena) and will keep this unnatural condition *forever*.<sup>58</sup> When he encounters Theseus again, Demetrius admits that his love to Hermia 'by some power [...] melted as the snow' and that Helena only is 'the object and the pleasure' of his eye (IV.i.164-169). Knowing that the 'power' he talks of is Oberon's, the audience may wonder whether Demetrius would have re-seen Helena's value spontaneously, with his own eyes. It is not implausible that Demetrius loves Helena again only because Oberon has decided so: his love is a manufactured stance that does not seem to have much to do with 'natural taste' (IV.i.173). Furthermore, the audience has witnessed Demetrius' love for Helena in the forest solely – in a dreamlike environment where things *are* and *are not* what they seem. Demetrius somehow never wakes up from his *dream*: in the Athenian court (where also Hippolyta's love, won through 'injuries', looks enforced rather than instinctive) he will still be under its spell. His love is hence the result of a never-ending dream, a 'fruitless vision' whose consequences will perpetually last in the *real* world (III.ii.371).

The audience sees all four lovers sleeping shortly before the conclusion of their venture in the wood. In order to put the antidote on Lysander's eyes, Oberon orders Puck to 'lead' Demetrius and Lysander 'up and down' (III.ii.397). Since the two young men cannot see that Puck is near, he mocks them by imitating their voices and continuously shifting place. The two Athenians' understanding of the events reaches its lowest point: they uselessly chase Puck's voice, entering and leaving the stage in an attempt to duel with one another. The sense of hearing is here as deceitful as sight; the scene may resemble a dream vision in which the dreamer has strong but illusory physical sensations, perceptions that *do and do not exist*. Fatigued by Puck's tricks, Demetrius and Lysander fall asleep in the wood for the second time. Helena and Hermia, worn out because of the night's madness, do the same immediately after. Before falling asleep, Hermia expresses the psychological and bodily exhaustion with which the forest *dream* has touched them all:

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<sup>58</sup> Holland reports that some critics feel that Demetrius is 'not 'properly' in love with Helena', but argues that 'his love for Helena is, as comedy prescribes, his 'natural taste'' (Holland 1994:66-68). In Holland's opinion, Oberon does not make Demetrius fall in love randomly, he makes him see Helena 'as the Venus of the sky' (III.ii.107).

Never so weary, never so in woe, / bedabbled with the dew, and torn with briers, / I  
can no further crawl, no further go. / My legs can keep no pace with my desires.  
(III.ii.442-445)

The performance thus displays four people who – having lived puzzling and demanding dreamlike events – are *now* asleep on stage. The very fact that they *now* sleep will later on persuade them to conceive of this *real* experience as of a dream. Indeed, as David Young asks in his study of the play: ‘how can we distinguish shadow from substance if they marry, interchange, and partake of each other?’ (Young 1966:158). Hermia’s words might remind the audience of the bodily investment dreams require – perhaps, like Hermia, the spectators have also felt ‘torn with briers’ in their dreams. Her words also confirm the complex likeness of dreams and reality: outside the forest, the night’s folly will be dismissed as dream; inside it, that same idiocy *felt like* (and *actually was*) real life.

Besides the lovers, Titania and Bottom also live an experience that is at once surreal and realistic. The shape-shifter Robin (‘an auditor’ and ‘an actor’ of the artisans’ performance, as well as ‘a horse’, or ‘a hound’, or ‘a hog’...) transforms Bottom (himself the actor who wishes to play all roles) into an ass (III.i.74-75 and 103-104).<sup>59</sup> As in a dream, Bottom is ‘changed’ and ‘translated’, but the dreamlike conversion does not show an unprecedented version of the weaver (III.i.109-113). Rather, the dream makes literal what previously was metaphorical, or, better, makes hyper-visible something which already existed: Bottom’s foolishness becomes truly observable thanks to the ass-head.<sup>60</sup> Abandoned by his mates, Bottom begins to walk ‘up and down’; he sings to let them ‘hear’ that he is not afraid (III.i.116-117).<sup>61</sup> His singing awakes Titania, and her charmed eyes immediately fall in love with him. Titania connects her love to the senses

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<sup>59</sup> For Artemidorus animals that ‘work diligently’ like asses signify ‘workmen and subjects’ (*Oneirocritica*: book 4, section 56). Furthermore, ‘if a man dreams that he has the head of a dog, horse, ass [...] it signifies slavery and misery’; yet this contradicts Bottom’s oneiric experience in the forest (*Oneirocritica*: book 1, section 37). Asses in dreams, as happens within Oberon’s *dream* creation, are ‘auspicious for marriages and partnerships’: they predict that ‘the man’s wife or partner will [...] willingly obey him and be benevolent’ (*Oneirocritica*: book 2, section 12).

<sup>60</sup> According to Garber, metaphor ‘is a condition structurally analogous to the dream state’; in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* the audience’s eyes repeatedly observe ‘the act of metaphor-making’, i.e. the figurative becomes literal (Garber 1974:77). Young sees in the scene two ‘embodied metaphors’: Bottom is an ass and love is blind, as Titania falls in love with him (Young 1966:162). Lynch underscores the remarkable strength of the dreaming imagination: ‘At first glance, of course, Shakespeare’s reading of the imagination seems quite sceptical. [...] this forest world is plunged into confusion at the centre of the play [...] But [...] the dream-world of the play shows imagination’s hilarious and terrifying capacity actually to realize its excesses, as we find in Bottom’s literal metamorphosis’ (Lynch 1999:122). However, I propose that, more than imagination’s, the forest *dream* displays the world-making power of masculine authority.

<sup>61</sup> Describing to Oberon the artisans’ escape, Robin says that they ‘made senseless things begin to do them wrong’ (III.ii.28). The mechanicals’ fear recalls sensations lived in dreams, when (supposedly) inoffensive images cause *real* anxiety.

of sight and hearing ('Mine ear is much enamoured of thy note; / so is mine eye enthralled to thy shape') (III.i.131-132). Her words repeatedly list the delights that will please Bottom's (and perhaps the audience's) sensorial perceptions during the dreamlike spell (in the third act 'jewels', 'pressèd flowers', 'apricots and dewberries', 'honeybags', 'painted butterflies'; in the fourth act 'musk-roses' and 'new nuts') (III.i.149-163 and IV.i.3-35). Importantly, also Titania's love dream is more *real* than unreal: as the Fairy Queen is momentarily in love with a *real* ass-headed man, Hermia and Helena love two 'monsters' who alternately humiliate them in Athens as well as in the woods. Bottom's hyper-visible ass-head exemplifies the young men's unworthiness, while Titania's infatuation reminds one of the two women's obstinacy: 'reason and love keep little company together nowadays' (III.i.136-137).



FIGURE 5: Henry Fuseli, *Titania and Bottom*, c. 1790.

Bottom's dream is a *real* occurrence that looks as implausible as a dream; in addition, Bottom's dream has a culturally-specific importance. In his article 'Shaping Fantasies', Montrose has drawn together Bottom's vision and the dream Simon Forman reported in 1597:

Bottom's dream, like Forman's, is an experience of fleeting intimacy with a powerful female who is at once lover, mother, and queen. The liaison between the Fairy Queen and the assiduous artisan is an outrageous theatrical realization of a personal fantasy that was obviously not Forman's alone. (Montrose 1983:65)

In his dream Forman sees the Queen as 'a little elderly woman', but also imagines that she kisses and loves him (Montrose 1983:62). Likewise, in Bottom's *dream* Titania is a caring mother ('I thy amiable cheeks do coy, / [...] and kiss thy fair large ears', 'Or say, sweet love, what thou desir'st to eat') and a firm lover ('Out of this wood do not desire to go. / Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no') (IV.i.2-4, IV.i.30 and III.i.143-144). The audience fully sees and hears Bottom's dream of love for the Fairy Queen: the on-stage dream is a shared and mutual experience; furthermore, the on-stage dream may both emanate from a community's joint tastes (perhaps from the desire of sleeping with the queen) and re-frame those tastes.<sup>62</sup> As Montrose argues, Bottom's public dream is 'a fantasy of male dependency upon woman', yet it is enclosed by a male fancy of power over woman: Oberon monitors Titania's libido for his own purposes, so that the feelings she momentarily enjoys are not spontaneously hers (Montrose 1983:65).<sup>63</sup> In a similar way, the fact that in reality players – like Bottom – are reliant on the Queen's patronage is presented 'within the imaginative reality of the dramatist's control over a Queen' (Montrose 1983:65).<sup>64</sup>

At the beginning of the fourth act, the spectators again observe Titania's and Bottom's love *dream*: the two are languidly spending their time upon a 'flow'ry bed' (IV.i.1). Bottom seems to realise his body has changed ('methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face'), but, as Holland writes, regards his translation 'as something natural and unworrying' (IV.i.24-25) (P. Holland 1994:72). When they fall asleep, the audience actually sees six sleeping characters on the stage, as the lovers are also sleeping. Once more the performance seems to emphasise the desire to watch people sleeping – Oberon and Robin immediately enter the stage to look at the scene - and

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<sup>62</sup> *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a cultural production showing the processes of cultural production: 'it implies a claim for a dialectic between Shakespeare's profession and his society, a dialectic between the theatre and the world' (Montrose 1983:86). The play is a product of Elizabethan culture, but it also shapes (or re-shapes) the culture from which it originates. The theatrical artifice is but a reflection of the artifice within the society: the artificial powers of lords/fathers/playwrights and the fashioning of women/daughters/plays.

<sup>63</sup> Hall underscores that Oberon castigates Titania's pride via the demonstration of her 'absolute erotic susceptibility': the *dream* exhibits unconfessable fantasies, yet keeps them under Oberon's control (Hall 1995:104).

<sup>64</sup> According to Montrose, Forman's dream shows how with the advent of Protestantism the royal cult of Elizabeth substitutes the cult of the Virgin Mary. Queen Elizabeth is 'part Madonna, part Ephesian Diana' and her body at once represents 'political motherhood' and a sort of 'erotic provocation' (Montrose 1983:64). Forman's dream demonstrates that psychological processes are historically specific: Forman employs the royal cult (itself an appropriation of the domestic domain) as 'the material for his dream work' (Montrose 1983:64).

calls attention to the sleepers' vulnerability.<sup>65</sup> Examining 'this sweet sight', Oberon explains how easily he obtained the changeling child: taking advantage of Titania's dream state ('her dotage'), the King did 'upbraid' her, 'fall out' with her, and 'taunted her' at his pleasure (IV.i.45-56). Ready to 'undo this hateful imperfection of her eyes', Oberon drops the antidote on Titania's eyelids ('See as thou wast wont to see') (IV.i.62). Waking up, the Queen promptly equates her *actual* rendezvous with Bottom to an illusory dream: 'My Oberon, what visions have I seen! / Methought I was enamoured of an ass'; when Oberon shows that Bottom is real, she blames her own sight: 'O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!' (IV.i.75-79). Titania's words confirm the strength sensorial perceptions have in (real or artificial) dreams: she *actually* saw Bottom/the ass and believed herself to be truly in love with him. Titania is the only dreamer in the performance who comprehends that her *dream* was *reality* (Bottom really is in the forest, not far from herself) and perhaps wonders how that dream came true.

Bottom is the last character to exit the forest dreamscape. Upon awakening, he believes his mates left him 'asleep' in the wood and thinks he slept since then (IV.i.201). Unlike the lovers, Bottom does not easily reject the *dream* as fruitless:

I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was – there is no man can tell what. [...] The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream. It shall be called 'Bottom's Dream', because it hath no bottom, [...]  
(IV.i.201-212)

Critics have noticed that Bottom's monologue echoes St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, a passage that refers to 'the wisdom of God' as present 'in a mystery' (Montrose 1998:233).<sup>66</sup> In his article 'A Kingdom of Shadows' Montrose has remarked that the New Testament passage contrasts 'the misconceived and misdirected profane knowledge' of this world's princes with 'the spiritual wisdom' reachable by those who 'humble themselves before a transcendent source of power and love' (Montrose 1998:233). Bottom (a weaver and 'artist-entrepreneur' of modest roots) somehow perceives the mad night's bottomless significance; in contrast, the better educated

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<sup>65</sup> As Freedman underscores, Shakespeare's early comedies utilize 'learned ignorance, trick perspectives, and optical experiments' to answer to a paradoxical 'desire to see how we cannot see ourselves seeing' (Freedman 1991:4). *A Midsummer Night's Dream* frequently enables the spectators to see themselves as dreamers or as audience to themselves as dreamers.

<sup>66</sup> Jeffrey Masten has underscored that in early modern culture the term bottom/fundament (foundament) also relates to foundation, fund, fundamental, and does so not merely in a metaphorical sense (Masten 1997:133). Bottom's words significantly rewrites the evangelical passage: 'the Spirite searcheth all thinges, ye the botome of Goddes secrettes' (I Corinthians 2:9-10 (Geneva version), quoted in Masten 1997:145).

lovers and the powerful Theseus do not seem to do so (Montrose 1998:234).<sup>67</sup> Possibly, the most inconceivable aspect of Bottom's *dream* is the union of a commoner/ass to a queen: in Annabel Patterson's words, an extreme example of 'status inversion and misrule' (Patterson 1996:187). This (temporary) erasure of class boundaries is made possible, I believe, by the dream, an anarchic space which shows the artificiality of allegedly natural social restrictions.<sup>68</sup>

Bottom's *dream* has been 'most rare' and, since 'it hath no bottom', it is difficult to grasp its meaning fully. Suitably, Bottom responds to it as a newly-awaken dreamer: he uses synaesthesia (he links sight with hearing, hearing with sight, touch with taste, and so on) and conveys the phenomenal haziness of the after-dream moments.<sup>69</sup> Bottom's *dream* and the forest events on the whole *appear* to have trafficked beyond the borders of the common world: Theseus regards them as 'more strange than true' (V.i.2). At the same time, as this section has proved, Bottom's, Titania's and the lovers' *dreams* (a combination of words, music, singing, actual bodies, movements, *real* acts as sleeping or dreaming) have happened *in fact* and cannot simply be seen as 'dust we raise by our steps' (Nashe 1594:162).<sup>70</sup>

#### **IV: Meaningless dreams that mean a lot.**

This section maintains that within the oneiric action of the two comedies powerful males easily sculpt a *reality* which suits their own socio-political wishes. The disturbing masculine behaviours, hyper-perceptible inside the dream frame, conveniently *seem* to disappear at the end of the performance and so negate their own imposed character.

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<sup>67</sup> Like Bottom's, Joseph's ascent in *Sometimes Dreams Come True* (analysed in chapter 5) contrasts spiritual and secular supremacy. Thanks to the biblical text, 'the spiritual hierarchy of wisdom and virtue' (embodied by Bottom and by the dramatist) gains political strength against 'the temporal hierarchy of wealth and power' (represented by Theseus in the performance, and by Queen Elizabeth in reality) (Montrose 1998:233). The most likely source for Bottom's transformation into an ass is Lucius Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* (second century A.D.), available to Shakespeare in William Adlington's translation (1566). As Gilman points out, when Lucius is freed from the ass-shape he 'is granted an ineffable vision of the goddess Isis': Bottom's dream seems therefore to reach 'a sacred dimension' (Gilman 1978:153-154).

<sup>68</sup> It is thanks to Bottom that 'the crisis in the natural cycle and the agricultural economy' is brought to an end: in *Sometimes Dreams Come True* the dreamer Joseph (a slave and prisoner) also prevents the famine that threatens Egypt (Patterson 1996:188).

<sup>69</sup> For Folkerth Bottom's use of synaesthesia shows how continuous is his experience of the world: Bottom's 'grotesque continuity' goes from 'base levels of perception into higher-order conceptual categories' (Folkerth 2002:93-94).

<sup>70</sup> In *Spiritual Shakespeares* Ewan Fernie writes that in Shakespeare's plays the characters who dream make these same plays 'also sufficiently 'real' to be haunted by spiritual alterity from within' (Fernie 2005:4-5).

#### IV.1: Supposing it were a dream...

In early modern English drama there are only a few examples of dream plays, plays whose action is explicitly said to be somebody's dream.<sup>71</sup> Possibly, the most interesting version of a dream play is *The Taming of a Shrew*, the play that ends when a Tapster wakes Sly up and the beggar comments on what he saw during his sleep. As noted in section II.1, it is likely that Shakespeare's first rendering of the Katherina story also had Sly's final scenes; those additional passages would maybe facilitate a safe interpretation of this play as Sly's dream. However, I believe the point in question here is not to ascertain whether *The Taming of the Shrew* is a dream play or not, but to acknowledge the fascinating potential of the Folio's elusive (perhaps intentionally so) meaning. As Huston remarks, 'critics have long noted how the world of dream is shadowed forth by many of the play's particular qualities'; nonetheless, this 'world' is interesting primarily because it appears simultaneously *true* and *false*, *real life* and *dream* (Huston 1981:63).

The ambiguity enveloping characters and circumstances of *The Taming of the Shrew* fashions a scenario that swings between *reality* and dream.<sup>72</sup> In the inner plot individuals intentionally take up fake identities in order to accomplish their aims: the servant Tranio becomes the master Lucentio, and vice-versa; to woo Bianca secretly, Lucentio also becomes Cambio (a Greek and Latin tutor), while Hortensio turns into Litio (a music teacher).<sup>73</sup> The numerous disguises and changes of name may complicate the audience's attempt to follow the story and to differentiate between fiction and *actuality*. Above all, the constant role-playing emphasises 'the liquidity of social relations in a commercialising culture' and the fact that accepted degree hierarchies are themselves a dream, i.e. a fictional construction (Howard 1991:73).<sup>74</sup> As Lucentio tells Tranio when they are about to swap their social roles, they cannot 'be

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<sup>71</sup> Holland mentions Lyly's *Sapho and Phao* (1584), a play whose 'apologetic prologue' (similar to Robin's) intends to justify its possible imperfections, and *The Woman in the Moon* (1591-93), a play presented as the outcome of the poet's dream (Holland 1994:17).

<sup>72</sup> At times the disorder also concerns the language the characters employ. For example, Petruchio and his servant Grumio (not to be confused with Gremio, Bianca's suitor) misunderstand each other as soon as they enter the stage. Petruchio asks Grumio to knock at Hortensio's door, but the servant refuses to do it: 'Why, sir, what am I, sir, that I should knock you here, sir?' (I.ii.9-10). Petruchio then 'wrings him [Grumio] by the ears' and shows an irritability that recalls Katherina's bad temper.

<sup>73</sup> Tranio thus explains his plan to find a fake father for Lucentio: 'supposed Lucentio / must get a father, called supposed Vincentio' (II.i.409-410). Baptista consents to give Bianca to Tranio/Lucentio after this 'supposed Vincentio' grants 'a sufficient dower' for Bianca (IV.iv.44). Baptista speaks to 'the deceiving father of a deceitful son' and is tricked by 'counterfeit supposes' (V.i.106).

<sup>74</sup> As Huston argues, *The Taming of the Shrew* tells the spectators that the theatre they are in, where actors perform the part assigned to them, 'is just another form of the theatre' they daily live in (Huston 1981:72). Similar considerations pertain to Calderón's *Life Is a Dream*, studied in chapter 4.

distinguished by [their] faces / for man or master': the disparity between them is a cultural, not an inborn, factor (I.i.197-198).<sup>75</sup>

The *real* identities of Katherina and Petruchio are especially indefinite. Katherina's initial behaviour *appears* irascible and inflated, but she has grounds to be what she is: for instance, her father has 'more to commune with Bianca' (I.i.101).<sup>76</sup> Arriving in Padua, Petruchio claims to be rich ('Crowns in my purse I have, and goods at home'), yet he seems to need a rich wife desperately (I.ii.56). Indeed, he agrees to woo Katherina after receiving money first from Hortensio and Gremio and then also from Tranio/Lucentio. In spite of his initial greediness, from the third act on Petruchio *seems* to praise inner virtues against external possessions: for example, he wears 'unreverent robes' at his wedding ('to me she's married, not unto my clothes') and teaches Katherina that 'tis the mind that makes the body rich' (III.ii.111, III.ii.116 and IV.iii.169). The onlookers see two opposite images of Katherina (shrew first, model wife at the end) and of Petruchio (materialistic and then idealistic): both portrayals could be authentic or counterfeit, as dream and performance are at once.

In terms of the plays' subject matter, Cecil Seronsy has argued that the theme of 'supposes' unifies the Induction and the two inner plots (the shrew-taming and the love intrigue) (Seronsy 1963:15-30).<sup>77</sup> This theme, I contend, puts on public view the blurriness of actuality and dream and, in particular, shows that also actuality is illusory and *man-made*. Supposing requires the substitution of a character for another (via disguise) as well as the concepts of *assuming* and *imagining*; these two verbs summarise the guiding principle of theatrical fiction, the *as if* condition allowing theatre to represent the everyday.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, 'assuming' means that the characters mistakenly look at and predict various events: the make-believe of *The Shrew* 'turns everything around, persons and things and notions about them' (Seronsy 1963:18). For instance, Lucentio observes Bianca at a distance for the first time (as members of the audience do); in line with patriarchal constructions of the ideal feminine, Lucentio sees

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<sup>75</sup> Freedman highlights that the play's argument is obscure: Katherina's final speech would seem to champion 'an intrinsic hierarchical order', while the lucky exchange of identity between master and servant exposes social roles as theatrical (Freedman 1991:119).

<sup>76</sup> Novy stresses the fact that Katherina is unique because, unlike most Shakespearean comic heroines, she does not have a female friend (Novy 1984:61). Katherina laments the fact that Bianca is her father's 'treasure' and is afraid of having to 'dance bare-foot on her [Bianca's] wedding day' (II.i.32-33). As Gary Schneider suggests, her words allude to 'archaic public customs' designed to publicize and shame Katherina (Schneider 2002:242).

<sup>77</sup> The 'supposes' theme prevails in George Gascoigne's *The Supposes* (1566), a translation of Ariosto's *I suppositi* (1509) that probably inspired Shakespeare for *The Taming of the Shrew* (Seronsy 1963:16).

<sup>78</sup> Within the Induction, the Lord and his servants behave *as if* Sly were their lord and had been sleeping for fifteen years; having accepted the identity they assign him, Sly acts *as if* he were their master.

in her 'mild behaviour and sobriety' (I.i.71).<sup>79</sup> Yet Bianca will agree to marry Lucentio/Cambio in secret and at the close of the performance Lucentio will realise he cannot rely on her 'duty' as a wife (V.ii.129).<sup>80</sup> Baptista supposes it 'a thing impossible' that Katherina will ever find a husband and Gremio thinks that Petruchio 'will curse' his decision to woo her (I.ii.121 and II.i.75). Nonetheless, the development of the events demonstrates that both inferences are incorrect. Supposed physical and psychological identities ambiguously show themselves throughout the plot and at the end turn into new, previously unimagined possibilities.

The strategies of 'assuming' and 'imagining' *seem* to help Petruchio accomplish his domesticating goals and, as happens in the Induction, suggest that reality is mainly a production of socially powerful characters. Initially, Petruchio is able to make up a reality that other people around him do not see and hear: that is, a *reality* that does not literally exist but, like a dream, is phenomenally perceptible. Three initial episodes present Katherina as a young woman with unconventional physical and verbal aggressiveness. In the first scene of act I, Gremio describes Katherina as 'too rough'; Hortensio predicts she will never marry, unless she acquires a 'gentler, milder mould' (I.i.55 and 60). Unafraid of answering back, Katherina affirms that she is not interested in getting married; but if she were, she would 'comb' Hortensio's 'noddle with a three-legged stool', 'paint' his face, and use him 'like a fool' (I.i.64-65). Subsequently, Katherina ties Bianca's hands, strikes her, and makes her weep; whereas Bianca *seems* to know her 'duty' to her 'elders', Katherina quarrels with her father Baptista and promises to revenge herself against Baptista's biased paternity (II.i.7). Again, Katherina breaks a lute on Hortensio/Litio's head and insults him with 'vile terms' such as 'rascal' and 'fiddler' (II.i.156-157). These incidents clearly introduce Katherina as an unruly woman who, in a patriarchal society, is unlawfully exercising her 'scolding tongue' 'under her own control rather than under the rule of a man' (I.ii.99) (Boose 2001:167). The spectators may think that this is the *real* Katherina; yet in the same act Petruchio manufactures a different Katherina and imposes his own construction as *true*. Meeting Baptista for the first time, Petruchio overturns the characterization of Katherina the

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<sup>79</sup> Lucentio thus reveals to have fallen in love with Bianca: 'while idly I stood looking on, / I found the effect of love in idleness' (I.i.147-148). The flower Oberon uses to provoke love-at-first-sight in Titania and the four lovers has the same name: 'love-in-idleness' (II.i.168). Lucentio's first description of his love for Bianca relies on the sense of sight ('I saw sweet beauty in her face', 'I saw her coral lips to move', 'Sacred and sweet was all I saw in her'); in contrast, Petruchio first hears what other people say of Katherina and then transforms those unfavourable depictions (I.i.164-173).

<sup>80</sup> Hall observes that the Bianca story refers to Roman canons: to get married, she and Lucentio elude the law and the paternal consent. In contrast, the Katherina story relates to Germanic and English canons: in theory, her marriage to Petruchio reflects 'the contractual nature of betrothal between consenting individuals' (Hall 1995:154-155).

audience has previously witnessed: he has heard of 'her beauty and her wit, / her affability and bashful modesty' and wants 'to make [his] eye the witness / of that report' (II.i.48-53). Talking to the audience only, Petruchio explains that his wooing strategy will be to assign to Katherina's unpleasant actions a positive meaning:

Say that she rail, why then I'll tell her plain / she sings as sweetly as a nightingale. /  
Say that she frown, / I'll say she looks as clear / as morning roses newly washed  
with dew. (II.i.169-172)

During their first encounter, Katherina does not refrain from mocking, offending, and beating Petruchio. Nevertheless, he denies the facts the spectators have *actually* seen and heard ('she is not hot, but temperate as the morn' and 'tis incredible to believe / how much she loves me') and quickly arranges their wedding day (II.i.294 and 308-309).<sup>81</sup> In other words, in *The Taming of the Shrew* (Petruchio's) male influence manages to erase *reality* (the fact that Katherina *is* hot and *does not* love him, at least in act II) and to establish his own illusory perspectives on things as the truth.

Following Katherina's 'training' in Petruchio's house (discussed in section III.1), the last, crucial taming test Petruchio devises concerns language. On their way to Padua, Petruchio forces Katherina to accept that the sun *is* the moon (or vice-versa, depending on his will). After an initial objection, Katherina *appears* to have understood the lesson: 'what you will have it named, even that it is, / and so it shall be so for Katherine' (IV.v.21-22). As Petruchio wants her to do, Katherina beholds Vincentio as 'a fresher gentlewoman'; when Petruchio changes his mind about Vincentio, Katherina blames her own 'mistaking eyes' and recognises that Vincentio is 'a reverend father' (IV.v.29, 45 and 48). Vincentio confesses that this 'strange encounter' has 'amazed' him and is uncertain about what is 'true' and what is not (for instance, has his son Lucentio *really* married Bianca?) (IV.v.54 and 71). The scene further reveals that (Petruchio's) male influence moulds reality and determines what is visually true or false; Katherina's sight is 'mistaking' every time it does not agree with Petruchio's. Whereas in the spectators' daily life the coerciveness of patriarchal misrepresentations is moderately out of sight, within Sly's supposed dream it fully emerges.

At the close of *The Taming of the Shrew* the audience could have the impression that all the initial expectations have been reversed, except Petruchio's. Indeed, the other husbands realise they have erroneously trusted the predictable outcome of (seemingly trustworthy) phenomenal signs: for example, Bianca's silence and mildness have

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<sup>81</sup> Freedman observes that Petruchio employs 'reframing' to 'make it impossible for Kate to negate or to differ': he presents her disagreements as a sort of funny agreement and empties her rebellion of any strength (Freedman 1991:145).

mistakenly been regarded as the promise of a future, ideally submissive wife. In contrast, Petruchio has questioned the evidence in front of him (Katherina's wildness); he has disfigured it through his masculine power; and, he finally *seems* to have gained a perfectly compliant wife whom everybody observes and listens to. Petruchio *appears* to have tamed his wife, yet the visual and acoustic vagueness of *The Taming of the Shrew* persists till the very end and, I believe, is especially enabled by the dream frame.<sup>82</sup> The last scene owns a dreamlike atmosphere: Lucentio twice describes the new, obedient Katherina as 'a wonder' and Baptista believes that 'she is changed' (V.ii.106, 190 and 115). For the audience, perhaps, the most dreamlike element of this scene is Katherina's long speech and her defence of male supremacy within the family and the state: 'thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, / thy head, thy sovereign [...] such duty as the subject owes the prince, / even such, a woman oweth to her husband' (V.ii.146-156). The optical and aural reality the spectators live *seems* unmistakable: Katherina's acts and words acknowledge Petruchio's 'right supremacy', and, at least in this finale, she *appears* to submit to his rule willingly (V.ii.109).<sup>83</sup> Nonetheless, I think that the tricky perspectives I have previously discussed also hinder a safe interpretation of Katherina's transformation.<sup>84</sup> Numerous characters in *The Taming of the Shrew* temporarily turn into something they are not: Sly is a beggar who becomes a lord who then presumably becomes a beggar again; Tranio is a servant who becomes a master who re-becomes a servant; Lucentio is a young wealthy man (the son of a merchant) who becomes a tutor who afterwards regains his original status. Also Petruchio

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<sup>82</sup> As Ann Thompson writes in her introduction to the Cambridge edition of *The Taming of the Shrew*, this comedy remains a 'deeply problematic play', and scholars have variously debated whether Katherina's final speech should be seen as ironic or not (Thompson 1984:42). Novy argues that at the end Katherina enters 'the new world of the game' and that 'her education in folly has taught her how to live with relative comfort in a patriarchal culture' (Novy 1984:54-55). Kahn thinks that Katherina's 'spirit remains mischievously free' and that she is 'outwardly compliant but inwardly independent' (Kahn 1988:49-50). In contrast, Garner underlines the misogynistic aspects of the play (in marriage 'women's power must be contained or channelled to serve and nurture men') and believes that Katherina pays 'too high a price' for her (inevitable) surrender (Garner 1988:117). Bamber also thinks that the battle of the sexes within the play 'is only funny to those who assume that the status quo is the natural order of things and likely to prevail. To the rest of us, Kate's compromise is distressing' (Bamber 1982:35).

<sup>83</sup> As Hall underlines, the social order of *The Taming of the Shrew* modifies Katherina's subjectivity so as to make it appropriate to its own political and economic needs. Katherina *seems* to recognise Petruchio's truth as 'the truth of herself' and, paradoxically, *seems* to serve him freely (Hall 1995:152). The marriage model is political: the family is a micro-kingdom gently governed by the husband/sovereign and in which hierarchy *appears* to occur without tyranny (see Hall 1995:153-154).

<sup>84</sup> Various productions have differently solved the two main problems of the play, the disappearance of the Induction and 'the lack of appeal of Kate's final tamedness' (Oliver 1982:71). Some directors have omitted the frame altogether, some others have kept it perhaps to underscore the fact that the inner play is 'rollicking farce' (Oliver 1982:72). As for Katherina's speech, it has at times been reduced heavily, or performed as a mockery. I believe the elusiveness and impropriety of the text signify its resistance to a secure reading.

restlessly amends his own image depending on the situation: in the last act he seems to have forgotten his previous sermons and happily receives the wager and the twenty thousand crowns Baptista offers him. Petruchio might have taught Katherina the arbitrariness of signs: within the dreamlike scenario of the last act (where notions of wonder and metamorphosis circulate) the onlookers may be observing and hearing something (Katherina's conversion to patriarchal principles) that *looks* real but *could be* a dream.

Agreeing with Freedman that 'if we are right about *The Taming of the Shrew* then we are wrong, and there is no easy way out of this dilemma', I have proposed that this point is crucial to a discussion of the dream in this play (Freedman 1991:124). Most likely, the spectators' doubts about the inner plot also (or perhaps mainly) derive from the impossibility of ascertaining whether it is a dream or not. If what happens to Katherina were Sly's dream, would one not view it as less distressing than it *actually* is? Or, if the inner plot were *real* (and indeed we see and hear *real* people moving, talking, beating other people...), would it not *too obscenely* expose worrying issues, such as the dependency of patriarchal civilization on female obedience? Paradoxically, the fact that the inner play *may or may not* be Sly's dream both facilitates and challenges Petruchio's taming purposes. Within the alleged dream, Petruchio has the freedom to be blatantly patriarchal: his (and his society's) disturbing strategies of containment of female insubordination can palpably surface. On the other hand, the assumed dream has shown that truth is but a forced construction. For most of the performance (Petruchio's) male power has converted what looked true (for instance, Katherina's anger) into its opposite (her desirability); accordingly, in the last scene Katherina might be able to shape a *reality* (her very tangible compliance) that, like a dream, is but a highly believable fiction. *The Taming of the Shrew* predictably ends with the capitulation of the mutinous female; however, Petruchio's noticeable ideological success may be less *real* (i.e. more dreamlike) than it *seems*.

#### **IV.2: A dream 'full of hateful *fantasies*' (II.i.258, emphasis added).**

Oberon's forest is a *real* setting – a wood that may exist somewhere in England – peopled by a myriad of animals ('cankers', 'reremice', 'the clamorous owl') and by normally invisible fairies (II.ii.3-6).<sup>85</sup> Within this at once realistic and fantastic location, the fairies possess an actual body and the lovers strongly experience the dreamlike,

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<sup>85</sup> Holland believes that Shakespeare's forest is an English wood, perhaps located somewhere in the Midlands (P. Holland 1994:172).

erratic quality that also pertains to their daily lives.<sup>86</sup> The accidents in the wood will probably be dismissed as ‘the fierce vexation of a dream’, yet they actually rest on ‘the appearance of the everyday and of what is already ‘being’ (strange but true)’ (IV.i.68) (Joughin 2005:143).<sup>87</sup> Let us recall for instance what happened in Athens – in *everyday reality* – to the lovers. Even prior to their entrance into the dreamlike forest, the lovers’ everyday was ‘strange but true’: Demetrius’ love for Helena all of a sudden turned into love for Hermia. Hence Demetrius’ and Lysander’s surreal whimsicality in the wood should not surprise us much: the forest’s *dream* is but an overblown repetition of the idiocy already present in Athens. In the city the two men professed to be in love with the same woman (Hermia); in the forest they do the same, but that woman has now been translated into Helena. The *dream* the lovers experience in the woods, furthermore, conforms to Nashe’s explanation of the causes of dreams: the lovers’ thoughts, ‘intently fixed all the day-time upon a mark [they] are to hit’, have flown ‘beyond the mark of the day into the confines of the night’ (Nashe 1594:153). The four young people’s preoccupation with their marital promises returns within the *dream*, ‘annoyeth [their] eyesight’, and ‘presently disperseth and vanisheth’ (Nashe 1594:162).

*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*’s central action may *seem* to evaporate suddenly as an insubstantial dream, yet it powerfully stages the gender inequality of heterosexual relationships within a patriarchal community. The action in the forest is a chaotic and at times hurtful performance directed by King Oberon via Puck’s help. Oberon puts love’s ‘charm’ on Titania’s ‘sight’ and streaks her eyes to ‘make her full of hateful fantasies’ (II.i.183 and 257-258). Clearly, he wants to ‘torment’ the unruly queen who has ‘forsworn his bed and company’ (II.i.147 and 62).<sup>88</sup> In contrast, Oberon’s intervention in the lovers’ vicissitudes *appears* benevolent: he orders Robin to ‘anoint’ the eyes of the ‘disdainful’ Demetrius with the love juice, so that Helena ‘of force [...] must be eyed’ (II.i.261 and III.ii.40). However, Oberon’s and Robin’s intrusion in the lovers’ story *actually* demystifies the stereotype of male dependence on a scornful female: within

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<sup>86</sup> As John D. Caputo points out, ‘the ancients invested a considerable effort trying to convince us that the supersensible sphere is ‘really real’’ (Caputo 2005:XVIII, emphasis original). Nashe describes the ‘spirits of the air’ as having no ‘visible bodies or form’ and being ‘all show and no substance, deluders of our imagination’ (Nashe 1594:151). Shakespeare’s fairies, however, are phenomenally perceptible (at least for the spectators) and, more than deceiving the lovers’ imagination, make hyper-visible the contradictions within their patriarchal society.

<sup>87</sup> Recalling Greenblatt’s definition of Shakespeare’s world as ‘hyperanimated’ (see *Hamlet in Purgatory*, 2001), John J. Joughin underscores how this world is under the attack of dreams, visions and other apparitions. Joughin argues that for Shakespeare’s audiences ‘witnessing the revival of ancient spirits and the birth of things to come seems to have constituted an everyday occurrence while also remaining a crucial component of the aesthetic experience of play-going itself’ (Joughin 2005:132).

<sup>88</sup> In Hall’s words, Titania’s ‘matriarchal indifference to the erotic’ (her desertion of Oberon’s bed) is ‘an ‘unnatural’ declaration of independence’ (Hall 1995:105, emphasis original).

the forest the women suffer because of their lovers' unkindness and unfaithfulness. As Hall observes, female beauty is 'a form of power' and Lysander's and Demetrius' alternating abhorrence of Helena and Hermia ('hang off [...] vile thing') reveals that 'misogyny is the other side of Petrarchan adoration' (III.ii.260) (Hall 1995:111-112).

Visual disparity separates the on-stage mortal characters and the off-stage spectators: Oberon declares his own invisibility, and, like an internal spectator, stands aside to 'overhear' Helena's and Demetrius' 'conference' (II.i.187).<sup>89</sup> The lovers cannot see the fairies around them and hence live 'as pain' what the audience (aware of the fairies' intervention in the plot) might experience 'with joy' (Lopez 2003:102). In addition, the lovers themselves could be a puzzling spectacle for the audience: Hermia's image reflects Helena's (both suffer for love) and Lysander's behaviour mirrors Demetrius' (both have rejected Hermia and sworn love to Helena).<sup>90</sup> Sight is the sense most affected within the forest *dream* and, unsurprisingly, is controlled by (Oberon's) masculine authority. Oberon's optical power seems to relate to early modern anxieties about the eye, as discussed in chapter 2: Oberon cannot be seen and, accordingly, cannot be objectified. The power Oberon exercises in the forest is mainly optical: Oberon is the male subject who eternally views (without being viewed) and controls Titania's and the lovers' sight. Importantly, analogous preoccupations regarding the (normally female) 'evil eye' are overturned within the forest *dream*: Lysander and Demetrius are enchanted by (Helena's) female beauty, yet Hermia and Helena are the actual victims of the men's fixation. Furthermore, Titania's compulsory infatuation for the ass Bottom favours (Oberon's) male goals and shames (Titania's) female understanding.<sup>91</sup>

The lovers' sight within the forest watches events that *seem* unfeasible, but are (at least for a while) *actual* and wounding. When Lysander reveals his love for Helena, Hermia emphasizes his dreamlike transformation and asks whether they are or are not the same people as before ('What change is this, sweet love?' and 'Am I not Hermia?')

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<sup>89</sup> Robin invites Oberon (and the real audience) to watch the lovers' 'fond pageant'; the two spirits 'stand apart' and observe 'things [...] that befall prepost'rously' (III.ii.114 and III.ii.120-121).

<sup>90</sup> Critics have stressed the transposable qualities of the lovers: the two men use conventional romantic language and are similarly unfaithful; the two women are physically different – Hermia is small, dark-haired and probably dark-complexioned, Helena is taller and thin – but similar in their faithfulness to their original 'choice of men' (P. Holland 1994:63). For Freedman one lover prevails on the other not because of his/her qualities, but because he/she has secured more optical power than his/her rival. In fact, in the first act Helena implores Hermia: 'O, teach me how you look' (I.i.192) (Freedman 1991:184).

<sup>91</sup> As Lobanov-Rostovsky explains, in early modern texts the male taming of the female gaze 'averts the threat of a passive, effeminised eye, subject to the world it views' (Lobanov-Rostovsky 1997:197). Oberon's optical power might be considered a 'divine similitude': it reminds one of God, the universal judge who is invisible and 'from whose gaze nothing is excluded' (Lobanov-Rostovsky 1997:201).

Are you not Lysander? / I am as fair now as I was erewhile') (III.ii.262 and III.ii.273-274).<sup>92</sup> Helena wrongly thinks that Demetrius and Lysander are making fun of her when they swear that they love her ('I see you all are bent / to set against me for your merriment'); similarly, Lysander mistakenly assumes that Demetrius is pretending to love Helena again ('For you love Hermia; this you know I know') (III.ii.145-146 and III.ii.163). The forest *dream* has made something absurd come *true*: Lysander and Demetrius *really* love Helena and they have *really* ceased to love Hermia; crucially, the *dream* lets the two women (and the spectators) see that male commitment is unreliable and that one woman can replace another effortlessly. Hermia still *is* 'as fair' as she was in Athens, but Lysander's sound words (''tis not jest / that I do hate thee and love Helena') erase Hermia's beauty; paradoxically, Lysander's assurance is both *true* and *false* (he loves Helena because of the effect of Oberon's love juice) (III.ii.280-281). Furthermore, the forest dream presents female antagonism as the result of male infidelity: the final restoration of patriarchal stability requires 'the breaking of women's bonds' (Garner 1996:92). Whereas in their childhood Helena and Hermia were like 'a double cherry: seeming parted, / but yet an union in partition', within the *dream* their 'ancient love' is 'quite forgot' and they come close to physical fighting (III.ii.209-211, 215 and 201).<sup>93</sup> Hermia's verbal aggressiveness is the result of male maliciousness, as Lysander loved her 'since night [...], yet since night' left her; her 'improper' behaviour will be suppressed by Oberon's re-coupling of the lovers (III.ii.275).

The lovers' and Titania's erring visions are the product of patriarchal control: for a while, Oberon *obviously* controls their viewpoints; subsequently, he leads them to consider those stances as a vain dream, something 'distorted and distorting' (Freedman 1991:180). As in *The Taming of the Shrew*, the power holders employ dreams and dreamlike chaos to impair or correct the sight of socially lower characters. In Freedman's words, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 'right vision is a social construct achieved through its own form of distortion': in particular, Oberon's manipulation of Titania's sight obliges Titania (a rebellious woman) to see through Oberon's eyes and to abandon her previous mutiny (Freedman 1991:184). Furthermore, Demetrius' sight is left twisted even outside the forest: in other words, 'distorted' means 'right' (at least right for Oberon/Theseus) and vice-versa. Having caused emotional delusion (the lovers have fallen in love erroneously), Oberon recombines the lovers correctly – but

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<sup>92</sup> Hermia had previously called Demetrius 'serpent', using the same imagery of her actual dream (III.ii.73). Lysander himself employs this same imagery to express his new hate for Hermia: 'let loose, / or I will shake thee from me like a serpent' (III.ii.260-261).

<sup>93</sup> As Calderwood points out, Hermia and Helena, Titania and the votaress, and Hippolyta and the Amazons all seem to share an idyllic feminine past that has disappeared forever. Calderwood suggests that Titania's loss of a male child may be 'the dream equivalent' of Hippolyta's loss of her previous masculine life (Calderwood 1991:417).

correctly for whom? On the one hand, Oberon's (magic) faculties *seem* to free the lovers from the oppression of paternal authority: Hermia can marry Lysander without her father's consent. On the other, Oberon's ascendancy simply serves a 'much larger patriarchal order', one that in the end controls the lovers' sexuality: Theseus' royal privilege annuls Egeus' paternal right (Orgel 2003:89).<sup>94</sup> Akin to a dream, love is here reality and illusion at once: the lovers' suffering *has seemed* real, their final arrangement is only apparently felicitous. In fact, it is established more by Oberon's and Theseus's choice than by the lovers' own predilection.<sup>95</sup>

Awakening from their *dream*, the young lovers are psychologically confused: Lysander answers Theseus 'amazèdly, half sleep, half waking'; Demetrius compares the night's accidents to 'things [...] small and undistinguishable, / like far-off mountains turned into clouds'; and, Helena says she has found Demetrius 'like a jewel, / mine own and not mine own' (IV.i.145-146, 186-187 and 190-191). Also, Demetrius is not sure whether he has really seen Theseus ('It seems to me / that yet we sleep, we dream') and trusts his sight only after the others have validated it (IV.i.192-193). The sensation of in-between-ness, Helena's paradoxical statement, Demetrius' sensorial hesitancy: all these elements prove that the lovers cannot clearly see what is or is not real and may still be dreaming. Hermia's words best recapitulate the dreamlike optical structure of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: 'everything seems double' and on- and off-stage viewers have watched the *dream* 'with parted eye' (IV.i.188-189).<sup>96</sup> The forest accidents may be repudiated as a pointless dream; all the same, they have noticeably unveiled upsetting but realistic male habits of female mortification and falsification of reality.

## **V: Shadows that may offend: the dream and the performance.**

*The Taming of the Shrew's* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* reflection on theatre and its nature is tied to their performance of dreams or dreamlike events.<sup>97</sup> In *The Curious Perspective* Gilman observes that in dramatic fiction 'what *is* [...] "is and is

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<sup>94</sup> In classical mythology, Theseus' father is called Aegëus and dies because of his son's (perhaps intentional) inattention.

<sup>95</sup> As Orgel argues in his *Imagining Shakespeare*, Oberon's magic is 'an utterly erratic but nevertheless indispensable element in the process of getting society's erotic arrangements right' (Orgel 2003:87). The topic of patriarchal power can be parodied (as in *Pyramus and Thisbe*), but never totally 'exorcised': also in the mechanicals' play the fathers win over the children (Orgel 2003:111).

<sup>96</sup> In his study of metamorphosis and Shakespearean comedy, William C. Carroll maintains that the metamorphic vision depends on 'seeing everything 'double', with 'parted eye''; furthermore, for Carroll 'the dream of erotic confusion' cannot be so effortlessly rejected as the lovers would seem to do (Carroll 1985:146).

<sup>97</sup> As Huston remarks, in his early comedies Shakespeare seems to bend the theatre towards itself and the audience that way as well: 'temporarily the boundary between the stage and life dissolves as the play reaches out to touch the audience partly by reminding it of its *role* as audience' (Huston 1981:4, emphasis original).

not” (Gilman 1978:147, emphasis original). Analogous considerations might refer to the dream: like the performance, the dream (Sly’s alleged dream of Petruchio’s taming or the lovers’ and Titania’s *dream* in the woods) happens like reality (it can be heard and seen), yet it is another kind of reality. The spectators of the two comedies at issue stand facing fictional occurrences, yet these occurrences *actually* take place and impinge on their senses. Through the on-stage dreams the audiences view inflated episodes of mockery, indoctrination, bewilderment and transformation: the fragility of ‘human perception and truth’ makes it difficult for the onlookers to decide whether these episodes are or are not a *dream*; the implications may be that what looks ‘natural’ and ‘right’ outside the theatre could also be a counterfeit *dream* (Lynch 1999:120).

In *The Terrors of the Night* Nashe writes: ‘could any men set down certain rules of *expounding* of dreams [...] I would begin a little to list to them, but commonly that which is portentive in a king is but a frivolous fancy in a *beggar*’ (Nashe 1594:158, emphasis added). At the end of the forest *dream* Bottom seems to agree with Nashe and says that ‘man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream’ (IV.i.203-204). In spite of his statement, Bottom makes an attempt to convey the importance of the oneiric vision he has perceptibly experienced; even the beggar Sly, contrary to what Nashe believes, may have dreamt of things that are not merely ‘a frivolous fancy’. In his famous speech about the lunatic, the lover and the poet, Duke Theseus compares the lovers’ *dream* (or the poet’s creation) to ‘airy nothing’ that has attained ‘a local habitation and a name’ (V.i.16-17). Nonetheless, this chapter has argued that in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* the dream ‘bodies forth’ not ‘the forms of things unknown’, but a reality off-stage audiences may be well familiar with (V.i.15).

The last act of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* crucially illustrates the state of dream and performance as at once short-lived fancies and deeply meaningful creations, an apparent contradiction which all my case studies exploit.<sup>98</sup> Like Sly’s supposed dream and the *dream* within the woods, the Pyramus and Thisbe play contains impossible alternatives: it is at once ‘merry’ and ‘tragical’, ‘tedious’ and ‘brief’ (V.i.58).<sup>99</sup> Trying to

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<sup>98</sup> Observing that the artisans’ project recalls the feast of Corpus Christi (still celebrated a generation before Shakespeare’s play), Montrose argues that a culture previously centred on social dynamics inside the local community has become a culture integrating the local within and subordinating it to the political centre (Montrose 1998:221). *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* has similarities with Elizabethan royal iconography (in the reference to the vestal) and with courtly entertainments (in the celebration of aristocratic weddings). Yet its dramaturgical and ideological nucleus lies in the professional playhouses: it has been written with the public theatre (and its audience’s tastes) in mind (Montrose 1998:226-227).

<sup>99</sup> Like a dream, the artisans’ performance may alternately *seem* too real or not real enough: as the mechanicals observe, Pyramus’ suicide and the lion’s ferocity might actually frighten the spectators; for that reason, a prologue explains that Pyramus and the lion are simply actors. On

dissuade Theseus from watching the mechanicals' play, Egeus affirms that the play 'is nothing, nothing in the world'; his words might remind one of Oberon's refutation of the lovers' *dream* as nothing but an unproductive vision (V.i.78). However, the *dream* in the woods has embodied a situation that the audience could find more credible than unfeasible: the *dream* has shown that, for 'one man holding troth', 'a million fail, confounding oath on oath' (III.ii.92-93). Similarly, the seemingly illogical performance at Theseus' court significantly re-embodies the incidents of the 'grim-looking night' (V.i.168). In fact, Pyramus fears that Thisbe has forgotten her 'promise', as Demetrius and Lysander did; the 'vile wall' separates the two lovers as Egeus opposed the relationship between Hermia and Lysander; Pyramus' eyes cannot accept that Thisbe has died ('eyes, do you see? / How can it be?'), as Hermia's and Helena's could not believe the change that affected their lovers; and, in Hippolyta's words, Thisbe should not feel pain for the death of 'such a Pyramus', perhaps as Hermia and Helena should not have greatly suffered for their treacherous lovers (V.i.171, 131, 273-274 and 311). It may be that the forest *dream* and the mechanicals' performance are 'the silliest stuff' the audience has ever heard; nonetheless, that silliest stuff has disclosed the 'wrongs' which male power carries out against women and the tragic consequences patriarchal rule might have on young couples (V.i.209 and II.i.240). Dream in the forest and theatre in Theseus' court are not (or should not be) inconsequential 'shadows' (V.i.210).<sup>100</sup> Lysander's and Demetrius' 'boorishness and patrician arrogance' during the artisans' performance suggest that the two men have forgotten their woeful dream too quickly (P. Holland 1994:68).<sup>101</sup> In contrast, Hermia's and Helena's mute presence probably says a lot: theirs is 'a portentous silence', as Garner puts it; their husbands have proved to be 'spotted and inconstant', but Hermia and Helena (who do not seem to have reconciled after their quarrelling in the wood) appear to have accepted the part of docile wives (Garner 1998:95). The performance in Theseus' court has 'told over' the *dream* in Oberon's forest; both the play and the dream have physically manufactured, rather than 'fancy's images', 'something of great constancy' that may endure within the

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the other hand, the performance may not manage to bring forth moonlight and the wall; therefore, the artisans resolve to have two actors impersonating Moonshine and Wall. Gilman writes that the mechanicals first diagnose the audience with 'advanced Hippolytanism' (an excessive disposition to believe in the veracity of illusion) and then with 'terminal Thesean rationality' (Gilman 1978:161).

<sup>100</sup> Montrose maintains that 'shadows' are 'the personified spirits in the play' and 'the players of Shakespeare's company who have performed the play' (Montrose 1998:234-235). Though Theseus puts all 'shadows' on the same level, the internal play calls attention to the qualitative gap between the best and the worst of shadows. The on-stage audience does not forgive the theatrical limitations of the artisans; only Theseus does it, perhaps because they are inoffensive to his power.

<sup>101</sup> As Holland writes, 'we would like the lovers to recognize how far 'Pyramus and Thisbe' mirrors the tragic potential of their experience' (P. Holland 1994:69).

spectators' minds (V.i.23, 26 and 25). Young has proposed that the mechanicals' performance encourages one not to dismiss 'unusual experience as meaningless dreams' (Young 1966:125). Certainly the (real or made-up) dreams of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* have enabled odd events to come true (for instance, a beggar has become a lord; a weaver has turned into an ass and has met the Fairy Queen). However, I have remarked that the dreams have also hyperdisplayed *usual* experience, especially the capability of the male to shape *reality* according to his will and the patriarchy's dependence on the domestication of disorderly females.

As the lovers and Titania do at the end of their *dream*, at the close of the performance the spectators seem to regain their 'wonted sight': the two comedies conventionally finish with the festive celebration of an ordered patriarchal community and what the onlookers finally see strikingly differs from the 'monster's view' they saw within the *dream* (III.ii.369 and 377). The dreams of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I believe, 'have offended': although they might be written off as 'weak' and 'idle', they have transgressed by vividly incarnating the alarming ways through which male power is secured and safeguarded (V.i.414 and 418). Simultaneously volatile and solid, on-stage dreams *seem* to yield nothing but dreams, yet the vexation they produce can be extremely fierce.

## Chapter 4

### Dreams Fit to Mould a Prince: *Life Is a Dream*

Momentarily departing from the English scene, this fourth chapter investigates the dramatic work that in seventeenth-century Spain most explicitly deals with the metaphor of life as dream, Calderón's *Life Is a Dream*. The play, probably first performed in Madrid in 1636, is usually defined as 'philosophical' or 'metaphysical' (see Maraniss 1978:14, Heiple 1993:131 and Benabu 2003:7).<sup>1</sup> The philosophical stance of *Life Is a Dream* aims to assert the vanity of worldly affairs when compared with spiritual concerns. Its more theological facet tackles the question of free will and demonstrates that the stars ('as part of God's providential pattern') affect but do not totally control one's future (McKendrick 1989:154). *Life Is a Dream* well represents seventeenth-century Spanish *comedia* in that its generic boundaries are discontinuous.<sup>2</sup> As many Calderonian plays do, *Life Is a Dream* opens presenting 'violence and conflict', but swiftly steers towards a serene finale in the last act (Benabu 2003:67).<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, *Life Is a Dream* may be regarded as a romance or a tragicomedy: Calderón's work (like Behn's *The Young King*) deals with the personal and political crisis of aristocratic families and in the end shows the (rather miraculous) reordering of the domestic and the public sphere. However, the reflection on ethical codes is presented as crucial to the resolution of *Life Is a Dream* and cleverly masks the play's

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<sup>1</sup> Kagan refers to the 1636 performance in his book *Lucrecia's Dreams* (Kagan 1990:35). *Life Is a Dream* was first published in a Madrid 1636 edition of Calderón's collected *comedias*. No original manuscript of the play has survived; the version in the Madrid edition probably follows a revision Calderón did of the original text. The play also appeared in a collection of works by different dramatists printed in Zaragoza in 1636. Controversy surrounds the date of composition: following Ruano de la Haza (1992), Paul Lewis-Smith suggests the years 1627-29, while Stanley Appelbaum proposes 1634-35 (see Lewis-Smith 1998:7 and Appelbaum 2002:xi).

<sup>2</sup> The term *comedia* overall defines the classical drama of seventeenth-century Spain, a drama that often blends together 'two modes, comedy and tragedy' (Blue 1996:26). For Benabu the word *comedia* ('play') echoes the 'blurring of generic distinction': early modern Spanish playwrights are free to play 'with all nuances of genre in composition' and the endings of their plays frequently present corrosive elements that threaten the final happiness (Benabu 2003:21-22). Describing her first meeting with Segismundo, Rosaura says that he aroused 'fear and pity' in her: the reference to Aristotle's generic definition may liken the beginning of *Life Is a Dream* to a tragedy (15). Throughout this chapter all quotations are from the Dover bilingual edition of *Life Is a Dream*, edited and translated by Stanley Applebaum (2002). This translation is 'as accurate and close to the original as possible' and 'conveys the meaning line for line', without a paragraph-style prose or English verse forms that would depart from the Spanish original versification (Appelbaum 2002:XVII). Though I can read Spanish, I have chosen to use English translations of the Calderón plays to facilitate the reader's comprehension of my textual analysis.

<sup>3</sup> The *comedia's* mixture of genres recalls the *comedias de santos* (drama about the lives of saints): plays that miraculously reach a composed closure and astonish the spectator 'with the human capacity for faith and the deity's power to confer grace' (Benabu 2003:26).

highly political concerns: for this reason, I have chosen to consider it as a philosophical play.<sup>4</sup>

*Life Is a Dream* dramatizes the story of Segismundo, a Polish prince imprisoned at birth by his father Basilio in a tower, after a prophecy predicted that one day the boy would kill his father and become a tyrant.<sup>5</sup> Years later, King Basilio decides to place Segismundo on the throne for one day, in order to see if the prince belies the prophecy. Segismundo is given a sleeping potion and is taken to the royal palace. At court he is deeply upset by his father's treachery and apparently fulfils the prediction (he behaves despotically and kills a servant). Afterwards he is given another soporific potion and is taken back to the tower, where, awakening, he believes that all that happened at court was just a dream. When the civil war breaks out, the commoners of the kingdom acclaim Segismundo as their natural leader and release him from his prison; the prince thus defeats his father's army. Yet he *seems* to have learnt the lesson behind the palace *dream* – that to do good (to perform justly on the world's stage) is what matters. He forgives his father and lawfully becomes the new king.<sup>6</sup> The heart of the whole performance is a real experience staged as *if* it were a dream, a fictional enactment that facilitates Segismundo's (ostensible) conversion and final triumph. As mentioned in chapter 1, Kagan has studied the dreams of Lucrecia de León, a young Spanish woman who was born in Madrid in 1568 and endured trial by the Spanish Inquisition (during the years 1590-95) because of her oneiric visions.<sup>7</sup> According to Kagan,

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<sup>4</sup> David Jonathan Hildner's definition of the play as 'political' is certainly acceptable: *Life Is a Dream* focuses on the (Polish) monarchy and addresses the 'problem of ruling wisely according to an ethical or religious pattern' (Hildner 1982:49). Still, I think that the emphasis on the life/dream belief shrewdly diverts one's attention from the final political achievement of Segismundo: the prince is *made to look* quite uninterested in the power he gains and rather concerned about eternal glory.

<sup>5</sup> King Sigismund III (1587-1632) was the Polish sovereign who in 1606 granted the vassals the right to depose the king, had the king been immoral and unlawful (see Lauer 1994:261). Calderón may have known real historical facts pertaining to the Polish kingdom and may have taken inspiration from them. For Ervin Brody Calderón was successful in 'recreating the historical Poland of Sigismund III in the midst of the turbulent Russian Time of Troubles': the years 1604-1613 saw civil wars related to Polish candidacies for the Moscow throne and the reluctance of the Polish aristocracy to accept Muscovites (like Astolfo in *Life Is a Dream*) as their monarchs (Brody 1969:47).

<sup>6</sup> Lewis-Smith has listed the various sources of *Life Is a Dream* in his book *Calderón de la Barca* (see Lewis-Smith 1998:8-17). As mentioned in chapter 3, Segismundo's *dream* experience (a man drugged – or found drunk and asleep as in Sly's case – and treated as a king/lord on his awakening) derives from a type of tale traditional in Arabic literature (Lewis-Smith 1998:13).

<sup>7</sup> For details of Lucrecia's life, see Kagan 9-34. Don Alonso de Mendoza ('an expert in Holy Scripture and a skilled theologian') and Fray Lucas de Allende ('head of Madrid's Franciscan convent') started meeting Lucrecia regularly in 1587 and transcribed the recounting of her dreams (415 in total) in thirty registers that were seized by agents of the Inquisition on 21 May 1590 (Kagan 1990:28 and 45-51). Mendoza believed that a divine source inspired Lucrecia's dreams and was

the real importance of these [Lucrecia's] dreams lies in their social and political criticism of Philip's Spain. [...] Philip is depicted in the dreams as the source of everything that Lucrecia perceives to be wrong with Spain: a corrupt church, oppressive taxes, lack of justice for the poor, and a weak national defense. (Kagan 1990:2)

Kagan underlines that early modern Spaniards (like most contemporary Europeans) are fascinated by dreams and possibly consider dreams as 'the wisest and safest moment to criticize their rulers' (Kagan 1990:166). I believe the dreams in *Life Is a Dream* (and in my other case studies) fulfil a similar function: their *phenomenal* quality makes possible the vivacious critique of aristocratic and patriarchal private and public conducts. On the other hand, dreams are *just* dreams, their worrying content can be seen as nothing more than a 'froth of the fancy', and possible censorious pressures can be held back (Nashe 1594:153).

Chapter 3 has investigated *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in order to show how on-stage dreams intensely reveal male practices of female indoctrination and subjugation. This chapter also touches on issues of gender discrimination, as represented by Rosaura's story. However, it especially analyses the part dreams perform as to the attainment and preservation of monarchical power and anticipates questions that will regard also Behn's *The Young King*. This chapter unfolds through four main sections: the first one concentrates on the play's first act and discusses both the introduction of generic (and ideological) expectations and the (dreamlike) factors that will relatively challenge those expectations. Section II examines Segismundo's palace *dream* through two different subsections. In II.1 I depict the phenomenal nature of the court *dream* and argue that, as the *dream* feels like reality, reality feels like a dream: no secure viewpoint about (on- and off-stage) events can therefore be reached. Subsection II.2 debates the cultural purchase of the palace *dream* by describing the dream's critical exposition of monarchical and patriarchal behaviour: King Basilio designs the dream to rectify his son's (literal and metaphorical) viewpoint, but the dream principally displays Segismundo's tyranny as a telling parody of Basilio's. Section III moves away from Segismundo's figure in order to analyse Rosaura's nonconformist gender characterization: her dreamlike persona enhances *Life Is a Dream's* polyphonic quality and unveils the falseness of social and sexual hierarchies. Finally, the last section sees Segismundo's

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mainly interested in those visions that regarded the king (Philip II), the destruction of Spain and its political resurgence (Kagan 1990:48-54). Lucrecia's dreams, 'a unique historical document' in Kagan's words, attracted the Inquisition's attention because of their popularity (Mendoza and Allende made the public aware of them) and because of their critique of the king (Kagan 1990:55).

ethical transformation as conveniently encouraged by (*real* and made-up) dreams and queries its *authenticity*. The play's finale may triumphantly affirm that life is but a futile dream, yet the preceding dreams have highlighted that appearances deceive and may be *at once* true and false (as the court *dream* was). Consequently, also Segismundo's conversion might *look* heartfelt but might not be: it could be a politically advantageous strategy enabling him to obtain his subjects' approval and secure that power which is, in theory, only illusive.

### **I: The opening: a dreamlike 'muddled labyrinth' (57).**

As suggested in chapter 2, established readings of *Life Is a Dream* maintain that the play validates its title's axiom fully. Being a philosophical *comedia*, *Life Is a Dream* puts forward an ethical perspective and shows its soundness on stage (i.e. publicly). Indeed, the spectators of Calderón's play follow the story of a prince who acknowledges the vainness of human things and performs well on earth in order to gain his reward in the afterlife. Among other critics, Susan Fischer writes that Segismundo 'is able to recognize that [...] reality, the world, and identity are as ephemeral as the stuff of dreams' (Fischer 1993:162). Likewise, for Daniel Heiple Segismundo 'concludes that all life is a dream [...] in the sense that the goods of the world [...] are illusory because they can be taken from him against his will' (Heiple 1993:125).<sup>8</sup>

Probably, this disillusionment with earthly things mirrors the political plight of seventeenth-century Spain both at home and abroad.<sup>9</sup> In particular, controversies surrounded the figure of Philip IV, king when Calderón composed *Life Is a Dream*: the sovereign was known for his interest in women (he was thought to be the father of over 30 bastards) and for his love of the theatre (he regularly performed in palace plays and masques) (see Blue 1997:29-30 and Blue 1989:23). Philip IV's politics ('directed' by the count-duke of Olivares) pursued a very aggressive programme in Europe and tried to complete the 'absolutist integration' of the Spanish empire (Blue 1989:23 and Cohen

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<sup>8</sup> Segismundo's scepticism, as Heiple explains, does not imply that he 'doubts or affirms his existence' in a Cartesian way: people 'do not dream *that* they are, but rather *what* they are'; therefore, life is 'a fiction and a fantasy, possessing all the insubstantiality of a dream' (Heiple 1993:125).

<sup>9</sup> As already mentioned, socio-political changes may have provoked this communal feeling of disenchantment: for instance, the brutal Thirty Years War (1618-48), the failure of a (Platonic and Christian) idealism that previously supported the concepts of peace and harmony and the decline of the Spanish empire's political power (see Heiple 1993:118). Numerous seventeenth-century Spanish writers portray themes such as the brevity of life and the collapse of human expectations: for example, Francisco de Quevedo, Francisco de Rioja and Luis de Góngora.

1985:262). However, his aspirations clearly failed: in Europe the conflict with France saw the defeat of Spain; Catalonia (supported by the French) rebelled against the central government in 1639; and, Portugal permanently seceded in 1640. In the late 1630s, Philip IV's immorality and Olivares' debacles became the (veiled) target of satirical writing and poems. On the other hand, the theatre was the target of anti-theatrical polemics that arose also from the fear that the audience could see parallels between on-stage and everyday depravity. State and religious censorship of performances wanted to make sure that the spectators saw and heard 'the 'right things'' (Cohen 1985:365 and Blue 1997:30). To be sure, the spectators of *Life Is a Dream* watch and listen to 'the 'right things'': the end of the performance accentuates Prince Segismundo's moral regeneration (he converts to the 'to do good' principle and states the worthlessness of earthly things) and hence defends his (divine-like) rule. Nevertheless, the dreams before the conclusion display Segismundo's and his father's hunger for power and, I argue, fairly interrogate the validity of the 'life as dream' belief.

Both *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Life Is a Dream* contain the word 'dream' in their title: this term puts forward the life/dream and the life/theatre correspondence and could somehow affect the audience's approach to the performance. Presumably, early modern spectators would be familiar with the maxim of Calderón's title and would predict that the play theatrically validates that adage. The life/dream and life/theatre metaphors, as Heiple underlines, embody the motif of disillusionment by showing the 'self-consciousness of life': human beings are actors, spectators and assessors of their own actions (Heiple 1993:121). The recurrent iteration of the title throughout the action of *Life Is a Dream* highlights the fictitiousness of the performance *and* of life: what the audience is watching and *living* in the theatre and in real life is pretence. Whereas before the use of self-reference the dramatic illusion is in the foreground, after it the *realities* that define the illusion come to the fore.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, the citing of the title *inside* the performance indicates that its message is valid also (or perhaps especially) *outside* it, in everyday life. The dream/life and the theatre/life metaphors do not weigh fake appearances (dream and theatre) against genuine reality (life). Rather, they imply that life too is a performance and that human beings play a part in order to secure (material or spiritual) benefits. For

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<sup>10</sup> In *Drama, Metadrama, and Perception* Richard Hornby observes that 'audience identification ceases' when a play uses self-reference and calls attention to itself; self-reference might realign the spectators' perception of the performance and prompt them to 'examine consciously the assumptions that lie behind and control their response to the world of the play' (Hornby 1986:115-117).

instance, Segismundo's closing conversion could be an advantageous simulation in front of his subjects, not a sincere spiritual change.

The dreamlike context of the first act assists the introduction of three extra-ordinary socio-political problems: Rosaura's desire for revenge, Segismundo's brutal condition and Basilio's authoritarianism. The clash between generations (Segismundo's and Rosaura's almost nonexistent relationship with their fathers) may recall the beginning of a comedy, but also brings in ingredients appropriate to the tragic and tragicomic genres. Unlike Katherina or Hermia and Helena, Rosaura is a cross-dressed woman who has lost her (sexual) honour; more than a (suitable) marriage agreement, Rosaura wants to take her revenge on her unfaithful lover. Furthermore, *Life Is a Dream* primarily stages a troublesome father/son relationship, not a husband/wife or a father/daughter struggle. The contrast between King Basilio and his son Segismundo relates to their kingdom's political succession and owns therefore a more openly public nature than the conflicts in the two Shakespearean comedies. Clearly, the philosophical title insinuates that the three central conflicts will soon find a resolution. Nevertheless, the dreamlike environment aids the vivid dramatization of private and communal anxieties that trouble the complete affirmation of aristocratic and patriarchal ideologies.

As *The Taming of the Shrew's* Induction and *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* first act do, the opening of *Life Is a Dream* presents a troublesome situation located in between *reality* and *dream*.<sup>11</sup> The performance 'bursts into sudden life, magical in its tone and setting' from its very beginning, as Alan Paterson writes (Paterson 1971:160). Its resemblance to a dreamscape is tangible as soon as Rosaura appears, having just fallen off the hippogriff she was riding.<sup>12</sup> Her fall resembles an abrupt awakening after a tormented dream: Rosaura is leaving a grievous past in Moscow and is *now* venturing into a foreign land (Poland) to recover her honour. Her *in medias res* entrance and speech (she is 'a woman

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<sup>11</sup> As Benabu stresses, early modern audiences were often unruly and would not wait for and follow the performance silently (Benabu 2003:74). A dreamlike aperture may thus have attracted the spectators' interest more easily.

<sup>12</sup> The first scene recalls the setting of a romance: the flying horse of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516-1532) evokes a mood and establishes Rosaura's identity as the heroine engaged on a love quest. Rosaura describes the hippogriff emphasising its supernatural qualities: it was 'flash without flame, / bird without bright plumage, fish without scales, / and beast without natural instincts' (5). As Cascardi argues, Calderón does not portray the state of nature as desirable: the hippogriff and Segismundo are 'monsters' produced by a (partial) state of nature in which the passions (shaped by society and culture) cause conflict (see Cascardi 1997:91). King Basilio (prey to an Oedipal conflict) has 'transgressed both the natural and the social order' and has raised his son as a beast (Cascardi 1997:93). In *Life Is a Dream* the viciousness of the state of nature makes the political state necessary and hence legitimises monarchical rule.

blinded by despair', 'a foreigner' and 'an unhappy person') introduce the play's concern with gender boundaries and inequities (5). As explained in chapter 1, on the *corrales'* stages actresses (not boys actors) play the female characters. The audience is thus observing a real woman (the actress playing Rosaura) who describes her (realistic) plight and has dressed up as a man in order to address it. The cross-dressed parts, as Soufas remarks, 'provided space and time for represented women to speak openly and expose dramatized male abuse' (Soufas 1996:138). In fact, both Rosaura and her mother Violante are *damas burladas*, women who have been seduced and abandoned by their lovers.<sup>13</sup> Unlike her mother, however, Rosaura exemplifies female empowerment by possessing male attributes (her father's sword) and acting as a man. Furthermore, Rosaura is a traditional *mujer varonil*, a transvestite woman who attempts to obtain justice for herself.<sup>14</sup> As Katy Emck points out in her article 'Female Transvestism and Male Self-Fashioning', cross-dressing presents identity as performative (other characters will actually take Rosaura for a man) and so disturbs accepted gender roles. Rosaura's shifting identity signifies a 'borderline gender status' and arouses male apprehensions (her father's in particular) regarding the 'blurring or transgression of social limits' (Emck 1996:78 and 85). Rosaura's androgynous status (a sign of the disquieting mobility of the social order) is possible within the dreamlike framework, but it is too aberrant to be kept at the closure. Indeed, Rosaura is finally re-inserted into the patriarchy and becomes a wife. Nonetheless, she is an instance of female insubordination for most of the performance and behaves more daringly than her male counterparts.

The play's opening reveals a mountain (perhaps on a lateral platform at stage right) from which Rosaura gradually descends. Shortly afterwards her servant Clarín (the play's *gracioso*, i.e. fool or clown) also appears on stage.<sup>15</sup> Rosaura and Clarín immediately see 'strange events' in the Polish setting: Rosaura discovers the tower in which Segismundo is

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<sup>13</sup> Lewis-Smith writes that the sub-plot concerning Rosaura recalls the 'confusion intrigues' typical of *comedias de capa y espada* (cloak and sword plays, 'light romantic dramas') (Lewis-Smith 1998:15). Yet, I think that the problem of Rosaura's honour (and the serious social effects it may have if Astolfo in the end did not agree to marry her) detaches the sub-plot from pure comedy. Far from being a mere personal offence, the fraud Rosaura and Violante have suffered has sombre social consequences: because an honourless woman has no value in a patriarchal society, she cannot get married and attain a respectable rank.

<sup>14</sup> Rosaura resembles Cleomena, the Amazon-like heroine of Behn's *The Young King*. Both women carry a sword and fight on the battleground; however, Cleomena is the main protagonist of Behn's tragicomedy and the audience actually sees her use swords (and pens) versus her male enemies.

<sup>15</sup> Clarín is an archetypal *gracioso*: 'unheroic, self-assertively talkative, impertinent, facetious' (Lewis-Smith 1998:75).

imprisoned, most likely located on a lateral platform at stage left (see Allen 1993:35-36).<sup>16</sup> The enchanted tower of coarse architecture is placed at the foot of rocks and resembles 'a boulder' rolled down from the top of the mountain (7-9). The dark, 'grim maw' of the tower is open: the two wanderers hear 'a noise of chains' and a 'sad cry' (Segismundo's) (9).<sup>17</sup> Rosaura then sees the small lamp that, with its 'dubious light', makes the tower even darker than it is; she decides to listen to the misfortunes of the 'living corpse' inside the dungeon (9).<sup>18</sup> Finally, she and Clarín (and probably the audience) distinguish Segismundo dressed in animal skins and in chains (9).<sup>19</sup> The opening, as Benabu observes, freely delves into 'the realm of the fantastic': within the otherworldly tower, a human being (Segismundo) lives in a monstrous condition, deprived of any autonomy (Benabu 2003:31). However, the unfolding of the action will soon make the early modern spectators realise that the dreamlike circumstances bear a resemblance to their historical and political situation.

Segismundo's initial speech chimes with the age's pessimism: he laments the fact that being born is itself a crime and protests against his lack of freedom ('Ah, woe is me! Ah, how wretched I am! / Heavens, I seek to inquire – [...] what crime I committed') (11). The prince's encounter with Rosaura owns an intense bodily quality: at first, Rosaura's overhearing of his words enrages Segismundo; afterwards, the very reception of her *phenomenal* presence softens him and her voice and her image confuse him. The prince's

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<sup>16</sup> The play's three acts contain seven *cuadros* (scenes), three of which take place in an unspecified room of King Basilio's palace. Another three scenes are located in or around Segismundo's tower, while the last one is set 'in an indeterminate location in the mountains' (Ruano de la Haza 1987:56). In his analysis of a (hypothetical) staging of *Life Is a Dream*, Ruano de la Haza argues that the play was staged in a very simple way, without straining the imagination and credulity of the audience (see Ruano de la Haza 1987:51-63). The disruption among the three acts would have been minimal, but the resources on stage (for instance, the constant presence of Segismundo's tower) would have maximized the visual impact. The tower, the palace and the mountain would have been an imitation of these places; for instance, a mountain could be a ramp located at either side of the main stage platform. When the play's action moved to the palace, the mountain remained in full view; being located at the sides of the stage, however, the mountain would have not distracted the audience's attention from the main action.

<sup>17</sup> The dark prison, as Everett Hesse puts it, is 'a womb symbol': Segismundo is properly born (or re-born) only once he has left it and has publicly proved his socio-political maturity (Hesse 1984:121). In the first act Clotaldo says that Segismundo 'died' before he was born 'because of a heavenly law': hence, the tower reminds the audience of a grave as well as of a womb (23). The tower is a 'womb-tomb' and, in line with Christian beliefs, portrays 'life and death as inseparable' (Piluso 1986:196).

<sup>18</sup> The small lamp beside Segismundo has an iconic task and stands both for his miserable condition and for the (Christian) enlightenment he gradually seems to gain.

<sup>19</sup> Clotaldo (Segismundo's jailer) will define the tower as a 'forbidden place' housing a 'marvel'; Rosaura and Clarín will be carried away from it with bandaged eyes, in order not to be able to locate the dreamlike building in the future (21).

previous sensuous experiences have been limited - he has only beheld '*this* rustic wilderness' and spoken to Clotaldo; *now* Rosaura is 'amazing [his] eyes and thrilling [his] ears' (17). Segismundo appears to become addicted to Rosaura's presence, as if to compensate for the sensual deprivation he has suffered from inside the tower:

Each time I look at you, / you fill me with new wonderment, / and the more I gaze on you / the more I long to do so. [...] / seeing that seeing gives me death, / I am dying to see. (17)

Significantly, his first vision of Rosaura contains an element of deception: though she introduces herself as 'a sad man', Segismundo is truly attracted to her; the (apparent) homoerotic penchant shows the artificiality of conventional gender positions (15). Segismundo's insistence on the visual aspect of the meeting depicts Rosaura's (androgynous) body as an object of optical admiration. The audience knows that Rosaura is actually a woman actress: she is a female performer whose controversial profession is the target of contemporary antitheatricalists and whose erotic charm is possibly a magnet for early modern theatregoers.<sup>20</sup> Yet Rosaura too exerts visual (and aural) agency and her reaction to Segismundo's image mirrors his own. Like the prince, Rosaura highlights the amazement of her senses: 'Awe-struck at seeing you, / astonished at hearing you, / I don't know what I can say to you, / or what I can ask you' (17). Accordingly, also Segismundo's male body (probably barely covered by the animal skins) is the focus of Rosaura's female gaze; at least within the (dreamlike) tower, the relationship between the two protagonists enjoys an atypical gender parity. The emphasis on ocular perception, furthermore, alludes to the spectators' own experience within the *corral*: 'new wonderment' is perhaps what the audience feels looking at the exotic setting and at the peculiar events (17).

Once Clotaldo (Segismundo's tutor and jailer) has taken Rosaura and Clarín away from the tower, the first act moves to King Basilio's palace and further explains the political problem the play deals with. Perhaps thanks to the dreamlike circumstances, a number of incongruities surround the king's figure and make his 'natural' authority vulnerable. At court

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<sup>20</sup> In his prison Orsames (the young king of Behn's tragicomedy) has with Urania a sensuous encounter similar to that between Segismundo and Rosaura; however, Behn further emphasises the erotic aspect of the scene. In *Love in the 'Corral'* O'Connor clearly describes the notorious status of female performers in early modern Madrid: 'since women ought to be silenced, covered up, and removed from public view, theatrical entertainments contravened all three socio-moral prohibitions [...] the presence of women on stage directly challenged [...] the cultural heritage of Spain and contributed to a laxity in discipline [...] or rejection [...] of time-honoured moral precepts and teachings of the church' (O'Connor 2000:89).

King Basilio reveals to on- and off-stage onlookers that he has a son and elucidates why he decided to keep him imprisoned for so many years.<sup>21</sup> As in the tower, in the royal palace the emphasis is on prodigious events causing 'astonishment' and which the spectators 'marvel at' (37-39). Frightful was what Clorilene (Segismundo's mother) distinguished in her dreams before giving birth: she 'saw her entrails / being burst by a bold / monster in human shape; / dyed in her blood, / he was killing her' (41).<sup>22</sup> Dreadful was what Basilio and his court observed at the prince's birth: 'the greatest, most terrifying / eclipse ever suffered by / the sun from the time when it bloodily / bewailed the death of Christ' (41).<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, in his books Basilio saw (or assumed he saw) his son's ghastly future: he would become 'the most insolent man, / the most cruel prince, / and the most impious monarch'; his kingdom would be 'fragmented and divided' (43). The king was above all troubled by the vision of Segismundo setting his foot on his father's head and of the king prostrating himself before the prince.

Basilio knows that the scandalous narration may alienate his subjects from himself and rationally motivates his past resolution: Segismundo's captivity has been an attempt 'to see whether a wise man can prevail over the stars' (47). King Basilio partly acknowledges his misdeed and declares that his decision goes against 'Christian charity': Catholic dogma teaches that fate merely inclines, but never compels, somebody's 'free will' (47).<sup>24</sup> In addition, Basilio has abused his monarchical right: according to Juan de Mariana in *De rege et Regis institutione* (1599), the king has absolute power in respect of making war, administering justice, and appointing judges; however, the sovereign cannot ignore his people's will, create or invalidate laws on his own, and modify succession rules (see Lauer

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<sup>21</sup> Kagan explains that in early modern Spain royal births 'were regularly accompanied by the circulation of fulfilment prophecies' (Kagan 1990:3). At times, prophecies were also employed by religious preachers to attack a secular regime, as Savonarola in Florence (1491) or Thomas Müntzer in Germany did (1525). The negative prophecy about Segismundo's future has therefore a sort of historical likelihood.

<sup>22</sup> As Robert A. Lauer points out, Basilio's wife and sister (Estrella's mother) are both called Clorilene; this detail may imply that the king committed incest and may pass judgement on his past conduct (see Lauer 1994:255).

<sup>23</sup> Segismundo might be regarded as a Christ-like figure: he lives a metaphorical death in the tower to atone for his father's fault; he enjoys new life when he (seemingly) accepts (and openly shows to his people) the Catholic doctrine of free will, unconditional love and forgiveness. According to Frederick A. De Armas, Basilio fails to note that after death (the symbolic eclipse at Segismundo's birth) 'there may be resurrection' (De Armas 1983:215).

<sup>24</sup> Lewis-Smith stresses that 'Basilio's unreformed thinking is reminiscent of the Lutheran doctrine that human nature is utterly corrupt' (Lewis-Smith 1998:107). In his book *On Calderón*, James Maraniss so presents the (Catholic) issue of free will in Calderón's works: it has 'its clearest form' in his religious plays, it is 'discussed openly and acted upon' in his metaphysical plays (like *Life Is a Dream*), and it is 'implied' in his honour plays (Maraniss 1978:14).

1994:259).<sup>25</sup> The last point is one of the fundamental concerns of *Life Is a Dream*: since Segismundo has his father's blood, he is the natural (i.e. lawful) heir to the Polish throne; the commoners who support Segismundo during the civil war also champion the principle of rank exclusivity.<sup>26</sup> The (very public) scene puts on view the questionable conduct of a learned and supposedly wise ruler.<sup>27</sup> In fact, in order to free Poland from a (would-be) tyrant, Basilio himself has acted unfairly: he has divested Segismundo of his inborn privilege and the nation of its divinely sanctioned young king. Basilio has also plainly contradicted himself: in the past he insisted that the stars do not lie; before his court he claims that destiny cannot force anybody's will. By postponing his son's (illicit) dethronement and by giving him another chance, King Basilio still presents himself as a prudent and laudable monarch: he will 'numb' the courtiers' (and the spectators') 'senses', place Segismundo on the throne for one day, and watch his (dream) performance (47).<sup>28</sup> All the same, on- and off-stage audiences have been made aware of the king's past errors and may not believe the honesty of his current intentions.

In conclusion, the first act's dreamlike circumstances introduce the extra-ordinariness of Rosaura's sexual identity and objectives, of Segismundo's brutal condition and of Basilio's personal and political inhumanity. The title and the exposition of the key conflict (the Basilio/Segismundo collision) indicate that this philosophical play will reach a placid (and Catholic-orientated) resolution. Even so, the critical gender and rank issues that have been brought in will disturb the accepted notion that 'life is a dream'.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Guillermo Barclay's *De Regno et Regali Potestate* (1600) maintains that a king loses his supremacy in two cases: when he behaves tyrannically or when he assigns the authority received from his predecessors to a person of different blood (see Lauer 1994:259).

<sup>26</sup> In Behn's *The Young King* the succession issue relates more to gender than to blood: the play juxtaposes a male heir (Orsames) to a female heiress (Cleomena) and predictably sees the victory of the former over the latter.

<sup>27</sup> Basilio has great mathematical and astrological knowledge and is likened to Thales (he is able to predict the coming of eclipses) and Euclid. According to Brody, Basilio's 'pseudo-scientific' figure may somewhat allude to the astrological debates taking place in seventeenth-century Europe (especially through the discoveries of the Pole Copernicus and the Italian Galileo) (Brody 1969:61).

<sup>28</sup> Basilio's words emphasise the choice of a specific setting and the importance of role-playing: 'I shall place Segismundo [...] / on my throne, beneath my canopy – / [...] / where he will govern and rule you / and where all of you submissively / will swear obedience to him' (47). Having being informed of Segismundo's existence, Astolfo exclaims 'let Segismundo appear' and likens the prince's image to a sort of magical vision (49).

<sup>29</sup> Clotaldo's words aptly conclude a first act whose intricacy *looks* impossible to unscramble: 'What muddled labyrinth / is this, [...] in such a confusing abyss, / all of heaven is one great omen / and the whole world one great marvel!' (57). Clotaldo has just found out that Rosaura is a woman ('I'm not what I seem', she tells him) and that Astolfo has 'affronted' her honour (57).

## **II: The palace *dream* in its phenomenal and social facets.**

This second section mainly investigates the play's second act and its enactment of Segismundo's palace *dream*. In II.1 I describe the sensory attributes of the court *dream* and reflect on the indistinctness of dream and reality. In contrast, in II.2 I focus on the socio-political aspects of the court *dream* and propose that the *dream* enables an important critique of those same ideologies which *appear* to triumph at the end of the performance.

### **II.1: A *dream* that *feels like reality*.**

The second act focuses on Segismundo's palace *dream* (or performance) and, like the two Shakespearean comedies studied in chapter 3, draws attention to the fact that actuality and appearances are hardly distinguishable. Segismundo's dream *feels* real (in fact, it *is* real) and invites a phenomenological investigation of its sensory traits. Like the on-stage dream and the performance, the reality outside the theatre encloses illusive moments, role-playing and sudden and implausible transformations. Given that no steady certainty about things can be accomplished, even the admirable conversion of Prince Segismundo may be a politically profitable fiction. As appropriate to its age's disillusionment, *Life Is a Dream* displays very often the fickleness of the senses and demonstrates the shakiness of the 'things of the world' (Heiple 1993:119). Various moments of the palace *dream* show the characters' movements and the physical contact between their bodies. Verbs like 'to see', 'to look at', 'to gaze' and 'to behold', 'to hear', 'to overhear' and 'to listen to', as well as 'to seize', repeatedly underline the phenomenal quality of the events on stage: they incite the audience to receive the performance sensuously and, hence, cautiously. In particular, the characters use the verb 'to see' no less than eighty-five times, as fitting of a culture that intentionally meddles with the illusions the gaze is subject to. The *desengaño* motif, however, does not put forward the falseness of the performance; in fact, one's sensory perceptions are unreliable in real life as much as within the performance. By calling attention to the fallibility of the perceptible experiences the characters live on stage, the performance shows that similar experiences may be fallacious even outside the theatre.

The seeming/being confusion is prominent from the beginning of the second act, when Clotaldo recounts what Segismundo experienced before being drugged: the prince talked with his jailer about the 'mighty eagle', fell asleep after having drunk the beverage, was

taken to the royal palace and put in Basilio's bed (61).<sup>30</sup> The king and Clotaldo (as the Lord or Oberon do in the Shakespearean comedies I have studied) exploit his unconsciousness to carry out their scheme: the (supposed) dream - a sort of 'time travel' - swiftly takes Segismundo from one location (the tower) to another (the court) (States 1997:8-9). The 'certain herbs' the prince drank make him so *look like* 'a living corpse' that Clotaldo himself almost fears for his life: Clotaldo knows that Segismundo's 'semblance of death' is illusion (the product of medical artifice in this case) (63). All the same, to Clotaldo's eyes the prince seems *truly* dead and *really* arouses concern (59). The 'medical art' includes 'natural mysteries' exactly as the theatrical art does: borrowing Gilman's words, the performance is 'a complementary juncture of artifice and truth' (Gilman 1978:150).

The court *dream* could remind the audience of an actual oneiric experience, as within it unfeasible events take place abruptly and tangibly. The Lord in *The Taming of the Shrew* forces the beggar Sly to believe he is a rich man; likewise, for Segismundo the palace scene is a brief escape from his everyday condition: it does not last long, but *seems* (and actually *is*) intensely *real*. The *dream* begins with 'musicians singing' and 'servants dressing' a 'dumbfounded' Segismundo (71). The prince's reaction recalls Sly's awakening in the Lord's house and Hermia's and Helena's response to the incidents in the forest. Indeed, Segismundo draws attention to his visual perception and to the life/dream muddle:

What's this I *see*? / [...] What do I *behold*? / I *marvel at* it with little fear, / but I believe it only with great doubt. / [...] To say I'm dreaming is mistaken, / I know very well I'm awake. / Am I not Segismundo? (71, emphasis added)

Like Sly, the lovers and Bottom, within the *dream* Segismundo has no choice but to believe that what he sees and hears, though so drastically different from his previous life, is *reality*. Exactly as in Sly's case, Segismundo is paradoxically both right and wrong in stating that he is awake: his bodily sensations tell him that he is not dreaming in the palace, yet he will believe he was once back in the tower.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Through the discussion about the eagle (the most powerful of all birds), Clotaldo seems to predispose the prince's mood toward ambition and pride. In fact, Segismundo tells Clotaldo that he 'wouldn't submit / to another man of [his] own free will' (63). For Artemidorus the eagle is a 'noble' and 'free-spirited' animal and indicates 'men of this kind' (*Oneirocritica*: book 4, section 56).

<sup>31</sup> States' idea that the enacted play is 'an induced dream' (as related in chapter 2) particularly suits *Life Is a Dream*: Segismundo watches and experiences a *real* theatrical moment, but is led to think it is only a dream. As Segismundo asks himself, the spectator may wonder how it has been possible 'to have been so thoroughly within a world that was within my own head' (States 1985:203). Segismundo initially relies on his sensorial perceptions and on his judgment to claim he

Given the importance of the visual aspect of the court *dream*, I would like to reflect on the notion of sight as portrayed within this *dream* (as well as afterwards in Segismundo's tower). At court Segismundo is both viewer and viewed, both outside and inside the dream frame his father has designed. At times he is a spectator (a gazing subject) of his own dream and 'marvels at' things and people he has never seen before: 'a luxurious palace', 'fabrics and brocade', 'an excellent bed' and 'well-dressed and energetic servants' (71). At times he is an (unaware) actor within the *dream*, the object of the gaze of on- and off-stage onlookers. The dream compels the prince to believe in his new identity, at least provisionally: the people who watch him, listen to him, and interact with him confirm the validity of the weird experience. At court, therefore, the idea of sight mainly relates to Galenic theory (as discussed in chapter 2).<sup>32</sup> Perhaps because his previous sensory experiences have been meagre, Segismundo seems 'a more or less empty vessel' that intensely receives the *species* (particles) issuing from what he sees (Burke 2000:57). These *species* can influence the viewer and somehow mould his/her essence, as Basilio has in mind when he originally orchestrates the palace *dream*. Indeed, what Segismundo observes within his *dream* will (ostensibly) transform his persona: at first, the things around him reveal his genealogy and foster his desire for power; back in the tower, what alters Segismundo's viewpoint may be, more than ethical considerations, the disappearance of those sumptuous objects. Crucially, both the fake and the real dream he goes through correct his vision – or, rather, they opportunely tailor it to his own ambitions and to his community's political needs.

In the Shakespearean comedies analysed in chapter 3, during the *dream* some characters perceive things 'with parted eye'. Segismundo does the same at court, where some of the people he meets appear double.<sup>33</sup> For example, Segismundo looks at

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is not dreaming: 'I'm not dreaming, because I feel and believe / that which I was and that which I am' (87).

<sup>32</sup> In line with Galenic theory, at court Segismundo defines 'man' as 'a world in miniature' and 'woman' as 'a heaven in miniature' (89).

<sup>33</sup> Dual elements populate *Life Is a Dream*, especially as to the portrayal of its characters. For instance, Basilio's story is parallel to Clotaldo's: the two men share a dishonourable past (Basilio has deprived his son of a normal life, Clotaldo has abandoned Rosaura's mother). Dualism informs the relationship between Astolfo and Estrella, Segismundo's cousins and possible successors of Basilio. Basilio wants to 'join together' their separate claims to his kingdom, in case Segismundo failed the palace test (or dream) (49). As the two potential male heirs to the throne, Segismundo and Astolfo also set up a binary opposition. During their first meeting, Astolfo suggests that they 'stand on equal terms' and asks Segismundo to show greater respect for him (79). When the prince attempts to kill Clotaldo, Segismundo and Astolfo duel with their swords, transporting their rivalry from a metaphorical to a physical and actual level (97). Astolfo states that his and Segismundo's case shows 'different aspects' of the same theme. Segismundo's predicted misfortunes appear to

Clotaldo's apparently twofold image: the man who 'mistreats [him] in prison' treats him *now* 'with such respect' (73). The two incongruous visions of Clotaldo are true and match his different social statuses (or theatrical roles) in the tower and at court. In the former, Clotaldo is a mentor who educates his pupil rigidly; in the latter, he is a courtier who has to humble himself before his prince. While other viewers (the Lord, Oberon, Basilio and his courtiers, and the off-stage spectators) grasp the on-stage picture, Segismundo and the other 'dreamers' in question hold only an incomplete perspective.<sup>34</sup> The accent on split visual perception within the palace *dream* continues when Rosaura – 'attired as a lady-in-waiting' – enters the stage (89). Once again, Segismundo looks at her 'with parted eye': he sees in her the same 'man' who descended the mountain at the performance's start and wonders about his/her further transformation. Segismundo is perplexed by Rosaura's shifting image, an erratic element which stresses the inconsistency of one's identity and 'produces mental confusion' (Hesse 1984:29). At court Rosaura's and Segismundo's amended roles and costumes make it difficult for them to recognize each other:

SEGISMUNDO: But what's this I see?

ROSAURA: I both *doubt* and *believe* what I'm seeing.

SEGISMUNDO: I have seen this beauty / before.

ROSAURA: I have seen this pomp, this / grandeur locked up / in a cramped prison. (89-91, emphasis added)

Their optical experience in the palace evokes a dream spectacle: it merges the baffled recollection of a past experience (their first encounter in the tower) with the novelty of a different (and improbable) location and characterisation. Rosaura's concurrent use of the verbs 'to doubt' and 'to believe' is particularly important and summarises the perceptive experience on- and off-stage onlookers live. In fact, Rosaura's response clearly testifies to the simultaneous make-believe and actuality of dream (and performance): her and Segismundo's twofold identities as prisoner/prince and man/woman at once *seemed* and *seem* real, at once *had* and *have* a fabricated quality.<sup>35</sup>

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be true; Astolfo's promise of 'good things' seems to be 'both wrong and right': Estrella, though inclined toward him, has not accepted his proposal yet (99).

<sup>34</sup> As discussed in chapter 3, audiences of *The Taming of the Shrew* would probably wonder about what is visually real or unreal: is Katherina *actually* tamed? Which Petruchio is authentic, the one in Padua or the one who preaches in his own house? Likewise, is *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* (apparent) happy ending more correct and true than what we observe in the forest (or in the dream)? In other words, is Lysander *really* in love with Hermia? Is Demetrius *really* in love with Helena? Is the Pyramus and Thisbe performance *really* so laughable?

<sup>35</sup> Basilio's rule over his son's life determines Segismundo's contrasting roles, whereas Rosaura's depend on Astolfo's betrayal and Clotaldo's orders. Segismundo and Rosaura threaten the Polish

The *dreamer* Segismundo considers his (and other characters') vigorous actions as the proof that he is awake and is *actually* living these events. For this reason, here I present a thick description of the vivacious on-stage business and show the lifelike-ness of the *dream* performance. For example, Clotaldo kisses Segismundo's hand, while the prince wants to kiss Estrella's; Segismundo seizes the Second Servant in his arms before killing him; he presses Rosaura strongly and draws his dagger against Clotaldo, whereas the old nobleman kneels and seizes the prince's weapon. Again, Segismundo and Clotaldo struggle after the prince has threatened to rape Rosaura; Clotaldo loses the fight and falls at Segismundo's feet; Astolfo interposes to save Clotaldo's life and also duels with the prince (95-97). Segismundo relies on these very physical deeds to corroborate his belief that he is not dreaming; the audience may do the same to trust in the genuineness of the performance. For instance, angry with Clotaldo who mentions 'the light of disillusionment', the prince tells him: 'by killing you, I'll see / whether it's a dream or reality' (95).<sup>36</sup> It *might* be a mere dream, yet it decidedly *feels like* reality.<sup>37</sup>

## II.2: The cultural purchase of the dream.

In spite of the Polish locale and the (at times) otherworldly situation, the political crisis *Life Is a Dream* tackles may appear familiar enough to early modern Spanish theatregoers. In his analysis of the play, Lewis-Smith calls attention to the resemblance between the unhealthy Basilio/Segismundo relationship and that involving King Philip II (1556-98) and his 'unbalanced heir Don Carlos' (Lewis-Smith 1998:9).<sup>38</sup> Don Carlos' mother, like

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kingdom because they bring a hidden past to life: Segismundo embodies Basilio's fear of losing power, Rosaura reminds Clotaldo of his unfair treatment of her mother and of his paternal inadequacy. As Ruth Anthony puts it, 'in the pair Rosaura/Segismundo can be seen the mechanisms of desire and repression on the basis of which Poland is structured and because of which Poland and Moscow remain forever separated' (Anthony 1993:179). Rosaura and Segismundo are 'the saviour twins' who trouble as well as renovate the kingdom (Anthony 1993:179).

<sup>36</sup> The swordfight reminds the audience of *comedias de capa y espada* (cloak-and-dagger plays) and again indicates the performance's mixture of various genres. The duels in the palace are not a 'farce', writes Benabu, and serve to increase the dramatic tension (Benabu 2003:27). Like other episodes, the swordfight moments underscore Segismundo's irascible personality and greatly contrast with his (apparent) composure in the last act.

<sup>37</sup> The characteristics of the palace *dream* and Segismundo's reaction to it match part of States' description of 'the imprint of the dream': the complete credulity of the dreamer, the self-generative and autonomous power of the dream image to appear without volition on the part of the dreamer and the power of the image to provoke an extreme emotional charge (States 1993:9).

<sup>38</sup> In his article 'Calderón's *Life Is a Dream*' Milton A. Buchanan writes that in Calderón's times 'the story of the harsh treatment meted out to Don Carlos by his father Philip II was not so remote [...] as to have been forgotten' (Buchanan 1932:1315). Buchanan also stresses the similarities between

Clorilene, died while giving birth to him. In 1568 his father feared an act of treason and put Don Carlos under indefinite arrest, though many of his subjects thought the resolution 'was precipitate and unjust' (Lewis-Smith 1998:9). As seen in section I, Philip IV (the sovereign when *Life Is a Dream* was performed) was an equally controversial figure: specifically, he gambled with the issue of his succession by procreating over thirty bastards and hence making his royal blood hardly exclusive.

As Kagan and Osborne detail in their books, Lucrecia de León's dreams frequently censure the king's (Philip II) conduct and share with Segismundo's palace *dream* common concerns. In her dreams Lucrecia often visits the royal palace, blames the king 'for Spain's impending loss', and at times acts as 'the king's spiritual advisor' (Kagan 1990:79 and 74). Other visions present the king as 'a weak, aging, decrepit monarch' and 'insinuate that the king arranged for the murder of his son' (Kagan 1990:82). Lucrecia's dreams are especially reminiscent of Segismundo's court dream when they depict Philip II 'as a father who has failed to look out for his children's welfare': Segismundo too reproaches King Basilio 'for the unfair way' in which his father raised him (Kagan 1990:82 and 99). Lucrecia's dreams most likely spring from her own personal needs: she is 'an otherwise neglected adolescent' who sees her father (Alonso Franco de León) as 'a harsh disciplinarian' and 'a poor provider' (Kagan 1990:33).<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, Lucrecia's dreams portray her psychological processes as culturally specific: the king's misdemeanours and her society's communal anxieties become the stuff of her dream-work. As Osborne writes, during the Habsburg reign Spanish subjects only share 'the illusion of glory': Lucrecia's dreams disapprove of a monarch who is not loved and become dangerous as they strike 'a cord' (Osborne 2001:64).<sup>40</sup> *Life Is a Dream* is similarly critical of the (Polish) monarchy and employs dreams to manifest this discontent: the oneiric visions powerfully enact the social reality of a community's reliance on its monarch's (fair or unfair) decisions and evoke the disasters that may rise from them. Like Lucrecia's, the dreams of *Life Is a Dream* menace 'the foundations of secular authority' (as represented

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Segismundo and John of Austria, the natural son of Charles V, who 'had been brought up ignorant of his high birth' (Buchanan 1932:1315).

<sup>39</sup> Kagan reasons that Lucrecia seems to know that 'recognition and identity' can be 'earned by dreaming' (Kagan 1990:163). In a similar way, thanks to his *dream* Segismundo is revealed as Basilio's legitimate heir and gradually finds his own (politically appropriate) self.

<sup>40</sup> Lucrecia's dreams and their relationship to *Life Is a Dream* somehow parallel the rapport between *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Simon Forman's dream of Queen Elizabeth. Lucrecia repeatedly dreams of Queen Elizabeth and of the predicament of the Catholics in England. In her visions political and religious worries strictly intersect: Lucrecia sees the enemies of Spain as 'the enemies of the faith – both within and without the country' (Osborne 2001:70). Moreover, her dreams frequently articulate the Spaniards' fear of English sea power (see Kagan 1990:124-125).

by Basilio and his son) and of 'social power and privilege' (the 'well-born and well-educated men' who populate the court) (Kagan 1990:165).

In *The Limits of Illusion*, Anthony J. Cascardi remarks that the (oneiric/theatrical) illusion within Calderón's works normally explores questions of social responsibility, authority and politics; the theatre publicly mirrors and proposes a solution to these collective worries. The path to responsible action in the world passes through the embracing of illusion: for Cascardi 'the self-aware use of illusion is one of the keys to the process of healthy social self-imagining' (Cascardi 1984:13). Cascardi maintains that Segismundo both embraces and dispels the oneiric (or theatrical) deception: he learns from it in that he rejects the fictitious nature of the world in favour of the extramundane. In contrast, my analysis underscores how Segismundo's disillusionment about material things could itself be illusive and does not entail a refusal of political power. Segismundo may repeatedly state that life is a vain dream, but he will in all probability enjoy the benefits deriving from his status. Furthermore, the *dream* conveys doubts about his capability to be a just monarch and might weaken his final success.<sup>41</sup>

Even prior to the deliberate dream performance, Basilio's court *is* a theatre: a bounded space within which social roles are accurately determined.<sup>42</sup> Borrowing Hornby's words, role-playing reminds us 'that all human roles are relative' and that 'identities are learned rather than innate' (Hornby 1986:71-72). The theatricality of one's public conduct shows up when various characters meet Segismundo at court and frankly illustrate that rank and gender codes are imposed.<sup>43</sup> The courtiers, in fact, are actors in Basilio's designed fiction as well as directors who try to instruct Segismundo about how to act properly. For instance, Astolfo and Estrella affectedly greet the prince ('the sun of Poland'), but are unhappy with his attitude towards them: they think he should show them 'greater respect' and be 'a more refined courtier' (77-81). Observing this all-pervading recital, the audience may be reminded of the fictitiousness of its own society: early modern Madrid is a stage on which human beings perform (well or badly) the (fixed) part God has given them. The palace dream (during which Segismundo is 'put to the test') is but a more visible (or more

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<sup>41</sup> Also Orsames' dreams in Behn's *The Young King* amusingly show his political incompetence and social inadequacy.

<sup>42</sup> In Friedman's words, 'Segismundo's 'dream' takes place in the Polish royal palace, which Basilio transforms into a theatre contained within the spectacle' (Friedman 1993:51).

<sup>43</sup> Arguing with Basilio, Segismundo himself presents social status as 'natural': 'You're my father and my king; / so that all this grandeur / is given to me by Nature / in accordance with her laws' (87). The prince also gives other examples of 'natural hierarchy' while talking to Rosaura/Astraea in the palace: 'the divine rose' presides over other flowers, 'the diamond' over precious stones, 'the evening star' over all other stars (91).

*theatrical*) enactment of the court's hierarchical system and protocol (65).<sup>44</sup> Should the prince fail his test, Basilio will let him believe that the performance (a phase in *real* life) was a mere dream.

In spite of his celebrated wisdom and divinely-sanctioned right, King Basilio's words refute his own behaviour: he claims that 'it will be a good thing' for Segismundo to realize that 'in this world [...] / everyone who lives is a dreamer' (67). In reality, the court *dream* reveals that Basilio vigorously acts to protect his own (ostensibly illusive) power from his son's (potential) despotism.<sup>45</sup> While the other peers never contradict the king, the *dreamer* Segismundo openly digs up the inconsistency of his father's (and the court's) performance. For example, when Basilio reproaches his son for his violent conduct and refuses to embrace him, Segismundo affirms: 'when a father is capable of showing / such severity to me [...] / it hardly matters at all / that he refuses to embrace me / after he has deprived me of human status' (85). King Basilio, in fact, has oppressed his son for years, lied to his people, and endangered the well-being of his nation (which is on the verge of a civil war). Within the *dream* the courtiers harshly condemn Segismundo's impropriety, but seem to ignore that the prince merely replicates his father's own socio-political misconduct. As A. J. Valbuena-Briones remarks, Segismundo fulfils the old prophecy mainly because of his long imprisonment: his captivity has 'thwarted the development of his free will' (Valbuena-Briones 1993:57). The fact that Basilio and the court expect Segismundo to know and abide by courtly etiquette is simply impracticable: since the prince has lived as a beast for years, he is unlikely to be very different from 'an insolent barbarian' (87). The father, however, has been the main agent of the son's depravity and has deserted his paternal and monarchical duties for years.

In addition to exposing King Basilio's immorality, the court *dream* certainly puts on public view the authoritarian and violent self of a royal heir who should 'naturally' be virtuous and superior. The radical exhibition of Segismundo's degeneracy within the *dream*, I argue, will make his subsequent conversion at least suspicious. Unlike his peers, the *dreamer* Segismundo brings anarchy into the royal palace and does not accept any impositions. As Soufas highlights in her article 'Death as a Laughing Matter':

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<sup>44</sup> Basilio's court might call to mind King Philip IV's: 'the entire Spanish Hapsburg court, with its exceptionally elaborate and formal etiquette and protocol, was a sort of theatre production in itself' (Greer 1991:12).

<sup>45</sup> Seeing Segismundo's insolent conduct in the palace, Clotaldo and Basilio begin to insinuate that his new condition is but a dream: 'What pride you're displaying, / unaware that you're only dreaming!' and 'pay close heed to my admonition / to be humble and tractable, / because you may be just dreaming, / even though you think you're awake!' (75 and 87).

Segismundo [...] transgresses the fixed values of social interaction that are upheld at the Polish court; his behaviour, however, is but the parodic, carnivalesque, and excessive version of the so-called orderly demeanour of those who criticise him. (Soufas 1993:85)

The dream and its surreal ambience facilitate the (temporary) explosion of carnival and the eccentric rendering of the everyday: Segismundo duplicates his father's own tyranny in a hyperbolical way.<sup>46</sup> The oneiric-like situation enables the reversal of accepted practices and mirrors the distortedness of those same practices (imposed as naturally just). Segismundo may remind one of Petruchio's moralising conduct in *The Taming of the Shrew*: through extreme actions, the two men make it more visible than it normally is and satirise the hypocrisy of their community. A few episodes openly display Segismundo's antisocial and autocratic behaviour, a mirror image of his father's. For example, Segismundo is attracted to Estrella first and Rosaura afterwards; he attempts to rape the latter, but Clotaldo's intervention prevents him from actually committing sexual violence on Rosaura.<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, on- and off-stage observers are made aware of Segismundo's illicit and hardly noble desire; his male advantage derives from physical strength, not from a (supposedly) natural and righteous hierarchy.<sup>48</sup> The most disturbing *dream* incident happens when Segismundo, annoyed because the Second Servant persists in telling him how to behave (or to perform his part correctly), resorts to killing him.<sup>49</sup> The prince describes the assassination to the audience (the aural recipient of the invisible homicide) and underlines his own dreamlike omnipotence: 'He fell from the balcony into the sea; / as God lives, it was possible!' (83, emphasis original).<sup>50</sup> The term 'possible' verifies the *actuality* of what is happening on stage and further decreases the distance between dream, performance and life. In fact, Segismundo obtains the countercheck he needs by murdering the servant: he is awake (despite what Basilio and Clotaldo suggest) and

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<sup>46</sup> Also Nashe seems to underscore the carnivalesque quality of oneiric visions: 'no such figure of the first Chaos whereout the world was extraught, as our dreams in the night. In them all states, all sexes, all places, are confounded and meet together' (Nashe 1594:154).

<sup>47</sup> The scene may remind the audience of King Philip IV who, as Greer underlines, always had 'a taste for the attractive actresses of the *corrales*' (Greer 1991:12).

<sup>48</sup> Segismundo is determined to 'throw' Rosaura's honour 'out the window'; he presses her 'very hard', as Clotaldo says, and shows a 'mad desire' (93).

<sup>49</sup> The Second Servant's use of the imperative tense conveys the idea of instructions about how to act: he asks Segismundo to 'observe' that Clotaldo (when keeping him locked in the tower) was only obeying Basilio's decrees, and to 'take note' that he should not be 'so forward' towards Estrella (75-81).

<sup>50</sup> The off-stage audience does not see the prince killing the servant, because he leaves the room 'with everyone following' (83). This way, Calderón limits our intrusiveness and voyeurism toward something as intimate (and in this case shocking) as the oneiric experience.

concretely cleanses his dream space of unpleasant elements.<sup>51</sup> The other characters' repeated blame conflicts with his despotic attitude and inflames his anger: 'nothing seems right' to him if it goes against his 'grain' (81). Segismundo moves within and verbalizes a precise dream space on which he exerts total control: 'Let no one prevent me, [...] / if you interpose, / I'll throw you out the window!' (75). Hence, the window becomes a physical border between Segismundo's dream area inside the palace and everything that stays outside and is not subject to his will.

As Spain does in the transition from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century, between the second and the third act Segismundo gradually moves from the illusion of almighty power to (seeming) disillusionment. Yet this process does not imply the invalidation of the dream. Cascardi observes that in Calderón's plays 'no understanding, no vision is justified or complete unless the frame of the viewer is incorporated into the field of his vision' (Cascardi 1984:15).<sup>52</sup> Likewise, Friedman argues that the dream is 'both analogue and frame': it is the instrument through which the audience might seize 'the essence of the lesson' and 'note the artificiality of the edifice' (Friedman 1993:50-51).<sup>53</sup> The palace *dream* is 'analogue' because it is as *real* and *theatrical* as life itself. Indeed, the dream scene reproduces the fictitiousness of the audience's reality and the importance of role-playing within it; it shows something the audience is used to and metaphorically encloses the off-stage onlookers within itself. On the other hand, the dream area is 'frame' because it enfolds and makes super-perceptible Segismundo's story, i.e. the (Catholic) conviction that mundane life is only a (good or bad) rehearsal for eternal life. Proclaiming that life itself is a dream, Basilio suggests that the palace performance is not simply false: it is a more perceptible fiction inside the greater fiction of life, a more noticeable dream-within-the-dream.

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<sup>51</sup> Edwin Honig writes in *Calderón and the Seizures of Honor* that 'the other characters are there to aid, block, and test him [Segismundo] along the way, as in a dream vision' (Honig 1972:163).

<sup>52</sup> Burke maintains that in the sixteenth century and in the first half of the seventeenth century knowing is the result of seeing something: 'in the drama of the Golden Age [...] the old ways of understanding the world continue to pertain. The individual is not yet the modern entity, independent, separate, the conquering subject who from a particular perspective controls all that he or she surveys' (Burke 2000:24). Rather, the early modern being is a spectator in a theatre, 'the depository of the gaze of all the others' (Burke 2000:24).

<sup>53</sup> In a similar way, Hornby observes that the play-within-the-play (or the dream-within-the-dream) is 'both reflective and expressive' of a society's (cynic) view about life: 'when the prevalent view is that the world is in some way illusory or false, then the play within the play becomes a metaphor for life itself' (Hornby 1986:45). In theory, however, Catholic doctrine does not uphold the complete equation of life and dream: life is a dream in the sense that its goods and appeals are futile, not that life itself has no value at all. Consequently, human beings have the moral responsibility to *obrar bien* (to do good): their future salvation depends on the goodness of their performance on the world's stage (See Valbuena-Briones 1993:54-56).

The last part of the palace *dream* features strong predictive elements that have often been connected to oneiric visions. As explained in chapter 1, early modern dream theorists believe dreams to be either the product of imagination (influenced by the humours or daily concerns) or of supernatural forces: in this second case, the sender could be Satan or God. For instance, Kagan maintains that the explicitly political content of Lucrecia de León's dreams, together with her reputation as an honest woman, would have suggested a supernatural, probably divine, source (Kagan 1990:43). Likewise, Basilio considered the prophecy about Segismundo and his wife's dreams 'a heavenly law'; observing his son's bad performance in the palace, he is (erroneously?) certain that 'heaven has kept its word' (23 and 87).<sup>54</sup> The prediction and the farsighted dreams enabled Basilio to foresee (to see before) how his son would have behaved at court: Segismundo indeed *seems* to execute those past visions. However, what the king, the court and the audience have watched is at once true and false: it is and is not the fulfilment of the prophecy. Segismundo has behaved as a tyrant, but he has not completely accomplished the prophecy yet: thus far, for instance, his father has not prostrated himself in front of him. Right before leaving the court, Segismundo warns his father that 'some day' he 'may see' Basilio's 'grey hair' at his feet (99). The king's reply categorically excludes this possibility:

Well, before you see such a sight, / you'll go back to sleep, and you'll believe / that everything that has happened to you, / since it entailed worldly goods, was just a dream. (99)<sup>55</sup>

On- and off-stage spectators will look at both events: they will observe Basilio's prostration and his son's conversion. Apparently, the final act will overturn the past interpretation of the prophecy: Segismundo will become the new monarch only after having forgiven his father and stated the worthlessness of material things. All the same, the palace *dream* has vividly disclosed another Segismundo: a dictatorial prince who may not be less *real* than the one in view at the end of the performance.

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<sup>54</sup> In his psychoanalytic (Lacanian) study of the play, Henry W. Sullivan stresses its similarities with the Oedipus myth. He argues that Segismundo's birth represents to both parents death. In addition, the prophecy and Segismundo's behaviour in the palace exemplify 'the return of the repressed from the future': Basilio's subdued anxiety is reconstructed retroactively (Sullivan 1993:115).

<sup>55</sup> Once more Basilio's words are at odds with his behaviour: if his political power (a worldly good) is doomed to fade away soon, perhaps he should not care so much about the threat that Segismundo poses to it.

### III: 'All the confusion of hell became summed up in my own Babel': Rosaura, a dreamlike bringer of chaos (159).

This section momentarily breaks away from Segismundo's central figure (and from his dreams) and calls attention to Rosaura's gender and status irregularity. The importance of Rosaura within *Life Is a Dream*, something which has been neglected by previous analyses, lies in the fact that her dreamlike attributes partially challenge the conventional finale of the performance.<sup>56</sup> In some ways, Rosaura's story doubles Segismundo's and enlarges the play's unfavourable portrait of patriarchy.<sup>57</sup> Since patriarchal rules afflict them, the prince and Rosaura are 'companions in misery': Segismundo is oppressed by his father's god-like despotism; Rosaura suffers because of a man who has taken her virginity, the only marketable good she has within a male-governed society (Hesse 1986:123). Multiple definitions sketch the prince's and the heroine's image, and throughout the plot they attempt to turn their identities from uncertain to stable. Segismundo introduces himself through the oxymora 'a living skeleton', 'an animated corpse' and 'a human monster'; Clotaldo states that Rosaura is and is not his 'son' (15, 17 and 29).<sup>58</sup> In spite of the return to traditional order, I propose that Rosaura's nonconformity may still be very vibrant before the audience's eyes at the end of the performance.

In a way that fits the fiction/reality concurrence of the performance, Rosaura intentionally changes her identity in each of the three acts. She is a man in the tower, Estrella's waiting lady (under the name of Astraea) at court, and at once an offended woman and a soldier (a hermaphrodite) in the last act.<sup>59</sup> Rosaura's *present* situation in Poland recalls her mother's predicament in Moscow. Talking to Segismundo, Rosaura remarks that her past is 'a portrait, a copy' of Violante's; Rosaura is 'an unfortunate heiress' to her mother's lot, she 'had the same as hers' (157). Yet Rosaura decides 'to act differently' from her mother:

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<sup>56</sup> For example, among the essays collected in De Armas' *The Prince in the Tower* only Ruth Anthony's 'Violante: The Place of Rejection' discusses the importance of Rosaura and her mother in *Life Is a Dream*.

<sup>57</sup> Honig proposes that Rosaura has the privilege to witness Segismundo's birth scene in the tower (when he is revealed to the public view for the first time) because she is his twin: Rosaura is born into consciousness as soon as she recognises Segismundo's birth. For Honig, the similarity and urgency of Segismundo's and Rosaura's plights set up a kind of 'incest barrier between them': an issue which may explain the fact that they do not get married at the end of the play (Honig 1972:160).

<sup>58</sup> At court Segismundo equates Rosaura to the sunrise; at the same time, he says that her leaving will bring the sunset (89). The actual meaning of her name, 'dawn', contrasts with Estrella's, 'star': this may amplify the opposition between the two women throughout the plot.

<sup>59</sup> As De Armas observes, the name Astraea has been associated with the idea of 'imperial *renovatio*' ever since Virgil's Fourth Eclogue (De Armas 1983:219). Hence Rosaura/Astraea may allude to the need the Polish kingdom has of renovating itself through a new monarch.

Violante passively tolerated Clotaldo's desertion and raised her daughter without any help. In contrast, Rosaura does not accept her dishonourable social position and acts as a man would in order to redress it (161).<sup>60</sup>

As previously mentioned, Rosaura is disguised as a man during her first encounter with the prince in the tower, while he is wretched and in chains. Therefore, in front of the audience there is a cross-dressed woman who is actually more 'masculine' and powerful than a man: Segismundo's 'feminine' figure cannot even move, whereas Rosaura is unconventionally vigorous and ready to kill her unfaithful lover. As Emck points out, Rosaura reflects the socio-political needs and dilemmas of her 'marginalised' and male counterpart (Emck 1996:75). The transvestite woman openly exhibits her 'will to rise above her subordination' and anticipates Segismundo's own desire to leave his abject situation (Emck 1996:79).<sup>61</sup> Rosaura's androgynous identity also illustrates that 'masculinity' is socially achieved more than intrinsically given; Segismundo himself will have to obtain a more 'masculine' status through political action.<sup>62</sup> Rosaura's 'maleness' particularly stands

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<sup>60</sup> Like Rosaura, the servant Clarín fairly mirrors Segismundo's figure. His name ('clarion') is a metaphor for his main function throughout the action: by appealing especially to the sense of hearing, Clarín is the one who often trumpets a truth other characters do not listen to. At court the fool advises Segismundo not to wake up, so as not to realise that his glory was 'a pretence'; he provokes Clotaldo's anger and is hence imprisoned in the tower together with Segismundo (115). Clarín's reaction to this juxtaposes the themes of fiction and reality. Whereas he did not misbehave in the palace as badly as Segismundo did, he himself may be sleeping: 'Is it I, [...], who am trying / to kill my father? [...] / Do I dream or sleep?' (115). The third act shows Clarín as a tragicomic copy of Segismundo, his lamenting speech resembling the one the prince gave when first discovered. Clarín briefly recounts the dreams he had the previous night; his words convey the theatrical potential of oneiric visions: 'After my dreams from last night / I have my sad head / filled with a thousand shawms, / trumpets, and delusions, / processions, crosses, / and flagellants' (125). Ironically, the rebel soldiers mistake Clarín for Segismundo and ask him to be their prince. The *gracioso* proclaims to be ready 'to play [his] part', though he is aware of being (as Segismundo momentarily was) a 'fake prince' on Poland's stage (129). On the other hand, when the civil war fully breaks out, Clarín distances himself from Segismundo: he will play 'the role of Nero, who wasn't concerned about anything' (171). Hiding between some rocks, sure that death will not find him, he wishes to be a passive spectator of 'the whole show' (171). As Basilio explains, Clarín's accidental death confirms that 'the man who tries hardest to escape its [death's] workings is the one who makes them come about' (173). By means of visual and moral opposition, Clarín's tragic destiny predicts a different fate for Segismundo: the prince will not refuse to act daringly (and conveniently) on the world's stage.

<sup>61</sup> Unsurprisingly, on-stage female cross-dressing provoked debates in early modern Spain: 'the symbolic representation of a woman liberated from masculine control [...] projected an image of woman that may have been historically accurate, but was socially, theologically, and culturally unacceptable for those in charge of public images and theatrical representations' (O'Connor 2000:99). Yet O'Connor also draws attention to the importance of female assumption of male attire in Christian tradition, as exemplified by the story of St. Thecla (see O'Connor 2000:96).

<sup>62</sup> At the end of the performance both Segismundo and Rosaura establish a (seemingly) serene relationship with their fathers: Segismundo forgives Basilio and inherits his throne. Rosaura discovers that Clotaldo is her father; she manages to marry Astolfo thanks to the fact that Clotaldo guarantees that she is of noble extraction.

out through the 'gilded sword' she carries: her father Clotaldo left it with her mother Violante in Moscow, so that he could one day recognise his 'son'. When Clotaldo sees the sword, he cannot decide whether 'what's happening is an illusion or reality'; yet he recognises his own 'burnished steel' and discovers himself to have a (seemingly male) child (27, 25 and 53). Clotaldo's sword - a symbolic phallus – metaphorically gives new life to Rosaura in Poland (as it literally did in Moscow): though she committed a crime by entering Segismundo's tower, Clotaldo (aware of being his/her biological father) decides to ask Basilio to spare her.<sup>63</sup>

Hesse argues that Rosaura's multiple images exemplify 'the commonplace notion that the senses cannot be trusted' (Hesse 1986:123). The seventeenth-century scepticism regarding one's sensory perceptions emphasises the precariousness of any certainty, and of gender and rank categories above all. In the tower both Segismundo and Clotaldo believe that Rosaura is a man: her 'external trappings' are 'a riddle, because the one they clothe / isn't what he seems' (57). At court Rosaura undergoes a further metamorphosis: she wears 'appropriate clothing' and changes her name into Astraea under Clotaldo's instructions (69). Furthermore, in the palace Clotaldo gives the sword (that 'once' was his) back to Rosaura: the fact that Rosaura carries a weapon openly puts on view her atypical empowerment (53). Lacking a father who may preserve her honour, Rosaura herself exerts 'male' agency: she becomes a man and is ready to punish Astolfo, the individual responsible for her loss of social respectability. Rosaura's first goal in Poland is to recover the miniature of herself she gave to Astolfo (a token of their commitment to each other). Clotaldo's sword overtly reveals Rosaura's genealogy and her nonconformist gender identity; onto her portrait Rosaura displaces her 'female' body and (sexual) property: the artefact therefore must not 'be seen in another woman's hands' (111).<sup>64</sup> Wondering how she can 'dissemble' in front of Astolfo, Rosaura calls attention to the interweaving of 'natural' and made-up selves: her phenomenal body (her 'voice, tongue, and eyes') may successfully perform Astraea's part, yet her 'soul' may disclose that she is *also* Rosaura

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<sup>63</sup> Like Rosaura and Segismundo, Clotaldo faces the dilemma of 'how to act': he is torn between love toward his 'son' and loyalty to Basilio's kingdom. His story juxtaposes different time dimensions: his sword recalls both his past relationship with Violante and his present awareness of his paternity.

<sup>64</sup> When she is about to face Astolfo, Rosaura/Astraea emphasises her tribulation in a way that evokes Segismundo's words in the first act: 'Can there be anyone in the world / whom unkind heaven / combats with more misfortunes / and besieges with more sorrows?' (103). Rosaura also compares her adversities to the Phoenix ('each one is born out of the preceding one') and connects herself (and Segismundo) to the mythical bird: *as if* they were inhabiting a dream, they endure metaphorical deaths and then re-births (105). Playing the part of Astraea, Rosaura tells Astolfo that her lady Estrella has ordered her to recuperate the female portrait he wears around his neck.

(105).<sup>65</sup> As Segismundo was in the tower, Astolfo is 'dumbfounded' at 'hearing' and 'seeing' her and interrogates her 'deception' (107). Astolfo perceives Rosaura/Astraea in a dual way: he sees her as Astraea, but loves her as Rosaura. His reaction to the Rosaura/Astraea riddle possibly resembles the audience's overall reaction: Astolfo experiences at once detachment (he seems to grasp the illusive nature of the spectacle) and involvement (he *really* engages with that misleading image). Like the whole performance, the Rosaura/Astraea binary blends together truth and fiction: for Astolfo her voice lies articulating Astraea's requests, whereas her eyes do not conceal Rosaura's cross persona.<sup>66</sup>

In addition to the guise of Astraea, Rosaura's portrait further multiplies her presence on stage: art (the painting and theatre) replicates nature so well that the viewer's sight may be deceived. As Estrella puts it, Rosaura's picture is 'the painted likeness' which 'isn't unfaithful to life' (113). The portrait is a commodity Astolfo treasures and does not want to lose: in Poland he is unable to enjoy Rosaura's actual body, but takes pleasure in her objectified and disciplined painted copy. Recovering the picture from Astolfo's hands, Rosaura regains a ('masculine') subject position and refuses to be the passive target of a male gaze. Although she believes herself to have retrieved also a honourable status, she will soon realise she has not. Indeed, in the third act the spectators are told that Astolfo's engagement to Estrella has not been broken; Rosaura (and the actress playing her part) again bemoans women's abject condition within the patriarchy: a woman 'offended and scorned' by male infidelity equals 'a dead woman' (159).<sup>67</sup>

Lastly, Rosaura resorts to an androgynous image to address her social quandary. She meets Segismundo for the third time and wants to side with him in the civil war; Clarín depicts her multifaceted-ness as 'a chaos', 'a hybrid of fire, earth, sea and wind' (153). Like an Amazon, in the final act Rosaura enters the stage riding a horse; her dreamlike figure is distorted because of the speed of the animal carrying her, while her otherworldly

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<sup>65</sup> Before meeting her lover, Rosaura also touches on one of the play's ethical warnings: 'But why do I ponder / on what to do, if it's evident / that, no matter how I plan, / ponder, and plot, / when the moment comes / I will have to act under the dictates / of my sorrow?' (107). She thus reminds the audience of King Basilio's ineffective attempt to control a would-be tragic future.

<sup>66</sup> In this and other moments, the performance resembles an illusionistic painting: it *feels* and *looks like* life, yet it is *also* a fiction. In her discussion of early modern perspectival art, Thorne maintains that 'the beholder must be fully apprised of the fictive nature of what he/she is seeing in order to experience the peculiar pleasures associated with illusionism' (Thorne 2000:79).

<sup>67</sup> Rosaura's grief calls to mind Hermia's and Helena's anguish within the woods of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and overturns the Petrarchan stereotype of the male lover suffering because of female unfaithfulness. However, Rosaura's lamentation is asserted by a real woman and possibly sounds more *authentic* than Hermia's and Helena's.

light blinds Segismundo. Rosaura herself verbalises her protean identity before on- and off-stage onlookers: she recalls that each time Segismundo has gazed on her she has been 'in different attire and guise' (153). Rosaura is *now* 'a hybrid of the two sexes': as a woman, she urges Segismundo to restore her good name; as a man, he/she spurs the prince on to recover his crown (165). Should Segismundo take advantage of her as a woman, Rosaura will play both a 'female' and a 'male' part: in the role of an affronted woman, she will lament to him; in the role of an insulted man, she will kill him to regain her a reputation. Therefore, in the third act Segismundo observes a person (Rosaura) who is 'in between' two genders and merges Diana and Pallas together (163). Her outfit clearly signals her hermaphrodite standing: by wearing both 'fine fabrics and steel', Rosaura questions the naturalness of traditional gender roles and demonstrates the ambiguity of external signs (clothes in this case) (163).

During this third meeting, the androgynous Rosaura establishes an alliance with Segismundo. She lends him the sun/light imagery that applies to herself, describes his future rule as 'natural', and asks him to safeguard her honour: 'so may you dawn upon the world, / gleaming sun of Poland, / and may you protect an unhappy woman' (153). Though Rosaura herself has infringed supposedly 'natural' gender and rank hierarchies, *here* she presents Segismundo's status as predestined and unquestionable. Also, she conventionally counts on male support in order to adjust her own irregular situation. In spite of these contradictions, one needs to notice that in this scene Segismundo is rather inert and hesitant; in contrast, Rosaura is resolute to act and will daringly fight in the civil war. Rosaura stresses the prince's misery: she describes the 'harsh prison' and says that his majesty in the palace was but 'a dream, a ghost, a shade' (155). She compares the darkness of his past and present state with the bright future he may embrace. Critics have remarked that Rosaura embodies the Platonic idea of 'Beauty', the element that stirs the wise man 'to mount the 'heavenly ladder' to God, who is Absolute Beauty' (Synnott 1991:63, emphasis original).<sup>68</sup> Segismundo's re-education, then, takes place via sensory

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<sup>68</sup> As Burke clarifies, 'the early medieval Christian Neoplatonic world view held that true reality existed in another realm and that the things of this world were but a reflection of this other, perfect plane' (J. Burke 2000:10). For Burke this view is still held in Renaissance and Baroque Spain and pertains to Calderón's work. Stephen Lipmann observes that the *theatrum mundi* metaphor of early modern Spanish culture comes from Plato's idealist philosophy: 'nothing can be real since all is a mere reflection of some eternal essence' (Lipmann 1976:235). Robert V. Piluso proposes that Rosaura is an educating agent who helps Segismundo gain 'the strength to overcome, assimilate and transmute his less exemplary traits, that is to say, to achieve a measure of self-mastery' (Piluso 1986:199). Cope believes that the vision of Rosaura has educated Segismundo 'to the union of the

experiences: in the scene under discussion, Rosaura's visual splendour and auditory messages (apparently) enable the prince to rise above his dejection towards higher goals. In accordance with Galenic theory, by watching Rosaura Segismundo's sight seems to project an external image of himself: despite her lower status, Rosaura mirrors the prince's own battle against a patriarchal power that hinders their socio-political needs. However, as section IV will prove, Segismundo's conversion means a deliberate 'subjection to a sovereign will': he accepts his father's absolutism as 'natural' and will himself incarnate a similar version of unlimited power (Cascardi 1997:86).

To be sure, Rosaura's impropriety is conveniently corrected at the performance's closure: Segismundo arranges her marriage to Astolfo and hence restores her reputation. On the one hand, Rosaura becomes an exchange object in the hands of a male authority that determines her future. On the other, unlike Shakespeare's Hermia and Helena, she herself has actively worked towards this resolution: she is finally reunited with her (culpable) lover and regains the social honour she longed for. Notwithstanding her final re-insertion into the patriarchal order, Rosaura's dreamlike, androgynous and pugnacious figure has forcefully questioned the naturalness of that same order.

#### **IV: Life is a dream – or is it?**

This final section studies the last part of the second act (when Segismundo is taken back to the tower and awakens from his dreams) and the third act (in which Segismundo wins the war against his father and inherits the Polish throne). My analysis calls attention to the contradictions in attendance towards the end of the performance and shows that the seemingly conservative and serene closure *may* be more cacophonous than it *seems*.<sup>69</sup> In his prison, Segismundo goes through four different phases: 1) he *really* dreams of being a ruthless prince; 2) he ponders the (made-up and real) dreams he has experienced; 3) he *seems* to grasp the incorrectness of his past behaviour; and, 4) he *apparently* converts to the 'to do good' belief: he turns from a prisoner (literal and in the sense that he is a slave to his instincts) into a model sovereign who uses his reason 'to arrive at a supreme,

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dark illusory dream world and the transcendent light of the real world through that mandate to 'hacer bien' [to do good]' (Cope 1971:240).

<sup>69</sup> Critics have often stressed the unambiguousness of the ending of *Life Is a Dream*. For instance, Cascardi has written that 'the play concludes with a triumphant restoration of order' and has (rightly, I think) suggested that this finale may be seen as 'overdetermined' (Cascardi 1997:100). Cascardi has read the play's last act as a neo-Scholastic 'defense of the inherent goodness of order, authority, and control'; likewise, Benabu has observed that, with the exception of the rebel soldier, the conclusion of *Life Is a Dream* is 'perfectly conciliatory' (Cascardi 1997:124 and Benabu 2003:7).

unchangeable good' (Hildner 1982:23).<sup>70</sup> In the last act Segismundo gives the impression of acting according to the life/dream principle and of disregarding the political power he finally gains. Critics have underlined how dreams vitally initiate Segismundo's ethical transformation and have normally taken for granted the genuineness of that transformation.<sup>71</sup> Even so, I argue that two distinct episodes cast doubt on the sincerity and soundness of Segismundo's moral conversion: Rosaura's speech in the tower (which proves that the prince did not simply dream of being Basilio's son) and the punishment of the rebel soldier (which once more displays a tyrannical Segismundo). The blurriness of being and seeming, of life and dream, has been evoked throughout the performance and does not simply evaporate at its closure. As Segismundo himself suggests, it is arduous to discriminate between reality and dream, between naturalness and performance. Accordingly, at the end of *Life Is a Dream* the spectators may ask themselves whether Segismundo's transformation into a wise and merciful prince *is* or *is not a dream*.

Back in his tower, Segismundo 'is discovered as at the beginning of the play, dressed in skins and chained, asleep on the ground' (115). The spectators, therefore, see a scene similar to that in the first act: the prince has lost his freedom and has returned to a bestial condition; furthermore, he is *now actually* sleeping and dreaming. In fact, while the palace *dream* is not entirely a creation of a sleeping Segismundo, in the prison he *really* dreams of being the Polish heir. Apart from the off-stage audience, King Basilio ('muffled in his cloak') and Clotaldo observe the dreaming prince and listen to his verbalisation of his oneiric experience:

let Clotaldo die at my hands, / let my father kiss my feet! [...] / Let my matchless worth / sally forth onto the spacious grounds / of the great theatre of the world [...] / Let everyone see Prince / Segismundo triumphing over his father! (117)

The pretended dream Segismundo lived in the royal palace induces his *actual* dream in the prison, so that the onlookers too enjoy it twice inside two different locations. The dream

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<sup>70</sup> Hildner has discussed the influence of Stoic and Thomistic philosophy in Calderón's dramatic corpus. For St. Thomas the intellect (reason) is the 'highest cognitive faculty'; reason should divert human beings from 'sensorial realities' and crucially guide them towards the 'knowledge of immaterial realities' (God) (Hildner 1982:17-18). I share Hildner's view that in Calderón's plays reason is often used to reach 'perfectly worldly and concrete' purposes, not 'divine and beneficent' ones (Hildner 1982:94).

<sup>71</sup> For instance, Fischer maintains that in *Life Is a Dream* 'it is still through art, and its particular manifestation in the dream, that one can often see life with new clarity' (Fischer 1993:162). Surely towards the end of the performance Segismundo sees things 'with new clarity': i.e., he has learnt that he can achieve his actual objectives by covering his more primitive instincts.

content, however, has not changed and presents a troublesome image of Segismundo: he wishes to murder Clotaldo, humiliate his father, and ubiquitously display his godlike persona.

King Basilio has been able, as it were, to rewind the action and achieve his goal: when Segismundo awakens from his *real* dream in the tower, he is compelled to believe that everything that happened at court was nothing but 'a dream' (99). Initially Segismundo experiences confused sensations in relation to the place he is in (the tower) and to his own identity. Although Clotaldo makes the spatio-temporal connections clearer (he explains that the prince has slept 'the whole day'), at first the reality surrounding Segismundo in the tower appears to be not fully graspable (119). Afterwards, Segismundo cannot but notice that the royal palace with its people and objects has disappeared.<sup>72</sup> Even so, he still strongly *feels* the phenomenal thickness of his *dream* experience:

as far as I can tell, / I'm still asleep. [...] / Because if what I *saw palpably and surely* / was just a dream, / what I *see* now is probably doubtful; / and it wouldn't be a surprise that, / if I *see* clearly while asleep, / I should dream while awake. (119, emphasis added)

Dreams can *feel* exactly *like* reality and reality can *feel* exactly *like* a dream. Accordingly, being asleep or awake does not make any difference to the prince: the two states show him the world in a phenomenally analogous way, 'palpably' and 'surely'. In particular, dreaming involves visual perceptions that might seem extremely authentic: Segismundo sees 'clearly while asleep', but thinks he only dreams of the world when awake (119).

By assuring Clotaldo that in the dream he 'saw' as plainly and vividly as in actual life, the prince gradually acknowledges and affirms the life/dream metaphor. Reproaching Segismundo for his cruel conduct within the *dream*, Clotaldo elucidates the moral lesson further: 'even in dreams / good deeds are never wasted' (121). Segismundo agrees with his tutor and extensively expresses his newly gained belief in front of the contemporary theatregoers:

*living is merely dreaming: / and the experience* teaches me / that the man who lives dreams / his reality until he awakes. / [...] in this world / all men merely dream *what*

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<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless, the memory of Rosaura still confuses him profoundly: whereas 'everything else has vanished', Segismundo feels he loves her deeply and believes that his (second) encounter with her 'really happened' (121). In fact, Rosaura will soon be the 'physical evidence' that his court *dream* took place for real.

*they are, / though no one realizes it. / [...] all of life is a dream, / and even dreams are dreams.* (121 – 123, emphasis added)

Segismundo's speech *seems* to prove that Basilio's experiment has worked: as the Lord did with Sly and Oberon with the lovers and Titania, Basilio has adjusted his son's (literal and metaphorical) view. Even more, he has forced Segismundo to distrust his own sight: for instance, the prince sees the 'shackles' on his wrists, yet he regards them as a mere illusion (123). The hyper-perceptible dreams have revealed how all people live in 'that deception', i.e. mistakenly have trust in the actuality of their roles and of their possessions on life's stage (121).<sup>73</sup> Through the palace *dream*, re-watched or re-dreamt within the tower, Segismundo *appears* to have learnt the lesson: he acknowledges the fabricatedness of worldly things and discerns the importance of doing good at any time.

On a more public level, Segismundo's long speech (or sermon) may pierce the theatregoers' ears and bring about their obedience to the life/dream and life/theatre teaching. The spectators might appreciate that to perform well is what counts, whether one is performing the part of a prisoner or a prince; the focus is not on *what* one plays, but on *how* one does it.<sup>74</sup> Given that in early modern Spain 'the distribution of social roles' is certified 'either by nature or by God', the metaphor's accentuation of performance over role 'becomes a means of keeping the class structure intact' (Cascardi 1997:25 and Friedman 1993:52). Accordingly, the life/dream and the life/theatre convictions champion the hierarchical differences present within Segismundo's as well as the audience's society. By accepting the life/dream concept, Segismundo also acknowledges his father's superiority: Basilio is the Polish monarch because God has decided so and is supposed to play his part accurately; in any case, even if he did not, nobody could take that role (or status) away from him. The ideological foundations of the life/dream or life/theatre belief are thus conveniently concealed and both Basilio and Segismundo benefit from it. Indeed, Segismundo gradually amends his unsuitable conduct (shown by his dreams) and

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<sup>73</sup> Blue writes that 'Segismundo *must* believe that he is dreaming the carnivalesque, [...] and that reality is Lenten severity' (Blue 1993:94, emphasis added). I would add that he must believe so both for his father's and his own political advantage: repressing the carnivalesque means to recognise Basilio's (indisputable) supremacy. It also means that before his subjects Segismundo shows himself as moderate and judicious, i.e. as fit for governing them decorously.

<sup>74</sup> As mentioned in chapter 2, Calderón's *auto The Great Theatre of the World* depicts life as a brief performance on the world's stage; Appelbaum notices that this *auto sacramental* may have been composed in 1635 exactly as *Life Is a Dream* (Appelbaum 2002:XI). Valbuena-Briones explains that this *auto* teaches the spectator 'to understand that a salutary life depends on the spirit of the individual and not on the role he portrays in society' (Valbuena-Briones 1993:61).

*apparently* begins to perform well. His position as the Polish successor (sanctioned by God Himself) *looks* absolutely natural and indisputable and is further validated by his finally fine performance.<sup>75</sup>

Let us consider Segismundo's words regarding the functions of the monarch:

the king dreams that he's king, and lives / in that deception, giving orders, / making decisions, and ruling; [...] / to think that there are people who try to reign / knowing that they must awaken / in the sleep of death! (121-123).

The paradox of the life/dream belief is palpable: according to Segismundo's reasoning, King Basilio is only dreaming of exerting power; yet the spectators are *actually* seeing that Basilio has *actually* brought his authority to bear (for instance, he has re-imprisoned his son in the tower). In a similarly ironic way, at the end of the performance Segismundo will state that he is merely dreaming of becoming the Polish sovereign; on- and off-stage onlookers may testify to the contrary. To sum up, in the case studies analysed so far the lawless space of the dream allows Petruccio, Oberon and Basilio to shape the sight of other (socially inferior) individuals. Whether or not this newly-gained *viewpoint* assists their own socio-political purposes, characters such as Katherina or Segismundo *seem* to acknowledge it as natural and right anyway. In Segismundo's case, the adoption of his father's seeming perspective (that life is a dream) will prove politically useful for himself.

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<sup>75</sup> As Hildner observes, in early modern Spain the Catholic 'to do good' code 'is rallied to the cause of aristocracy, whose noble blood is one of the *causas ministras* that God's providence uses in carrying out its designs' (Hildner 1982:10).



FIGURE 6: Antonio Pereda, *The Soldier's Dream*, 1640.

Segismundo may have convincingly asserted that life is only a dream, yet his behaviour in the last act gives the lie to his previous words. In the third act 'noise of drums and people' and 'voices of soldiers' make Segismundo's dream of power materialise for the second time (127). The prince faces again a dreamlike prospect: the mutinous soldiers offer him the opportunity to 'leave *this* tower' and recover his 'imperial crown and sceptre' (131).<sup>76</sup> As within the palace *dream*, the emphasis is on Segismundo's bodily perceptions: he listens to the 'voice of liberty' of the crying plebeians and sees the 'majesty and pomp' of his (possible) grandeur (131-133). At first his disillusionment leads him to reject the very tangible dreamlike spectacle:

away with you, you shadows that today / pretend to my numbed senses / that you have

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<sup>76</sup> The civil war scene might be considered dreamlike because 'it astonishes the viewer and terrifies the listener': as Estrella explains, natural elements as the sun or the wind are perturbed, stones and flowers erect mausoleums, every soldier looks like a living skeleton (141). The setting recalls the day of Segismundo's portentous birth and announces the final, paradoxical coming *true* of the prophecy. At the same time, the stormy environment puts on public view the violence caused by the son/father thirst for power; it may remind early modern audiences of the turbulent situation of their own nation (for instance, the Catalan rebellion against the Spanish central government of 1639).

*a body and a voice*, though the truth is / you have neither voice nor body (133, emphasis added)

The prince believes he is watching another dream: an imaginary and insubstantial occurrence that, nevertheless, *looks* (and actually *is*) phenomenally detectable (it does have a body and a voice).<sup>77</sup> In order to persuade Segismundo that he is not dreaming, one of the soldiers says that ‘great events have always induced presentiments’: possibly, in the past Segismundo has dreamt of the events *now* happening before his eyes and breaking through his ears (133). Accepting the soldier’s suggestion, Segismundo decides to ‘dream once again’; however, this time he will *dream* ‘with the awareness and knowledge / that we must awaken [...] / for, keeping that in mind, / *our* disappointment won’t be so great’ (135, emphasis added). Critics of the play usually argue that Segismundo takes action because he appreciates that ‘to do good is what matters’, in spite of the precariousness of one’s role on the world’s stage (137). For instance, Lewis-Smith observes that in act III Segismundo ‘knows that the role is ephemeral – [...] but the knowledge produces no alienation from *el gran teatro del mundo* [the great theatre of the world], rather an intelligent awareness that roles in life must be worn conscientiously’ (Lewis-Smith 1998:79). More than ‘conscientiously’, Segismundo could be seen as playing his part calculatingly and resentfully. For example, when he thanks his vassals he promises that he will free them ‘from foreign servitude’ (Astolfo’s probable ascent to the throne) (135). What he does not openly say is that he himself will become their (absolute) monarch.<sup>78</sup> Again, when Clotaldo insinuates that making war on his father would not mean ‘to do good’, Segismundo insults the tutor with the words ‘base, disloyal traitor!’ (137). As a result of his court *dream*, the prince *appears* unable to know whether he is dreaming or not: ‘don’t awaken me if I’m asleep, / and, if this is reality, don’t put me to sleep’ (137). Even so, his political purposes look obvious enough: he asks ‘Fortune’ to let him ‘go and reign’ (137).

In addition to the chaotic surroundings, Rosaura’s arrival in front of Segismundo enhances the sensation of an anarchic dream vision. As seen in section III, most readings

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<sup>77</sup> The audience may be reminded of the oneiric *modus operandi*, that of iteration of past events with differences. What the prince saw at court and sees ‘clearly and distinctly’ *now* is ‘the very same thing’; however, this time Segismundo will not behave as he did at court and the *dream* will not vanish as quickly as it did before (133).

<sup>78</sup> The support the vassals give Segismundo, as Cascardi argues, makes his political right look ‘popular’ in addition to ‘natural’. During the civil war Segismundo emerges as the ally of a collective cause (versus his father’s attempt to empower Astolfo, ‘a foreign prince’) (127). Furthermore, via his free will Segismundo pardons his father and brings to a halt the violence and disorder that troubled ‘the natural world’ (Cascardi 1997:97). Whereas at court Estrella and Astolfo merely seem to crave ‘pure prestige’, Segismundo is associated with the ‘popular’ consciousness (Cascardi 1997:97).

of the play regard Rosaura as the embodiment of the Platonic idea of 'Beauty', the figure who heartily prompts Segismundo to look beyond appearances and towards a higher good. Nonetheless, I would like to underscore how secular Rosaura's and Segismundo's aims are. Rosaura knows that it is Segismundo's turn to take 'revenge *today*'; she explains to him that the break up of Astolfo's and Estrella's engagement is beneficial to his cause as well as to hers (by getting married, the two cousins would join the Polish and the Muscovite realms and they would have 'greater power and strength' than Segismundo) (163). Crucially, Rosaura is the bodily evidence that the court *dream* was an actual experience: therefore, she confirms that Segismundo *is* the Polish heir and will *really* succeed to Basilio if he wins the war. Segismundo gradually revises the belief that all that he lived at court was a fleeting dream:

If I only dreamed that grandeur / in which I found myself, how then now / can this woman mention / such accurate details? / Then, *it was reality*, not a dream; / and, if it was reality [...] / how can I call it / a dream? Are glories, then, / so similar to dreams / that real ones / are considered fictitious / and feigned ones true? [...] / let us learn *how to make good use* / of this brief time allotted to us, / because all we enjoy in real life / is what we enjoy in dreams! (165-167, emphasis added)

Segismundo has perfectly expressed the paradox inherent to the life/dream belief (one cannot know whether what he 'sees and enjoys' is 'a lie or the truth'): since they are destined to disappear, *real* things (the 'glories' he saw at court, for instance) may be *regarded as* fictitious (165-167). This does not mean, however, that *real* 'glories' do not exist at all or cannot be enjoyed on earth; it means that one can get pleasure from them *only temporarily*, as it happens in dreams. Rosaura's beauty, for example, is one of the worldly commodities Segismundo may take advantage of. Though briefly, the prince displays the same sexual lust he showed in his father's palace: he knows that Rosaura is in his 'power' and that his (improperly called) 'love' may easily 'violate' her 'merit and trust' (167).

What prevents Segismundo from raping Rosaura is, of course, a consideration of the 'everlasting fame' he might acquire by behaving more nobly (167). While the sexual abuse of Rosaura would only be an ephemerally pleasant dream, a conduct 'more befitting a prince' *will* grant Segismundo 'a divine glory' (167-169).<sup>79</sup> In line with the life/theatre notion,

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<sup>79</sup> When, at the end of their third meeting, Rosaura asks Segismundo why he neither looks at her nor listens to her, the prince stresses the effort he is making to respect her credit: 'the man who must look to your honour / mustn't look at your beauty' (169). Again, his words jeopardise the

Segismundo chooses to perform his part (that of a prince) competently: rather than innate and spontaneous, his *evidently* virtuous behaviour may *look like* the result of careful calculation – and how is the audience to know, given that one cannot distinguish life from dream, reality from performance? Critics of the play normally agree on Rosaura's fundamental contribution to Segismundo's transformation: 'Rosaura, and Rosaura only, can convince Segismundo that his visit to the palace was *real*. And only in the knowledge of this can his conversion be complete – the knowledge, that is, that life itself is as fleeting and *unreal* as a dream' (Sloman 1953:297, emphasis added).<sup>80</sup> Accordingly, thanks to Rosaura Segismundo obtains the certainty that the court and its opulence *are not* a dream and that he *will* return to possess them by prevailing in the civil war. The 'divine glory' he aspires to, consequently, might be far less celestial than his words convey.

Once he realises that his army has lost against Segismundo's, Basilio himself enacts the much-anticipated prophecy and prostrates in front of his son. Segismundo does not save his old father from the mortifying act: in contrast, he clearly asks the 'court of Poland' and the theatregoers to 'be attentive' 'to such great marvels' (177). The prince accentuates the abnormality of the situation, i.e. the fact that the 'natural' father/son and monarch/subject hierarchy has been overturned:

Let this unusual spectacle / be an example, this odd / wonder, this awful situation, / this miracle; because there can't be / a better example than to finally see, [...] / a father submissive at my feet, / and a monarch trampled upon. (181)

Segismundo's long speech (during which Basilio remains on his knees) highlights that 'the verdict of heaven' cannot be avoided; importantly, it strongly exposes that a wise and illustrious monarch (Basilio) has 'erred' for years trying to overcome God's decree. Shortly afterwards, it *appears* that Prince Segismundo invalidates the prophecy: as his free will conquers his 'rabid fury', the prince forgives his father and falls at his feet. Among the

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supposedly natural nobility of royal blood and may remind the Spanish spectators of their dissolute monarch Philip IV.

<sup>80</sup> Friedman too writes that Rosaura is 'a sign' that Segismundo actually lived the court *dream* and concludes that 'the stage, the world, the staged dream [...] all belong to the illusion, to the metaphorical dream, while at the same time they are linked to the 'other', to eternity' (Friedman 1988:39). Friedman reasons that Segismundo, after having recognised the illusiveness of all, chooses 'the eternal'; in contrast, I highlight that Segismundo gains actual and legitimate power the moment he *seems* to look for divine glory (Friedman 1988:39).

general acclamation, King Basilio proclaims Segismundo 'prince'; Segismundo inherits the Polish kingdom legally.<sup>81</sup>

The play's predictable conclusion restores a seemingly laudable patriarchal and monarchical order: Segismundo carries out a further 'victory' over himself by renouncing Rosaura's love and excusing his jailer Clotaldo (183). Also these two decisions, however, may be more conniving than altruistic.<sup>82</sup> In fact, through the marriage of Rosaura to Astolfo Segismundo achieves three main things: 1) he certainly re-establishes Rosaura's honour; 2) he brings to an end Astolfo's claim to the Polish throne; and, 3) he manages to marry Estrella, the heiress to Basilio's realm, and so increases his own political power. Furthermore, Segismundo seems to ignore the fact that Clotaldo (the man who 'loyally' served the king) has for years committed 'treason' against his country and deprived the prince of life itself (185 and 75). Perhaps, now that he is in power, Segismundo wishes to have subjects who, like Clotaldo, never contradict the monarch or inquire whether the monarch's actions are 'proper or not' (77).<sup>83</sup> The episode that most seriously questions the *reality* of Segismundo's moral regeneration is that concerning the rebel soldier. This soldier instigated the uprising in the Polish kingdom and released Segismundo from the tower; seeing how Segismundo has generously rewarded the people who were not on his side, the soldier expects an adequate recompense for his political services. Instead, Segismundo sends him to the tower and maintains that 'a traitor is no longer needed / once the treason is over' (185). Scholars have normally tried to justify Segismundo's behaviour towards the 'rebel soldier': those who uphold the concept of 'poetic justice' observe that wrongdoing should not go unpunished and see the soldier's imprisonment as fair. For instance, Parker remarks that the soldier has acted 'for the sake of personal gain' and thus 'has to enter the tower' (Parker 1988:89). Others deem the incarceration as both 'a penalty' and 'a prize': for the soldier it is an opportunity to acquire the same

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<sup>81</sup> With the only exception of the Rosaura/Clotaldo story, family relationships are basically absent from *Life Is a Dream*; as Cascardi points out, 'the issues that bind or trouble the family (e.g., conjugal honour, cleanliness of blood) are *already* one with those of the state' (Cascardi 1997:45). More than a father, Basilio is a feudal lord and king who alone can 'sanction' Segismundo's official rise to power.

<sup>82</sup> In the figure of Segismundo, monarchical and patriarchal authority legalizes the matrimonial exchange of women for political purposes. This (public) 'trade' overlooks the (private) feelings of love Segismundo seemed to have for Rosaura and Estrella for Astolfo.

<sup>83</sup> Contrary to what he does in the third act, within the court *dream* Segismundo openly accused Clotaldo of having violated the law; only Clarín agreed with Segismundo and stated that Clotaldo had 'behaved very badly' (77).

disillusionment as Segismundo (Ife 1976:32).<sup>84</sup> In contrast, I think that the rebel soldier case makes vulnerable the 'gallant nobility', 'highminded heredity' and 'generous nature' Segismundo attributes to himself (179). In a way that reminds one of Basilio's incoherence, Segismundo charges the soldier with sedition, but disregards the fact that he himself rebelled against his father and 'reaped the fruits' of that insurgence (Hildner 1982:60). Segismundo has previously praised the value of 'prudence and temperateness'; yet his rash decision seems to indicate: 1) that he does not possess the latter virtue; and, 2) that he is cautious principally to protect his own power from potential conspirators (181).<sup>85</sup> The other characters are 'amazed' at Segismundo's 'intelligence', underline the 'change' he has undergone, and remark that he is 'clever and wise'; nonetheless, Segismundo's last action appears tyrannical and, as Cascardi writes, 'offers sufficient evidence of the inability of absolute power to conceal its own violent basis' (Cascardi 1997:101).<sup>86</sup> I agree with Paterson who reasons that in the finale of *Life Is a Dream* 'ambiguity is all' (Paterson 1971:180). Surely Segismundo has shown some nobleness by forgiving his father and Clotaldo, people who belong to his own social class. However, his very last action is to deny any sort of recognition to somebody of lower status who has vitally helped him achieve political command. The audience may thus suspect that Segismundo's previous selflessness only sought to legitimise and safeguard a very *concrete* socio-political power. In fact, shortly after the rebel soldier episode Segismundo confirms that he is 'afraid' he might 'wake up again' and finds himself in his 'locked cell': in other words, he is concerned about a possible loss of freedom and supremacy (185).<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> According to Honig, via the soldier's punishment 'we recognise that the order of constituted authority has been restored by Segismundo' and that 'chaos and anarchy have been consigned to the house of illusion, sleep, and death [the tower]' (Honig 1972:173). Hildner suggests that the soldier may have 'a retributive debt to pay for his act of treason in order for justice to be upheld' (Hildner 1982:60). Like Ife, Benabu believes that the soldier's banishment to the tower means both incarceration and regeneration and that through it the soldier may repent for his self-interested behaviour (Benabu 2003:7).

<sup>85</sup> Possibly, Segismundo fears that the soldier who has already committed treason may do so again and wants 'to prevent another from occupying his throne'; for St. Thomas this carefulness would be 'true prudence' (Hildner 1982:61). Segismundo could be charged with some Machiavellian traits, given that he seems to worry about the preservation of his newly gained power (see Hildner 1982:61-62).

<sup>86</sup> 'The precise virtue, then, which Segismundo will attain is magnanimity, the quality of the highest civilized behaviour', argues Honig; however, Segismundo's treatment of the soldier seems to me to deny such 'magnanimity' (Honig 1972:164).

<sup>87</sup> I would not go as far as Alice Homstad, who interprets Segismundo as the perfect Machiavellian prince: 'it is evident that it was not Segismundo's heart that changed but rather his level of awareness. The victory of intelligence over instinct is not the same as a victory of good over evil [...] It is clear that the perfect Machiavellian prince can be prudent without being virtuous. He need only be careful' (Homstad 1989:136-37).

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated that *Life Is a Dream* employs dreams mainly to reflect on the management and attainment of political power, as personified by the figures of King Basilio and Prince Segismundo. In addition, the play's oneiric-like components and above all the (dreamlike) character of Rosaura raise questions regarding the fabricated-ness of gender and rank issues. The *dream* Segismundo lives at court and re-experiences in the tower crucially but ambiguously shapes his ethical viewpoint: on the one hand, the dream seems to instruct the prince in the worthlessness of secular possessions and in the value of doing good. On the other, the apparently fickle dream *tangibly* displays Segismundo's allegedly innate graciousness as merely illusive: the prince is dictatorial, sexually predatory and violent to the point that he kills one of his servants. The evaporation of the court's 'worldly goods' and the desire to re-obtain them might be the key spur behind Segismundo's ethical translation: in this sense, the dream may have taught the prince to perform *well*, i.e. to dissimulate his actual socio-political intentions (99). The last act of *Life Is a Dream* reaches a conservative conclusion by highlighting the prince's (ostensible) moral renaissance and thus sanctioning his acquisition of (monarchical and patriarchal) rule.<sup>88</sup> Nonetheless, Segismundo's final speech does not erase the ubiquitous haziness: 'all of human happiness / passes by in the end like a dream, / and I wish today to *enjoy* mine / for as long as it lasts' (185, emphasis added). Without a doubt his absolute power will one day vanish like a dream; yet it would seem that, before that day comes, the prince will benefit from his earthly role completely.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> In Cascardi's words, 'the restoration of political order [...] depends on the possibility of recuperating an inherent nobility that has been placed in eclipse, but never entirely lost' (Cascardi 1997:95). However, the rebel soldier episode appears to dispute Segismundo's 'nobility' till the very end of the performance.

<sup>89</sup> As Puck does at the closure of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Segismundo asks 'pardon for *our* faults'; the request probably refers to the taboo nature of the issues tackled by the performance via dreams and to the (subtle) criticism of royal conduct in particular.

## Chapter 5

### Dreams that Make Believe: *Sometimes Dreams Come True*

This chapter continues the investigation of theatrical dreams in early modern Spanish drama by focusing on one of Calderón's *autos sacramentales*, religious or 'sacramental' plays: *Sometimes Dreams Come True* (*Sueños hay que verdad son*), first performed in Madrid in 1670 (Valbuena-Briones 1993:55).<sup>1</sup> Whereas between the 1620s and 1640s Calderón wrote numerous *comedias*, after his ordination as a priest in 1650 he mainly devoted himself to the composition of *autos sacramentales* and court drama. He would produce two *autos* for the municipality of Madrid every summer and plays on mythological topics to be performed in the Spanish Habsburg courts (McGaha 1998:145).<sup>2</sup>

*Sometimes Dreams Come True* dramatizes a Biblical story popular in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain, that of the 'dreamer' Joseph.<sup>3</sup> The dreams Joseph lives and interprets make the plot of *Sometimes Dreams Come True* progress and feature symbolic meanings. In addition, the dreams are located within the broader socio-historical context of (discordant) oneiric reading.<sup>4</sup> As Levin writes, in early modern texts Joseph is often portrayed as a 'Captain-Dreamer' who has sublime knowledge and marvellous insight; yet even Joseph cannot trust his dreams completely (for instance, dreams do not foresee his imprisonment) (Levin 2008:68). In his book *The Story of Joseph in Spanish Golden Age Drama*, Michael McGaha argues that the Joseph story is very popular in the theatrical

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<sup>1</sup> The Elizabethan government suppressed the mystery cycles in 1569 in order to censor this 'obviously Catholic' dramatic tradition and facilitate its efforts of absolutist centralization; in contrast, in Spain productions of *autos sacramentales* will continue until c. 1765 (Cohen 1985:126 and McKendrick 1989:260). The survival of the *autos* seems to imply that early modern Spanish society, to a certain extent, remained feudal: it kept seeing the individual as the performer of a fixed (divine-given) role throughout his/her life and did not accept social mobility and personal enterprise. Yet in *Sometimes Dreams Come True* Joseph is a Jew, a slave and a prisoner who becomes the viceroy of Egypt and foreshadows Jesus himself.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Rich Greer has investigated Calderón's mythological court dramas in her book *The Play of Power* (1991).

<sup>3</sup> A more literal translation of the Spanish title would be *There Are Dreams That Are True*, but I am using the title Michael McGaha chooses for his translation of the play-text. Throughout this chapter all quotations are from McGaha's translation as included in his *The Story of Joseph in Spanish Golden Age Drama* (1998).

<sup>4</sup> As seen in chapter 1 and as Kagan remarks, 'scholarly opinion about message dreams remained divided, with some sixteenth-century Spanish philosophers accepting the notion of prophetic dreams while simultaneously condemning the use of dreams for purposes of divination' (Kagan 1990:42).

production of early modern Spain because it easily lends itself to dramatization.<sup>5</sup> The biblical text contains numerous dialogues that can be effortlessly transported into a dramatic piece and its structure naturally suits the three-act *comedia* format. In fact, the plot can be divided into three macro-sequences: the first deals with the conflict between Joseph and his brothers; the second sequence focuses on the fall and subsequent rise of Joseph's fortune in Egypt; the third part shows the final reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers. Joseph's tale deals with issues that are among the favourites in the Madrid playhouses: the rivalry and envy among Joseph and his brothers; the betrayal they carry out against him; the 'revenge' which Joseph devises to test his brothers' maturation and to verify their repentance; and, the 'Cinderella-like rise' of a humble man to a position of power and prestige in the Egyptian empire (McGaha 1997:448).<sup>6</sup>

To recapitulate the issues the thesis has so far dealt with, both chapter 3 and chapter 4 have focused on plays in which dreams expose (but in the end also seem to validate) patriarchal systems of indoctrination and containment of unruly subjects. Chapter 3 has focused on two Shakespearean comedies that employ dreams mainly to address questions of (supposedly natural) female submission to male order; chapter 4 has analysed how the dreams of *Life Is a Dream* fashion a prince's coming into power and subtly question his (allegedly inherent) nobleness and political adequacy. As happens to Sly, Bottom and Segismundo, in *Sometimes Dreams Come True* the prisoner Joseph lives a dreamlike social ascent and becomes the vice-governor of Egypt. However, the dreams this chapter analyses do not exhibit the (enforced) modification of Joseph's (literal and metaphorical) *viewpoint*. Rather, the dreams portray Joseph as a moral and spiritual example, but point to the ethical and political defectiveness of other characters and, possibly, of off-stage audiences. My reading, therefore, wants to show that the dreams within *Sometimes Dreams Come True*, far from being merely allegorical, ably allude to the

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<sup>5</sup> Apart from Calderón's play, McGaha discusses another five adaptations of Joseph's story: Micael de Carvajal's *The Josephine Tragedy* (1535), *Joseph's Wedding* (Anonymous, 1550-1575?), Lope de Vega's *The Trials of Jacob* (1620-30), Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's *Joseph's Sceptre* (1684-90?) and Isaac de Matatia Aboab's *Harassed but Happy* (1685-86). The popularity of the Joseph plot among early modern audiences, as McGaha suggests, could hinder the dramatists' attempt to create suspense and arouse the theatregoers' curiosity.

<sup>6</sup> As Françoise Gilbert observes, the motif of (Joseph's) social and spiritual ascension plays an important part in *Sometimes Dreams Come True*. The character of Dream and various dreams vitally enable this ascension: Joseph's first dreams in Canaan allude to his future rise; Joseph's correct reading of the Pharaoh's dreams sets in motion his political ascent in Egypt; and, the coming *true* of Joseph's Canaan dreams in Egypt activates his spiritual ascension (see Gilbert 2005:445). In early modern times the theme of ascension is often connected to oneiric visions: dreams may act as the bridge between the material and the spiritual world, 'as instruments of divine revelation' (Kagan 1990:39).

worsening of monarchical, ethical and religious practices both on- and off-stage. Furthermore, I intend to highlight the paradoxical quality of the sacramental performance: early modern Spanish culture normally sees dreams as a non-entity, a negligible fiction; nonetheless, in *Sometimes Dreams Come True* dreams vitally embody and assert the verity of the religious mystery. Calderón's contemporaries seem to need (allegedly) vain and spectacular dreams to believe in the dogma, a fact that may cast doubt on the transparency of their faith.

This chapter is divided into four main sections: the first one briefly introduces the main thematic interests of the *autos sacramentales*, their staging practices and the cultural milieu in which they flourish. Section II disputes the traditional view that the sacramental genre has a predominantly symbolical significance: I focus on the *auto's* major allegorical characters (Chastity, Dream and Joseph himself) and underline both their phenomenal attributes (they are real bodies living on stage) and their historical and cultural dimension. The third section of this chapter analyses the key dreams and dream-related episodes of *Sometimes Dreams Come True*. The sensory and spectacular properties of the dreams, I argue, make them *feel like* reality and possibly entertain and stupefy the spectators; on the other hand, the on-stage dreams call attention to the moral decadence and political failure of on-stage characters and, perhaps, of their off-stage counterparts. Finally, section IV studies the on-stage coming *true* of the dreams Joseph had in Canaan and of the Eucharistic mystery. *Sometimes Dreams Come True* depicts the dogma itself as an eye- and ear-catching dream; this (quite inconsistent) choice, I propose, critically emphasises the gap between Joseph's almost inborn faith and the spectators' more secular spiritual requirements.

Given the complexity (and perhaps the unfamiliarity) of the plot of *Sometimes Dreams Come True*, I have created a table which carries out three major tasks: 1) it summarises the play's key events; 2) it informs of the time and the setting of the action; and, 3) it elucidates the various phases of Joseph's (social and spiritual) ascent and the role dreams play in this ascent.



## **I: The Spanish *auto sacramental*.**

In both medieval and early modern Spain the *autos sacramentales* were performed in the streets of Madrid (and other towns) as part of the Feast of Corpus Christi and were the most prestigious event in the public theatre's calendar; they normally had only one long act.<sup>7</sup> In Madrid from the end of the sixteenth-century until 1645 two of the most talented acting companies would perform four *autos* every year. All four *autos* were played first before the King at the royal palace, then before the Council of Castile and the citizens in a public square. The *autos*' elaborate organization was assigned to a few municipal officers under the general supervision of the Protector (a member of the Castilian Council). In 1646, however, a royal order prohibited the performance of both *comedias* and *autos*; in June 1647 the monarchy allowed the performance of two *autos* only (provided that they did not display anything indecent) and afterwards efforts were made to cut costs (see McKendrick 1989:244-249). As Pedro Ruiz Pérez explains, the public could attend the *autos*' performances for free, a fact that to a certain extent decreased usual social and economic distinctions (in force for example within the public playhouses).<sup>8</sup>

From early on the performances of the *autos* made use of floats during the procession and of stages located inside or at the door of the church from which the procession started and to which it returned. Towards the mid-sixteenth century two floats (wheeled platforms carrying 'towering structures of scenery') began to be used, together with a 'linking, bare, multi-purpose stage' (which was either a third cart or a platform placed inside or outside a church or somewhere along the processional itinerary) (McKendrick 1989:245 and 240). The stage, usually void of decoration, was very large and very close to the audience and enclosed a few trapdoors. The floats contained all the necessary scenery; they had an upper and lower storey to house players and musicians and a system of pulleys and winches that could be operated to reveal discoveries. In particular, the floats had machinery that enabled scenery to rise into view from out of the lower storey. Other machines were used to open and close clouds, move hills and bushes, and allow characters to make swift (vertical and diagonal) ascents and descents on the main stage.

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<sup>7</sup> See Merveena McKendrick's *Theatre in Spain, 1490–1700* (especially pages 238-260) and N. D. Shergold's *A History of the Spanish Stage* (especially pages 452-478).

<sup>8</sup> During the Corpus Christi celebrations the king himself would at times attend Mass and then walk in the procession that preceded the *autos*' performances. At the royal Palace there was a 'special platform', with a podium, for the king and queen and the stage was placed at the foot of this platform; also the public could watch the performances at the Palace, but would see 'only the backs of the actors' (Shergold 1967:452). For Ruiz Pérez the *autos* were meant to keep the public away from other (less pious) forms of entertainment; they had a clearly festive character as well as a more religious dimension (Pérez 1994:46).

In Calderón's *autos* the *bofetón* - a sort of channel located inside the upper storey of the floats - was very important, for it allowed the characters to appear on stage suddenly (Shergold 1967:471).<sup>9</sup> As McKendrick writes, the *autos* were 'spectacular boxes of tricks' intending to rouse devotion through wonder and special effects (McKendrick 1989:246). The dreams within *Sometimes Dreams Come True* help this extravaganza: for instance, they enable the dramatization of miraculous characters (Dream and Chastity) and events. However, the dreams may also refer to and circuitously disapprove of contemporary people and their beliefs.

In the early years of the sixteenth century the *autos* usually combine enjoyable pageants with fairly simple religious teaching. Conversely, after the Protestant schism they focus on the fundamental contents of Catholic dogma, principally the problems of grace, free will and transubstantiation (Tietz 1983:78).<sup>10</sup> As Nicolas Shumway underlines, the *autos* affirm three main points: 1) faith is not 'a product of human will' and it is given only to the individual who believes in the truth of the Sacraments (the indispensable dispensers of God's grace); 2) one's salvation certainly depends on God's grace, yet the individual can exert free will by choosing to receive the Sacraments and to do good; and, 3) Christ is really present in the Eucharist (see Shumway 1981:333-347).<sup>11</sup> In order to persuade their audiences of the validity of the dogma, the Spanish *autos* aim to arouse emotional more than rational comprehension. According to Manfred Tietz, the *autos*' goals are '*docere, movere, delectare*' (as in classical rhetoric); however, moving the spectator's spirit is probably the most important of their purposes (Tietz 1983:81). The exemplary and educating aspect of the *autos* is also very significant: the sacramental genre typically shows praiseworthy deeds; ideally, it should prompt the spectators 'to emulate sacred heroes' or teach them 'to avoid censured conduct' (Kurtz 1990:230). For the most part, the Spanish religious plays display allegorical characters of various kinds: everyman figures or

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<sup>9</sup> For example, the *bofetón* was used to transport characters horizontally across the façade of one of the carts and to make them disappear into the opposite side of it (Shergold 1967:473).

<sup>10</sup> Ansgar Hillach explains that in Spain heretical movements (that promoted the knowledge of God via reason more than faith) had afflicted the Catholic Church since 1555. Another potentially threatening issue was the humanistic and pagan presence in Europe and in the New World (Hillach 1982:23).

<sup>11</sup> Many of Calderón's *autos* refute the Protestant notion that salvation can be obtained by faith only, independently from the partaking in the sacraments. As for the transubstantiation dogma, Shumway remarks that Luther and Calvin did not doubt 'Real Presence' or question the concept that The Lord's Supper was 'a channel of grace from and communion with God' (Shumway 1981:338). Rather, Luther proposed that nobody could 're-sacrifice' Christ and felt that Christ's death, 'universal and eternally sufficient', did not need to be repeated during the Mass (Shumway 1981:338).

specific social roles (the rich, the poor) overall signify the human condition; emotional and psychic elements (feelings such as love or hate, positive or negative qualities such as intelligence or pride) often set the action in motion; religious concepts (faith, free will, heresy) elucidate or dispute doctrinal aspects.<sup>12</sup> In accordance with Catholic precepts (and as seen in chapter 4), in the *autos* one's (socio-cultural) role matters less than how he/she is performing that role; yet this belief also authorises existing rank and gender hierarchies.

Like contemporary *comedias*, the *autos* are on the whole unworried about unity and coherence of time and place. Because of their religious nature, the *autos* present human time as 'subsumed in the eternal present of the mind of God'; however, time is also deliberate and revolves around three key events: God's creation of the cosmos, Christ's incarnation and the final judgement (Greer 1997:43). *Sometimes Dreams Come True* enjoys very flexible chronological and spatial dimensions: time can freely contract or expand; fragments of different spatial realities (Egypt/Canaan) can be juxtaposed.<sup>13</sup> This spatio-temporal liberty may remind the audience of the *modus operandi* of prophetic dreams: what the audience sees and hears during the performance of the Joseph *auto* is and is not what it seems. Like a prophetic dream, this *auto* at once concretely represents something and alludes to something else: for instance, the main on-stage actor embodies Joseph, implies Jesus' advent, and perhaps hints at other contemporary historical figures (the Spanish vice-governor or the king's favourite).

From 1648 until 1681 (the year of his death) Calderón is Spain's most prolific playwright: in particular, he is 'the exclusive author' of all the 'four-cart staging' *autos* (more than seventy) to be performed in Madrid (McKendrick 1989:248 and Shergold 1967:454).<sup>14</sup> Calderón's sacramental works normally include a music- and dance-laden prologue (called

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<sup>12</sup> Javier Herrero suggests that the *autos*' allegorical character 'presents a direct connection between signifier and signified': the system that creates such relationship is the scriptural one (as understood by seventeenth-century Catholicism) (Herrero 1993:189). Yet the figurative characters frequently exhibit the inner conflicts that lacerate human beings and, hence, reveal a concern also with individual psychology. For James Maraniss the *autos sacramentales* stage internal battles among feelings or impulses in a 'comprehensible and conceptually very clear' way (Maraniss 1978:23).

<sup>13</sup> In her study of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's poem *El sueño* (c. 1680), Jacqueline Nanfita argues that the dream motif transcends the boundaries of time and space and makes them become 'the vehicles of freedom and flight' (Nanfita 1991:423). I believe this holds true also for *Sometimes Dreams Come True*, where, for instance, dreams can simultaneously display a *past* Canaan and a *current* Egypt.

<sup>14</sup> Every year the Madrid municipality gave Calderón a gratuity for writing the *autos*; he also received 'a fee of 700 *reales*' from the companies that were to perform the sacramental plays (McKendrick 1989:248). Especially after 1650, Calderón enjoyed great stature at court and was granted a 'modest royal pension' in his later years; nonetheless, I think it is important to underline that he was never appointed court dramatist (Greer 1991:5).

*loa*); the *loa* introduces themes and symbolic motives similar to those of the main plot and may celebrate the royals. In addition to the *autos*' script, Calderón would write a paper containing technical instructions about the concrete realization of the stage effects (for instance, the sudden on-stage appearances and disappearances).<sup>15</sup> This habit testifies to the importance the performance of the *autos* has for their author: as Calderón remarks in his preface to the collected edition (1677), the *autos* are 'written to be heard and seen, not read' (quoted in Parker 1943:17).<sup>16</sup> The *autos*' artistry is scenic as well as poetical, in that the numerous stage effects should give stunning materialization to the verbal images. Music and singing also play a key role in Calderón's *autos*, which regularly enjoy what Eugenio Frutos calls 'a symphonic development': music at once fleshes out the *autos*' main nucleus and harmoniously integrates their various components (Frutos 1981:87). In his preface Calderón also clarifies the theoretical core of every *auto* by distinguishing between the *asunto* (assumption, hypothesis) and the *argumento* (argument, line of reasoning). He proposes that the assumption is always identical (all *autos* want to prove the truth of the Eucharist), while the argument differs greatly (the theme and plot are given a distinctive form).<sup>17</sup> The doctrine of the Eucharist, fundamental to the Catholic theological system, somehow embraces all other Catholic dogmas: for that reason, Calderón centres his religious works around the Eucharist and so demonstrates its 'fecundity' as the font and heart of Catholic creed and life (Parker 1943:60).

As suggested in this section, the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century *autos* both appeal to the public's appetite for impressive entertainment and try to corroborate its Catholic faith: in James E. Maraniss' words, 'if sin is glamorous, salvation must be competitive; and in Calderón's theatre it is' (Maraniss 1978:22). Nevertheless, one cannot generalise about the (spiritual) response of every spectator to the *autos*: as Parker warns, 'Calderón [...] could not convert his audience to belief in the dogma even had he needed to' (Parker

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<sup>15</sup> After 1650 famous scenographers such as Baccio del Bianco and José Caudi were hired 'to apply their expertise and ingenuity' to the Corpus Christi floats (McKendrick 1989:247).

<sup>16</sup> In his prologue to *La segunda esposa* (*The Second Wife*, 1648) Calderón defines the *autos* as sermons in verse, as theology turned into 'actable ideas' (McKendrick 1989:244). His reference to oral preaching may count on the early modern idea of hearing as the sense of obedience (as seen in chapter 2).

<sup>17</sup> The *argumento* varies in every *auto*: 'it can be any 'historia divina' – historical, legendary, or fictitious – provided that it throws some light on some aspect of the *asunto*' (Parker 1943:59). Parker orders Calderón's religious plays into five main groups: dogmatic, scriptural (historico-theological, like *Sometimes Dreams Come True*), apologetical, ethical and devotional (hagiological) (Parker 1943:62). In contrast, Frutos proposes a categorization according to the *autos*' symbolism: religious symbolism, biblical symbolism (allegorical, analogical and tropological) and poetical symbolism (historical, mythological and philosophical) (Frutos 1981:85).

1943:199). One can imagine that *Sometimes Dreams Come True* could facilitate the acceptance of Catholic doctrine (primarily) through its staging of alluring dreams. Even so, the stunning dreams within this *auto* also reflect on the reprehensible political, moral and religious customs of various (on- and possibly off-stage) individuals.

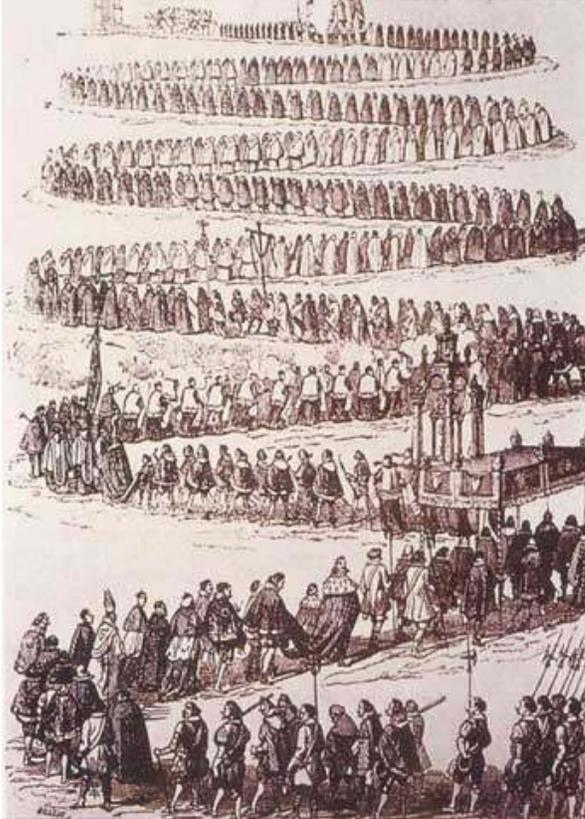


FIGURE 7: Engraving of the Corpus Christi procession in Madrid, 1623.

## **II: The historical and phenomenal traits of the allegory.**

In this section I think about the formal and ideological properties of the *autos sacramentales* and argue that this genre is neither a merely unrealistic construction nor an uncomplicated device of religious indoctrination. I show that numerous components of *Sometimes Dreams Come True*, though certainly allegorical, do also bring in contemporaneous socio-political concerns and do not solely bear out the (timeless) truth of the religious mystery.

Critics have normally affirmed that the Spanish sacramental genre aims to portray Catholic dogma as perpetual and transcendental; as a result, scholars have proposed that

this genre goes beyond the secular plane and is basically removed from worldly themes or meanings. For instance, McKendrick has understood the eye-catching *autos* as ‘the consummate example of religious propaganda, of art in the service of religion’ (McKendrick 1989:250). However, she has proposed that the *autos* ‘are entirely allegorical and operate at no realistic level’; for McKendrick in the *autos* there is a total synthesis of subject, imagery and enactment: every *auto* element becomes ‘an integral part’ of the *auto*’s ‘symbolism’ (McKendrick 1989:249). Likewise, Hillach has remarked that the inner kernel of the *autos* is a divine situation (not a human one) and has argued that the *autos* perform ‘a metaphysical universe of radical a-temporality’ (Hillach 1982:24).<sup>18</sup> In contrast, Cohen has appreciated the more material and conservative aspect of the *autos*: he has suggested that the *autos*’ exposition of Catholic dogma ‘could function as an important vehicle of national self-definition’ and could easily lend a hand ‘to the interests of the monarchy’ (Cohen 1985:379). For example, various sacramental plays liken rebellion against God to rebellion against society ‘in the form of banditry’; they put forward that obedience to God entails obedience to social norms and to the authority of the monarch and of the family (Cohen 1985:379).<sup>19</sup> I partially agree with Cohen’s observations, yet I would like to show that *Sometimes Dreams Come True* is not unmistakably complicit with its time’s status quo: rather, this *auto* is subtly critical of customary prejudices and of political and religious habits.<sup>20</sup>

Clearly the celebration of Catholic faith is central to *Sometimes Dreams Come True* and various allegorical facets populate the play (among them, the Joseph/Jesus symbolism). However, the dream-loaded performance also perceptively scrutinizes its own historical context. This is patent as soon as the *auto*’s prologue begins and equates the Spanish

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<sup>18</sup> Hillach observes that the theological system of Calderón’s *autos* praises the creation and, above all, the person as image of God: ‘the human being is the culmination of the creation process’ (Hillach 1982:24). The seventeenth-century *autos* seem to hold an anthropocentric notion of the universe: in opposition to the mind/body dualism of other European countries, the *autos*’ individual appears to possess an existential unity both in life and in his/her relationship with God (Hillach 1982:25-27).

<sup>19</sup> As discussed in chapter 4, in early modern Spain the monarchs are seen as having divine right and as being God’s ‘vicereagents on earth’ (Greer 1997:46). Yet the Spanish sovereign has moral duties towards his subjects, and some episodes of *Sometimes Dreams Come True* seem to underscore this fact. As Greer remarks, especially in the second half of the seventeenth century Spaniards probably regarded Philip IV and his court more ‘as the object of God’s wrath than his love’ (Greer 1997:52).

<sup>20</sup> Thanks to their religious subjects and didactic intentions, in early modern Spain the *autos* are less criticised than the (supposedly debauched) *comedias*. Nevertheless, as Parker elucidates, attacks are made against ‘the manner of their presentation’ and the fact that professional actors (‘sometimes of notoriously immoral lives’) personify exemplary figures from the Christian tradition (Parker 1943:16).

royals to ancient divinities: the goddess Diana (also called 'Ana', 'grace') stands for the Queen Mother, Mariana of Austria, who was regent for ten years after her husband Philip IV's death in 1665. The association with Diana links the queen to notions of chastity and purity, traditionally 'female' virtues that will return in the *auto* through the figures of Chastity and Joseph. Diana mentions Philip IV's death and the mourning that took place for him ('pleasures [...] have been [...] suspended for a while'); in addition, she wants to 'make a garland' to adorn 'the newborn Sun', the young King Charles II (who was only eight at the time of the performance, in 1670) (150).<sup>21</sup> Olympus and Diana summon different flowers (Narcissus, Carnation, etc.) who wear a card with the initial letter of their names; singing and dancing, the gods and the flowers line up so that their cards spell the young king's name, 'Carlos Segundo'.<sup>22</sup> The *loa*'s characters make clear the religious intents of the performance to follow: they want to commemorate 'the Mystery / that's worthy of the highest praise' (152). Yet the flower Aster (symbolizing 'life unending, immortelle') states that life is 'the supreme gift' and so brings together spiritual and secular fears (152). In fact, the mention of immortal life indicates Jesus' message of eternal salvation as well as monarchical aspirations to everlasting fame: as Diana says, 'his [the king's] name [...] one day will be written in the stars' (153). Charles II, however, was mentally and physically subnormal and, as Graham Darby explains, 'was not expected to live long' (Darby 1994:69). The *auto* perhaps tries to exorcise the problem of the king's fragile health, a source of preoccupation alongside the politically ambitious figure of Don Juan José, the bastard son of Philip IV. Furthermore, before the prologue ends Diana conventionally asks the audience for 'indulgence' and emphasises its composite nature: the actors are performing in front of a 'handsome' king, 'a pious queen', 'lovely ladies', 'the learned prudence of the royal council', 'a great gathering of nobility' and 'brilliant commoners' (154). Most likely, the *auto* will try to cater to the (heterogeneous) tastes and concerns of the onlookers; it will offer an enjoyable spectacle as well as touch on contemporary social and religious issues.

In spite of their allegorical nature, three key characters tangibly bring up divisive matters the audience is probably familiar with: Dream, Chastity and Joseph himself. As normally happens within every *auto* performance, abstract ideas adopt an audible voice, deliver

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<sup>21</sup> Court mourning for Philip IV's death started in 1665 and ended in January 1670, when a play by Calderón was staged in honour of the Queen Mother's birthday (see McGaha 1998:327).

<sup>22</sup> The 'new Sun' Charles II has replaced 'the former one', his father Philip IV; yet Calderón appears to disapprove of Philip IV's conduct when he makes Olive say that 'peace makes a king just as heroic as war' (152). The numerous martial commitments of Philip IV and Olivares led Spain to 'partial bankruptcy' in 1660 and to 'full bankruptcy' in 1662 (Darby 1994:67).

long speeches, watch other characters, and are observed while moving on stage. Maraniss maintains that this practice helps religious drama to relate theology to human experience: the authors work down 'from a *'concepto imaginado'* [...] to a *'práctico concepto'*, a play' (Maraniss 1978:27). The imagined idea (*concepto imaginado*) is moulded into a practical idea (*práctico concepto*) to which the performance gives temporary life: 'ideas' are transformed 'in fantastic shapes'; one's 'joys' and 'sorrows' become 'living pictures', as Dream clarifies in *Sometimes Dreams Come True* (159). In this *auto* two usually abstract concepts, chastity and dream, acquire the tangible bodies of two actors and open the *auto*: previously embodied by Diana, Chastity physically enters the stage, dressed 'as a lady' and 'crowned with flowers'; Dream has taken on the shape of Morpheus (the god of sleep) and has a 'black face' and a 'gloomy, pale, and rigid form' (155). Chastity herself has actually assumed the 'appearance' of Aseneth (the priestess who will become Joseph's wife): the same actress, hence, performs two female characters, a personified virtue and a *real* woman (155).<sup>23</sup>

The importance of Chastity is repeatedly emphasised: she is a 'lovely virtue'; in 'sacred texts' she is the 'laurel of victory', 'the trophy' for those who 'triumph over themselves in the struggle with the senses'; she is 'the pinnacle of purity'; she vanquishes 'the body's rebellions' and gives 'the soul victory' (155). In line with early modern conceptions of 'proper' femininity, the female gender of Chastity offers a moral warning to the *auto*'s female spectators. In fact, as Juan Luis Vives writes in his *Formación de la mujer cristiana* (*The Formation of the Christian Wife*, 1523), 'no one expects anything from her [woman] but *chastity*' (quoted in Soufas 1996:131, emphasis added).<sup>24</sup> At the same time, Chastity's purity contrasts with the sexual depravity of Spanish monarchs (Philip IV in particular), the nobles and the commoners alike.<sup>25</sup> Analysing the laicisation of Spanish society in the seventeenth century, O'Connor writes: 'the moral degeneration of Spain's religious life [...]

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<sup>23</sup> The priestess Aseneth's immaculate virtues resemble Chastity's: Dream says that Aseneth is 'like a sun herself' (155).

<sup>24</sup> Soufas underlines the gender-relatedness of early modern treatises on female education: women should be taught chastity, silence and obedience (Soufas 1996:130). Yet, as O'Connor underlines, Spanish *comedias* often contest the image of woman that patriarchy wishes to see publicly exhibited: like Rosaura in *Life Is a Dream*, the on-stage female heroines are not always 'deferential before masculine authority and acquiescent regarding its decisions' (O'Connor 2000:73).

<sup>25</sup> In 1664 Francis Willughby (an Englishman visiting Spain) writes of Spaniards that 'for fornication and impurity they are the worst of all Nations, at least in Europe' (quoted in Kamen 1980:296). Henry Kamen explains that in seventeenth-century Spain pre-nuptial intercourse is not uncommon, parish priests have concubines, and prostitution is everywhere (see Kamen 1980:294-297). In the Egyptian prison Chastity says that 'if a rock fell from heaven, it would be less wonderful for it to stop in midair than for a man to resist temptation': the phrase may aptly summarise the moral degeneration of seventeenth-century Spain (158).

fostered in large measure by the example of the king himself [...] was sufficient, for some, to account for the political failures of the empire' (O'Connor 2000:213).<sup>26</sup> Given that Chastity advocates the return to a more upright Christian lifestyle, she may represent an ethical admonition for most of the spectators, regardless of their gender and rank. Chastity affirms the supremacy of the soul over the body and praises Joseph who has conquered his senses; all the same, one should not overlook the fact that she will employ a highly sensory performance to put on view the Jew's exemplary story.<sup>27</sup>

Probably the *auto*'s title informs the spectators that dreams will play a major role within the performance. The entrance of the character of Dream confirms the title's axiom: the dream has become *true* (it has attained the factual body of an actor) and is sensually received by on- and off-stage spectators. In addition, the audience may be reminded of the prophetic dreams present in the Bible, i.e. oneiric visions that *actually* came about. As discussed in chapter 1, in his *Treatise on sleeping and waking* friar Lope de Barrientos argues that predictive dreams occur when 'our Lord wishes to reveal things to come to a few suitable people whom He Himself chooses' (*Tractado del dormir et despertar*:26).<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, the *auto* shows the coming true of the dreams God sent Joseph and portrays some aspects of Catholic doctrine as dreams that have turned into reality.

As in Chastity's case, contradictory features surround the figure of Dream. In keeping with the time's dream theories, Dream oscillates between being a 'vague fantasy' or 'an obscure spasm of the intellect' and the crucial medium of divine revelation (155 and 159).<sup>29</sup> Given that Chastity wants to show him a morally edifying spectacle, Dream might be regarded as an on-stage spectator of the *auto*. Yet at the end of the performance Dream will take the place of Chastity as the *auto*'s director and will guide the audience through the mysteries of Catholic credo; his spiritual elevation and insight will echo those of the Pharaoh, of Joseph's repentant brothers and, perhaps, of the spectators

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<sup>26</sup> The Spanish clergy especially disapproved of the theatrical performances given in Philip IV's Buen Retiro palace and saw the political disasters of the 1640s and after as the consequence of sin and of the public slackening of customs (see O'Connor 2000:211-213).

<sup>27</sup> Chastity's doppelganger, the priestess Aseneth, at times deviates a little from the accepted archetype of female decorum: for instance, she verbally expresses her physical attraction for Joseph saying that the Jew 'overcomes' her 'natural modesty' and makes her 'want to please him' (170).

<sup>28</sup> The translation of the Spanish text is mine: 'a nuestro Señor plazze revelar algunas cosas advenideras mediante alguna persona ydónea que para ello escoge'.

<sup>29</sup> The *auto* shares traditional beliefs about dreams. For instance, Chastity says to Dream: 'when calm has introduced you to bring rest, you treacherously transform rest into risk'; as Nashe does in *The Terrors of the Night*, Chastity underscores the often chaotic and frightening content of dreams (155).

themselves. Dream is gendered male, like the god Morpheus; his black face and dark shape may hint at the slaves working both in the Spanish colonies and at times in Spain itself.<sup>30</sup> As a result, Dream may be seen as a rather marginalized individual who resembles Joseph: indeed, at the opening of the *auto* Joseph is a prisoner, a slandered individual and the dreamer par excellence. Dream's dim guise visually differs from Chastity's: he is 'dressed in shadows', whereas she is bright and clothed 'in lights'; the two characters will duel each other, Chastity says, by displaying the clash between 'reason' (Chastity) and 'unreason' (Dream) (155, 156 and 159). The strongly egalitarian song Dream sings after having seen Joseph in jail may corroborate his (apparent) low-class status:

Sleep now, ye mortals, sleep! / For the great man and the small / are equal when they're asleep. (159)

The message Dream conveys to the listeners depicts sleep (or death) as a condition of equality for all individuals. Dream asserts that in the afterlife any rank or gender hierarchy will be abolished and so reminds the audience (the royals too) that earthly roles are only temporary. In *Ideologies of History* Cascardi writes that in the *autos* social disparities are depicted as 'merely contingent' and, consequently, the ideological effectiveness of those disparities is hidden from plain view (Cascardi 1997:98, emphasis original). Surely, as with Segismundo's in *Life Is a Dream*, the power of early modern Spanish monarchs is not a fiction: they really exert it. Nonetheless, *Sometimes Dreams Come True* vividly cautions on- and off-stage viewers about the precariousness of earthly power; above all, this *auto* applauds a governor (Joseph) whose political and ethical conduct greatly differs from, for instance, Philip IV's.

Chastity and Dream open the *auto* championing values that, most likely, collide with the socio-political habits of the majority of the contemporaneous spectators. The figure of Joseph does the same and incarnates the force of principles (such as compassionate forgiveness and love) that are not thriving in seventeenth-century Madrid.<sup>31</sup> Within the Egyptian prison, the Cupbearer and the Baker preliminarily describe Joseph as a 'wretch'

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<sup>30</sup> Though the demand for slaves was relatively limited in Spain, throughout the seventeenth-century Gypsies, *Moriscos* and black people were employed in households, mines and galleys (see Kamen 1980:283-290).

<sup>31</sup> In 1688 a Catholic envoy wrote that 'in the midst of all these bowings, [...] breast-beatings and innumerable other superstitious externals, [...] the real conduct of Spaniards consisted of lies, thieving, murder and concubinage' (quoted in Kamen 1980:291). As Dream observes, the Egyptian jail is 'the centre of all vices' and inside it 'dwell homicide and theft, fraud and adultery': the prison, an inappropriate place for Chastity's spotlessness, may remind the early modern onlooker of Spain and its court (155).

and a 'helpless' person; Joseph enters the jail ('in chains' like Segismundo in the first act of *Life Is a Dream*) and shows his humbleness by kneeling before the two other prisoners (156).<sup>32</sup> Joseph calls attention to his (exceptional) tribulation and kind-heartedness ('I was a wretched slave in my master's house, and I'm a wretched slave here, for I have come to serve'); he reveals that his own dreams 'aroused the envy' that brought him to this abject state (156-157).<sup>33</sup> In particular, Joseph's piousness differs from the Baker's spiteful behaviour: the Baker always thinks 'the worst' (he assumes that Joseph is in prison because he is 'a rascal') and would like to get hold of Joseph's 'cap and gown' (156). The Baker considers Joseph's meekness 'highfalutin' and leaves the stage saying he does not want to listen to 'such goody-goody nonsense': according to the Biblical parable of the sower, he may exemplify the deficient listener who (partly) hears 'the word', but does not understand it or allow it to 'take root' within himself (Folkerth 2002:46).<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, while both Joseph and the Cupbearer are 'innocently punished', the Baker will be found guilty of 'a crime' and will be sentenced to death: his story might recall the situation of seventeenth-century Madrid, a city in which 'murder was common and crime frequent among all social classes' (Kamen 1980:167).

Chastity explains to Dream (and to the audience) that 'in all the world there is no one else who venerates' her (chastity) as Joseph does (158).<sup>35</sup> In fact, Joseph was incarcerated only because he tried to 'preserve [Chastity's] purity' and to 'avoid offending his master': when the wife of the master he was working for fell in love with him, Joseph strongly rejected her, 'attentive both to the demands of religion and loyalty' (158). The master's wife, offended by Joseph's refusal, slandered the Jew (saying that he had

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<sup>32</sup> The beginning of *Sometimes Dreams Come True* resembles *Life Is a Dream*'s first act: two characters (Dream and Chastity, Rosaura and Clarín) observe a man (Joseph and Segismundo) who is imprisoned and unhappy. This man will find a way out of his misery through the (literal or metaphorical) interpretation of his dreams.

<sup>33</sup> When the Cupbearer remarks that the name 'Joseph' means 'increase', the Jew laments that 'trouble' is the only thing he has seen 'increase' (157). Since in early modern Spain masses are 'thronged' and most Spaniards are 'adequately informed' about religion, Calderón's audiences would probably know that the dreams Joseph had in Canaan prompted his envious brothers to sell him to some merchants (Kamen 1980:298-299).

<sup>34</sup> Unlike Joseph, the Baker seems unable to restrain his bodily needs and believes that one should 'eat' if 'hungry' or 'sleep' if 'sleepy' (160). The Baker's hedonistic philosophy disagrees with the preaching of St Ignatius Loyola (1491-1536, the founder of the Jesuits): according to Loyola, to exercise spiritually the faithful should cut down on food and sleep and even inflict pain on their bodies. Loyola praises the 'redemptive value of pain and mortification'; he establishes eight rules to make one feel less gratification while eating and to remain masters of the body (Synnott 1991:69).

<sup>35</sup> In terms of staging, Chastity and Dream probably look down onto the stage from up above and see Joseph and the other prisoners below. The two allegorical characters are on one of the carts, possibly in one of the niches of the storeys.

sexually abused her) and caused his imprisonment. Chastity soundly portrays Joseph as the champion of moral integrity: the Jew 'overcame the sweetest siren, the most flattering snake, [...] and the wildest hyena'; he was 'deaf to her voice, mute to her pleading, unmoved by all her tears' (158). Since early modern Spain values chastity as a 'typically feminine' virtue, the audience may see Joseph as a not very 'masculine' character and may find his lack of sexual boldness quite peculiar.<sup>36</sup> Joseph surely challenges the conventional male hero of Spanish *comedias* and of the cape-and-sword genre in particular: in these plays men duel for possession over a woman and the representation of (male) 'erotic arousal or passionate love' is described 'as something *natural and good*' (O'Connor 2000:51, emphasis original).<sup>37</sup> As pointed out in the Introduction, in early modern Spanish drama (and in Spanish society) the preservation of (sexual) honour is essential for men; a woman who is even merely suspected of infidelity would normally end up being murdered. The Joseph story, however, reverses this situation; when the Pharaoh asks Joseph why he was imprisoned, the Jew conceals the truth and so protects the reputation of his ex-master's wife:

I'd rather die with the comfort of knowing I'm innocent than sacrifice the honour of a woman. I will not defend my own honour at the cost of another's honour. (168)

Presumably, Joseph's decision not to dishonour his master's wife would have been unpopular in seventeenth-century Madrid. In keeping with the time's honour code, one may suspect that the *auto*'s spectators would have regarded the public humiliation and even the slaughter of a treacherous woman as 'righteous' (Jehenson and Welles 2000:189).<sup>38</sup> In contrast, Joseph places the woman's reputation above his own and follows evangelical teaching by choosing to forgive her malevolent conduct.

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<sup>36</sup> Joseph will particularly show his 'femininity' again while talking to his brothers in Egypt: his heart will be 'in [his] throat' and will beat 'like a drum'; the Jew will also weep while meeting again his much-loved brother Benjamin and seeing his brothers' remorse (173).

<sup>37</sup> In his article 'Performativity and Sexual Identity', Matthew D. Stroud observes that in (Calderón's and other dramatists') *comedias* male characters are 'expected to be protective of women', valiant, cruel, competitive, and dignified; men 'must do something' to preserve their honour when affronted (Stroud 2000:113).

<sup>38</sup> As O'Connor elucidates, the early modern (European) honour code required men to be 'severe domestic guardians' of their wives and sisters; 'masculine responsibility over women was enveloped in the mantle of sacred authority' and failure to guarantee it caused disrespect for patriarchal authority (O'Connor 2000:73). The *comedias* often portray men 'who are overly zealous in the pursuit of honour' and very 'quick to discover personal affronts in the slightest actions or omissions of others'; these same men 'tend to view women as mere receptacles of honour' and hence dehumanise their female partners (O'Connor 2000:13). See also the essay by Yvonne Jehenson and Marcia L. Welles in *Gender, Identity, and Representation in Spain's Golden Age* (2000).

The last key aspect of Joseph's potentially divisive characterisation is his Jewish lineage. On the one hand, *Sometimes Dreams Come True* pays homage to a Biblical figure (Joseph) whom Christian tradition favourably interpreted as a precursor of Jesus. On the other, the *auto's* hero is a Jew who triumphs within a non-Jewish country (Egypt): the Egyptian kingdom could allude to early modern Spain, a strongly anti-Semitic environment that may not easily accept the glorification of a Jew. As Kamen observes, 'since the fifteenth century racial discrimination against Spaniards of Jewish origin had become an established feature of public life' (Kamen 1980:303).<sup>39</sup> Purity of blood (the *limpieza de sangre* discussed in chapter 1) was a compulsory requirement for anybody who wanted to work in public office; in contrast, in *Sometimes Dreams Come True* the Pharaoh appoints Joseph viceroy of Egypt and the Jew wisely carries out his political duties. Once more, the *auto's* internal socio-political resolutions disagree with those of its historical context and possibly pass judgement on that context.

As a final point, I would like to begin to stress the *auto's* rather paradoxical use of dreams and of a sensuous performance to verify the religious mystery. Chastity openly draws attention to the allegorical dimension of the *auto*: the performance ('all that happens to him', i.e. to Joseph) has a 'double meaning', in that 'a mystery' hides beneath its obvious surface (159). In 'future ages', Chastity goes on, this 'hidden' implication will become 'Miracle of Miracles, Wonder of All Wonders, and [...] the light, truth, and life of the Sacrament Most High': among those 'future ages' there is seventeenth-century Spain and its Catholic faith, as Calderón's audiences probably understand (159). On stage, however, the allegory conveniently obtains an actual concreteness: 'seeing it will be more effective than just hearing', Chastity affirms, and this solidity possibly brings the mystery nearer to the spectator's own reality (156). The appeal to the senses of 'seeing' and 'hearing' (recurring throughout) contributes to the *phenomenal* thickness of theoretical concepts: characters and audience alike are asked to pay great attention to the visible elements on stage, to songs and scenic effects.

Since dreams are one of the causes of Joseph's sufferings (his brothers sold him because they did not like his dreams of future glory), Chastity wants Dream to 'indemnify' Joseph and to defend the worth of doing good (158). Via the *auto*, Chastity wants 'to carry out a gloriously chaste enterprise': 'our performance *in this temporal theatre* will

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<sup>39</sup> People who could not officially prove that they were free of Jewish blood or that the Inquisition had never penalized them were automatically banned from the public administration. Though during Philip IV's kingdom it was recognised that these regulations caused injustice and social discord, no measures were taken to abolish them (see Kamen 1980:303-307).

demonstrate that if a man practices a virtue, when he falls on hard times, she will defend him' (155 and 158, emphasis added). In all probability, Joseph's merciful behaviour suitably demonstrates Chastity's argument that 'the soul's noble virtue' is superior to 'the body's vile inclination' (158). However, the *auto* itself does not refrain from exploiting extremely sensory channels to bear out Chastity's contention (158). For example, Joseph (and the actor playing him) frequently attracts and affects the sight of other characters: Joseph is 'a good-looking boy', he is 'handsome' and 'smart'; the Cupbearer says he has 'never seen a nicer-looking person' and remarks that seeing Joseph 'so unhappy' is breaking his heart (156-157). The male body of the actor performing Joseph's part is often the object of visual pleasure and admiration; the Jew's virtuous conduct should encourage on- and off-stage viewers to do good, but his 'good looks' may equally touch their feelings (156).<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, in addition to Joseph's commendable life, the *auto* stages the reprehensible actions of other characters (the brothers' and the Baker's, for instance): on the one hand, the focus on the importance of (Joseph's) love and clemency reminds one that 'the great theatre of the world' is transient and that the afterlife matters more; on the other, the characters who pursue socio-political power and material benefits emphasise that earthly life may not be a merely pointless illusion.

Overcoming his initial hesitation, Dream accepts Chastity's invitation to perform in the *auto* and sings to invite human beings (the whole audience) to sleep: 'Sleep, sleep I say, but seek not / merely the body's rest; / pay heed to Heaven's message / to you *in shades* addressed' (159, emphasis added). Dream's song recapitulates the multifaceted-ness of the *auto sacramental* I have discussed in this section: paradoxically, the *auto's* 'shades' are *true*, i.e. they possess both bodily reality and historical relevance. Similar to a dream, the *auto* is a very convincing illusion: it succeeds in transmitting Heaven's non-negligible message and in censuring its community's socio-political transgressions.

### **III: Many-sided dreams: on-stage happenings, time-travellers and power-dispensing tools.**

This section investigates the three central events that link Joseph with dreams and dream interpretation and assist his social ascent: the Baker's and the Cupbearer's dream, Joseph's dreamlike vision of Jacob and Benjamin in Canaan, and Joseph's correct reading

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<sup>40</sup> The Cupbearer believes that 'good looks are the address Heaven writes on its letters of recommendation, to endear the bearer to those it wants to like him' (156). These words may denote a sort of homoerotic frisson between the Cupbearer and Joseph and may ironically refer to the audience's visual enjoyment of the actors' bodies.

of the Pharaoh's dreams. Again, I call attention to the eye- and ear-catching attributes of the on-stage dreams and to their cultural purchase; by highlighting their unique synthesis of illusive entertainment, socio-political questions and religious instruction I refute the argument that the dreams (and the *auto*) only have a figurative meaning.

All the three dream-related episodes I am going to analyse bring together diverse chronological layers. In his analysis of *Sometimes Dreams Come True* Gilbert observes that in this *auto* dreams exercise a dynamic function that is either proleptic (i.e. foretelling future events) or analeptic (i.e. showing events already happened in 'the past' of the performance).<sup>41</sup> Apart from these two functions, the dreams in *Sometimes Dreams Come True* manipulate time in a very specific way: the on-stage characters often look forward to events which are past for the off-stage audience. For instance, Chastity suspects that Joseph's figure conceals 'a greater matter, which must remain veiled in shadows until the appointed time'; the seventeenth-century spectators, however, probably know that Joseph prefigures Jesus' coming, i.e. an event that has happened *before* their own age (158). Again, in one scene in the Egyptian jail Joseph finds himself between the Baker and the Cupbearer 'in the shape of a cross', an image that 'foreshadows a [...] mystery' (163).<sup>42</sup> For the audience the mystery to come has *already* taken place: the shape of a cross heralds Jesus' death between the two thieves and reveals the mystery of life on the right side and death on the left one. The *auto* plays with real time (the time when the performance is enacted) and with dramatic time: in real time predictive events (Joseph's life) look backward, as they touch on incidents that have previously occurred; in dramatic time predictive events look forward, as they foresee *future* events (Jesus' advent). As Garber proposes with regard to the English history plays, 'the result is a remarkable theatrical illusion, hindsight masquerading as foresight' (Garber 1986:308). This dramatic irony supplements 'a sense of historical inevitability': overall, the *autos* present history as (religiously) providential; history is a plot designed by God and will in the end lead to either

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<sup>41</sup> In Gilbert's words: 'the allegorization of the dream [...] will work sometimes as the structural motif of the *auto*, as prophetic dream that configures the dramatic trajectory of the central figure of the dreamer, and sometimes as the key to the global interpretation of the representation, as allegory of the divine message, in service of the eucharistic intention of the *auto sacramental*' (Gilbert 2005:446). The translation of the Spanish text is mine: 'la alegorización del sueño [...] funcionará a la vez como motivo estructurante del auto en tanto que sueño profético que configura la trayectoria dramática de la figura central del soñador, y también como clave de interpretación global de lo representado, en tanto que alegoría del mensaje divino puesto al servicio del propósito eucarístico de la obra sacramental'.

<sup>42</sup> Angry because Joseph has interpreted his dream as a sign of imminent death, the Baker tries to attack the Jew; in contrast, the Cupbearer wants to defend him. Joseph stops the two men placing himself between them and lifting them up with both hands.

everlasting salvation or perpetual damnation for every individual (Garber 1986:305). Most likely, the divinatory quality of the *autos* stirs in the onlookers a sense of unavoidability concerning both dramatic and real time. In fact, every *auto* will *surely* terminate with the apotheosis of Catholic dogma as well as with the defeat (or the repentance) of characters who contested the dogma or acted against evangelical teaching. The spectators may believe that this inescapability will apply also to their own history: God's justice will finally come about and will dispense either reward or punishment to the poor and the royals alike.<sup>43</sup>

In spite of their spiritual aspect, the dreams of *Sometimes Dreams Come True* own a very phenomenal nature and acutely apply to the seventeenth-century Spanish context. After Chastity, Dream and Joseph have been introduced, the audience sees the Baker and the Cupbearer sleeping and dreaming in the Egyptian jail: the everyday activities of sleeping and dreaming might bring to mind their (real) existence outside the performance and might reduce the degree of illusiveness of the performance itself. The *auto* publicly shows *in reality* (as enacted by the actors on the streets and squares of Madrid) the intensity and the mysteriousness of the dreaming act; otherwise, dreaming would wholly happen only during the actual oneiric phase, when the dreamer could not directly watch him/herself dreaming. Specifically, the audience observes the transition from the act of sleeping (the Baker and the Cupbearer 'lie down' and lose full consciousness) to the dream event and its bustle: the dream is both an extra-ordinary space (for instance, it is inhabited by the two Shades) and a lifelike space (*real* actions take place within it). In addition, *Sometimes Dreams Come True* makes the dream occurrence available in a dual and novel way: consciously, as on- and off-stage viewers are aware of *living* a dream event; communally, as the people gathered for the *auto* performance share the oneiric (and ritual) experience together.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Since the prophecy guarantees its own truth and the audience knows it is going to be fulfilled, Garber argues, the history plays may encourage an (unwanted) complicity between audience and actor: the seduction carried out by the prophecy could compromise the audience's detachment and objectivity towards the (supposedly inevitable) events (see Garber 1986:318-327). Yet in the *autos* the inescapable events are the triumph of (Catholic) virtue and the future equality of all people in front of God; as Greer emphasises, in early modern Spain even the king (at least in theory) is 'supported and controlled by divine law' and is not 'morally or politically absolute' (Greer 1997:46).

<sup>44</sup> Maraniss writes that the characters of every *auto* 'meet on a theatrical plane that is both human and divine, where the human cedes some of its inalienability and concreteness and the divine cedes some of its distance and mystery' (Maraniss 1978:18). Similar considerations pertain to the dreams within the *auto* I am analysing: in *Sometimes Dreams Come True* dreams lose some of their 'distance and mystery' and land onto a human surface (they are on the streets of Madrid, in

Dream's song ('Sleep now, ye mortals, sleep!') makes the Cupbearer and the Baker fall asleep.<sup>45</sup> According to the stage directions, the two prisoners lie down on opposite sides of the stage. The Cupbearer sits and sleeps on the cart containing a 'hinged platform' from which a Shade gradually comes out, getting out from beneath a grapevine. The Baker stays beneath another cart, one that will bring out a Shade with some birds and some baskets of bread.<sup>46</sup> When the two platforms open from the wings and meet in the centre of the main stage, the Shades start singing a song about the 'bread of death' and the 'wine of life' (160-161). Their performance ends with the repetition of Dream's 'egalitarian' song:

SHADE 1: It's Bread of Death to him who eats *in sin*.

SHADE 2: But if *in grace*, it is Wine from Heaven.

BOTH: Sleep now, ye mortals, sleep! / For the great man and the small / are equal as long as they sleep. (160, emphasis added)

The Shades' song indicates that the on-stage bread and wine belong to both a bygone, quasi-mythical time (the Israelites' wanderings in the desert, when God gave them manna and 'hearty wine') and to the age of Calderón's audiences (160).<sup>47</sup> In fact, the bread and wine recall the Eucharist rite remembered and re-lived during Mass. Yet the song also reminds the spectators that the ritual can bring about opposite outcomes: the one who 'abhors' the sacrament or takes part in it 'in sin' will meet eternal death; the one who 'adores' the sacrament and participates in it 'in grace' will have eternal life (161).

The dream of bread and wine has physically affected the two dreamers: as Joseph notices when he enters the stage, they are 'frightened, distressed, and upset' (161). Before recounting their vision the two prisoners spell out a dream phenomenology that matches early modern beliefs about dreams:

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front of the Spanish spectators). Dreams are on-stage actors (for example, the character of Dream and the two Shades) and on-stage physical occurrences to be watched, heard and interpreted.

<sup>45</sup> As Gilbert points out, music normally has narcoleptic properties in Calderón's *autos*: it communicates the characters' desire to sleep or makes them fall asleep (Gilbert 2005:451). In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Shakespeare presents music in a similar way (see 4.i.82). Before Dream concludes the song, the Cupbearer and the Baker actually join in the refrain and then feel 'sluggish' (160). The more allegorical plane (represented by Dream) mixes with the more realistic one (represented by the two prisoners) and seems to prove its historical dimension further. The Baker repeats the democratic implications of Dream's song: 'when I'm sleeping, I can't tell whether I'm in prison or a free man' (160).

<sup>46</sup> Like Segismundo in *Life Is a Dream*, the Cupbearer and the Baker are at once gazing subjects and visual objects of their dream: they observe what happens within their dream, whereas the audience views them as being part of that dream.

<sup>47</sup> In terms of purely dramatic time, the song about the 'bread of death' and the 'wine of life' refers to the *present* situation lived by the prisoners as well as to the *future* establishment of the Eucharistic ritual.

CUPBEARER: Don't be afraid...  
 BAKER: ...for something painful...  
 CUPBEARER: ...for such a pleasure...  
 BAKER: hurts *even in a dream*.  
 CUPBEARER: ...*even in a dream* goes by too quickly (161, emphasis added)

The adverb 'even' explicates the ambivalent quality of the dream (and of the performance): the dream is *reality*, but only a certain kind of *reality*; though it *feels like* reality, to some extent the dream is illusion. The dream has aroused *genuine* pleasure and distress in the Baker and the Cupbearer, as the *auto* may have done in the spectators; the dream and the performance might hurt deeply or finish 'too quickly', as authentic experiences do. In *Sometimes Dreams Come True*, however, dreams provide evidence for the truth of the Eucharistic mystery: in other words, the (fundamental) religious belief relies on the simultaneous actuality and fictitiousness of the dream (and of the performance).

After the enactment of the shared bread-and-wine dream (enjoyed by all those on- and off-stage), the Baker and the Cupbearer recount their individual dreams to Joseph: their oneiric visions were 'marked' by 'the signs' of their 'trade' and, within them, the two dreamers repeatedly 'saw' various things ('I saw some flocks of vile, nocturnal birds', 'I saw a lovely grapevine') (161-162).<sup>48</sup> As happened to the audience when the bread-and-wine dream was being performed, the recounting of the two prisoners' dreams makes Joseph see 'life and death in wine and bread' (162). Joseph foretells imminent death to the Baker whose bread, in the dream, was devoured by 'vile, nocturnal birds'; in contrast, Joseph predicts future happiness to the Cupbearer who, in his dream, did not 'waste' a 'drop' of 'that precious liquid' (Christ's blood) (161-162).<sup>49</sup> In addition to alluding to Jesus' *future* institution of the Eucharistic rite, the bread-and-wine dream talks to Calderón's audiences about their own religious conduct. Indeed, the Baker's and the Cupbearer's dreams are 'almost alike': yet the former dream shows 'waste of bread' and means 'ruin'; the latter shows 'wine preserved' and means 'increase' (162). As Joseph explains, bread may be life *or* death and wine may be death *or* life: this positive/negative and

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<sup>48</sup> The Baker maintains it was 'natural' for him to dream of bread, for 'our fantasy in dreams always represents whatever we deal with most during the day' (161). His consideration is in line with dream theories of the time: for example, in his *Tratado en el qual se repruevan en todas las supersticiones y hechizerías* (*A Treatise Reproving All Superstitions and Forms of Witchcraft*, 1530) Pedro Ciruelo writes that within dreams 'the mind rehashes the experiences of the previous day' (quoted in Kagan 1990:41). Nashe argues the same in *The Terrors of the Night*.

<sup>49</sup> Diffidence still seems to surround dreams and their significance: the Baker claims he is not 'worried' by Joseph's reading of the dream; likewise, the Cupbearer is not 'excited' about the good interpretation of his dream and invites the Baker not to pay attention to it (163).

negative/positive alternative tells the early modern listeners that the soundness of the Eucharist rests on the spirit with which one takes the sacrament (in sin or in grace). Furthermore, the core moral of the bread-and-wine dream is that punishment awaits the sinner: the Baker has committed a crime and will be convicted of it ('Oh, woe is me, for I must pay for my crime!') (163). On the contrary, the guiltless and compassionate Cupbearer will leave the prison (a metaphor for worldly life, as seen in *Life Is a Dream*) and will be restored 'to the king's favour' (the Pharaoh as well as God Himself) (163).<sup>50</sup>

After the *actual* coming true of the Baker's and the Cupbearer's dreams, Joseph's fate still appears uncertain. The Jew complains that his only crime 'was to refuse to commit a crime' and, once more, puts on public view his absolute obedience to God's law (164). By rejecting his master's wife, Joseph followed the commandments of not desiring the woman of another man and of not committing adultery; certainly the late Philip IV and members of the audience could not boast a similar rectitude.<sup>51</sup> The great contrast between Joseph's and other characters' behaviour (and between Joseph's conduct and, probably, that of a good number of the spectators) continues when the Jew is left alone in the jail. Joseph laments the distance from his father Jacob and his beloved brother Benjamin and wonders what happened to them after his disappearance from Canaan ('I can't help thinking he [Jacob] has died of grief because I'm not there') (165). Chastity hears Joseph's cry and reappears crossing the stage in front of him: her 'heavenly beauty', Joseph erroneously thinks, is a 'delirium' caused by his 'apprehension' (165). Chastity makes the 'dream' carry on: she rewinds the action to two years *before* and lets Jacob and Benjamin appear on a stage 'suspended above' on one of the carts (165).<sup>52</sup> The mini-dream reveals to Joseph how his brothers have justified his absence: Reuben, Judah, Issachar and Manasseh tell Jacob that they found Joseph's 'lifeless body torn in pieces', massacred by a ferocious beast (166). Apart from its narrative task, the Canaan dream (which Joseph calls 'illusion') exposes the depravity of Joseph's brothers in general and highlights the dreadful consequences of the sin of envy in particular (as Jacob says, envy is the 'worst of beasts') (167 and 166). Jealous of the fact that Joseph was their father's favourite and annoyed by

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<sup>50</sup> The Cupbearer's joyful words might refer to the day of the final judgement: 'oh, lucky me, to have lived to see this day!' (163).

<sup>51</sup> In *The Play of Power* Greer underlines that Philip IV's subjects feared that 'his sexual passions distracted his attention from affairs of state' (Greer 1991:77).

<sup>52</sup> Thanks to the machinery of the carts (themselves a sort of 'supernatural' space) the Canaan dream dramatizes an episode temporally antecedent to the *current* focus of the performance (Joseph's imprisonment in Egypt). The dream has an analeptic function (it shows past events of which Joseph is unaware) as well as a proleptic one (it tells the spectators of the brothers' culpability toward Joseph and possibly anticipates their future punishment).

Joseph's dreams of glory ('if he hadn't had those dreams, his good fortune would never have been spoiled'), the brothers contravene the evangelical mandate to love one another (167). Like most of the characters of *Sometimes Dreams Come True*, the brothers foreshadow *future* events (they may symbolise the apostles); nonetheless, they could also evoke episodes of brotherly rivalry the contemporaneous audience would be familiar with. As Greer explains, '*Discordia* (or factional struggle) grew to truly monstrous proportions in the Spanish court after Philip IV died in 1665 [...] at the centre of this struggle stood Don Juan José' (the young king Charles II's half-brother) (Greer 1991:146). Even while Philip IV lived, Don Juan openly divulged his political ambitions; in 1669 (the year previous to the performance of *Sometimes Dreams Come True*) Don Juan marched triumphantly from Barcelona toward Madrid and 'his approach [...] threatened civil war'; he was appointed vicar general of the Crown of Aragón and, until his death in 1679, his vigorous figure sharply contrasted with the 'sickly, mentally retarded' Charles II (Greer 1991:149 and 179).<sup>53</sup> The discord between Joseph and his brothers, therefore, might call to mind the (potential) Don Juan/Charles conflict; by staging a story of antagonism, wrongdoing and subsequent reconciliation, Calderón's *auto* handles anxieties that are all but completely transcendent.

The last dream-related episode in the central part of *Sometimes Dreams Come True* concerns the Jew's exact interpretation of the Pharaoh's dreams. Shortly after his Canaan dream, Joseph is released from prison and taken to the royal court to advise the Pharaoh on his dreams; the prison, as it were, is torn open by Joseph's divinatory powers. Initially the Pharaoh states that he 'can have no comfort' until he knows what 'heaven meant to tell' through the dreams (168). Afterwards the monarch describes the two visions to Joseph: in the first dream, seven osseous cows devour seven fat ones; in the second dream, seven scanty ears of grain destroy seven flourishing ones. The King also underlines the fact that his dreams take place beside a river: Joseph reads this detail as 'a hieroglyphic meaning time', the eternal flow of time that connects the (both *future* and *past*) events to the viewers' seventeenth-century Spain (169). Joseph calls attention to the double pattern of abundance followed by destruction and immediately interprets the two visions correctly: the miserable group of cows and spikes predicts seven years of famine coming after seven years of prosperity; the Pharaoh should 'store up plenty against want,

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<sup>53</sup> Kamen explains that, after 1669, Don Juan wanted to make his half-brother Charles 'truly king'; furthermore, for ten years Don Juan was a decent administrator of the Spanish wealth, promoted scientific learning, and encouraged journalism (Kamen 1980:341). Yet in 1669-1670 Calderón and his audiences could not know how Don Juan would subsequently use his power.

and happiness against woe' (169). Consistent with the tradition of divinely inspired dreams, the king's foretelling dreams are less a private experience than an affair of great consequence for his nation's future.<sup>54</sup> Joseph himself, the translator of the oneiric occurrences, communicates a message 'received through a miraculous medium' (Kagan 1990:86).<sup>55</sup> The happiness/woe succession within the king's dreams and kingdom is reversed in Joseph's story: in Egypt seven prosperous years will be followed by seven years of famine; Joseph's misery is *now* replaced by a prestigious social position. In fact, the Pharaoh proclaims Joseph viceroy of Egypt ('since you have foreseen the damage, you must be the one to prepare the remedy') and underlines the Jew's new magnificent belongings and status: Joseph receives the 'royal purple', a 'ring' and a 'chain'; he will go out in public 'in the most triumphal chariot'; he will sit at the king's right hand and all will 'applaud' him 'in unison' (169). Joseph's role clearly foreshadows Jesus': the crowd rejoices, calls the Jew 'Egypt's Saviour', and hopes for the blessing of 'he who comes in the holy name of the Lord' (170).<sup>56</sup> Nonetheless, Joseph's socio-political achievement owns also a key historical significance. To begin with, when the Pharaoh embraces Joseph class disparities seem to vanish: the absolute sovereign descends onto the level of an abject prisoner and publicly recognises the vital contribution the commoner has given to the kingdom. As Osborne points out, the interpreter (Joseph) is greater than the dreamer (the Pharaoh): 'Joseph's demonstration of wisdom is a demonstration of power' (Osborne 2001:110). The Jewish Joseph represents a minority in seventeenth-century Madrid as well as in the *auto's* Egypt: the pagan monarch, unconcerned about racial or religious diversity, affirms that Joseph's God wisely speaks through him; hence, he orders his subjects (from the 'most noble vassal' to 'the humblest of them all') to obey the Jew, who has rescued the nation 'from the ruin' (169). Furthermore, the Pharaoh's dreams raise issues the spectators would probably care about: Darby explains that in early modern Spain poor climatic conditions often 'meant that agriculture could not support the existing levels of population'; throughout the seventeenth century (and Charles II's reign was no exception) heavy rains frequently ruined the harvests, flooding and hail destroyed the

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<sup>54</sup> In her essay 'Dreaming Meanings' Hodgkin remarks the social importance of Biblical as well as early modern dreams: the dreamer (the Pharaoh) dreams as a particular person and as a member of a community; dreams are located 'at the intersection of public and private, prognosticatory and everyday meanings' (Hodgkin 2008:124).

<sup>55</sup> As Kagan emphasises in his analysis of Lucrecia's (potentially) prophetic dreams, prophecy is at once 'a social act, a collective enterprise, a private endeavour' (Kagan 1990:86).

<sup>56</sup> Amazed by what he sees, Joseph says he is 'the one who is dreaming': his reaction, similar to Sly's and Segismundo's, points to the indistinctness (i.e. the sensory resemblance) of reality and dreams (170).

crops, locusts invaded the countryside, and famine and plague could spread quickly (Darby 1994:22 and 72-73).<sup>57</sup> Accordingly, Calderón's audiences would almost certainly appreciate Joseph's wisdom; unlike many Spanish vice-governors or favourites of the kings (*validos*), the Jew will prove to be an excellent administrator of the public wealth. For instance, Philip IV's chief minister, Count-Duke Olivares, was blamed for providing the king with 'unending rounds of entertainment' and for encouraging the monarch's 'weakness for women': the people tended to regard Spain's recurring military and economic disasters as the proof of God's anger and longed for a moral renewal of the ruler and his advisers (Greer 1991:90).

In conclusion, this section has demonstrated that the *auto's* dreams and dream-related components feature a symbolic as well as a lifelike and quotidian nature. The on-stage dreams certainly portend Jesus' advent and the foundation of the Eucharistic mystery. At the same time, by insinuating the distance between Joseph's highly principled behaviour and the ethical decadence of early modern Spanish society, the very physical on-stage dreams attend to both secular and spiritual apprehensions.

#### **IV: The coming *true* of dreams.**

This final section analyses the last part of *Sometimes Dreams Come True* and, specifically, Joseph's reconciliation with his brothers and the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrament. In accordance with the *auto's* title, dreams do come *true* on stage: the oneiric visions Joseph had in Canaan materialise when his brothers bow in front of him in the Egyptian palace; furthermore, the Catholic dogma itself is likened to a dream that *actually* comes into view for both on- and off-stage spectators. I would like to underline that, rather incongruously, the *auto* relies on astonishing dreams to prove the truth of the religious creed: paradoxically, only the surreal dream can embody the mystery and, perhaps, convince the audience of its truth. This resort may, once again, accentuate the spiritual gap between Joseph's untainted faith and the amusement-addicted contemporary addressees.

When the procession acclaiming Joseph (the new viceroy) leaves the stage, Dream enters and openly expresses his bewilderment ('I'm still utterly dumbfounded'); he prays Chastity to return to 'the theatre of the world' and to clarify to him what 'mystery' all the 'visible signs' relating to Joseph 'foreshadow' (171). Possibly, Dream here plays the part of

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<sup>57</sup> Kamen too writes that in early modern Spain 'poor harvests were a constant threat' and explains that most towns would keep stores of grain to be used in emergencies (Kamen 1980:165).

a stunned spectator of the *auto* who feels to be unable to 'solve' the 'riddle' enacted on stage (171). Chastity (the *auto*'s internal director) is glad to help Dream and explains how she will do so:

We'll have to behave like what we are: allegories, not *real* people. As such, we two know *neither time nor place*, so we can simply let interpolation – *as if* one act had ended, and another already begun – fill up the gap of years. So let's *suppose* the seven fertile years are over, and the years of famine have begun. (171, emphasis added)

In truth, Chastity and Dream *are* real people (they are actors performing on stage) and live within *actual* time and place (the duration of the Corpus Christi feast in Madrid in 1670). On the other hand, Chastity's speech candidly exposes the fictitiousness of the *auto* and the theatrical means that make possible the advance of the plot; this same forgery will crucially enable the religious mystery to be perceptible on stage. Chastity takes Dream to the top of the Mount of Vision (which Joseph 'inherited' from his grandfather Isaac) and shows him Joseph's brothers looking for grain and going from Canaan to Egypt. Chastity emphasises that Joseph's righteous government and generosity will fully appear in the subsequent scenes: the Jew will distribute 'bread to rich and poor alike' and will not recall 'how unkind' the brothers were to him (171-172). Dream begins to appreciate the 'visible signs' and stresses his own *lifelike* experiencing of the scenes ('it's *as if* I could see them [the brothers] *now*, as they go looking for him [Joseph]') (172, emphasis added).

Seven years after Joseph's appointment as vice-king, his brothers arrive in Egypt; as Calderón's contemporaries might have done during a period of famine, the brothers trust in the governor and in his 'great providence': they have heard he is 'generous, compassionate, gentle, and mild' (172). The brothers see Joseph/the viceroy in a parade, but do not suspect his real identity; they kneel to him like 'beggars' and address him with a song: 'give unto us this day / our daily Bread, kind sir' (172). The scene obviously presages Jesus' teaching of the 'Our Father' prayer; at the same time, it underscores the people's dependence on the prudence and liberality of good monarchs and administrators in times of crisis. For Joseph the dreamlike view of his brothers (whom he recognises immediately) is deeply tangible:

the Hebrew language and melody here? But what I see now is even more shocking than what I *heard!* [...] I'm utterly amazed to see them and shocked to *hear* them. But I'll use *my eyes and ears* to find out more. (172, emphasis added)

When he was in Canaan, Joseph dreamt two dreams which inflamed his brothers' envy: he 'saw the golden necks of his brothers' sheaves bend over [...] as if obeying his'; and he dreamt that he 'had the sun, moon, and stars at his feet' (157).<sup>58</sup> Joseph's first dream, therefore, is *now physically* coming true, and he grasps what 'Heaven' originally meant to prefigure (172). Reuben, one of the brothers, explains why they have come to Egypt and describes the apocalyptic scenario of the famine years:

no leaf, no flower, no grass, no plants at all remain [...] even the rivers are perishing from thirst, and the cattle are dying of hunger. [...] As the people perish from the inclement crop failures, their only consolation is seeing the earth crack open, yawning with horror. (173)

Again, the *auto* portrays a situation with which the Madrid spectators would be acquainted: they may remember the 'bad harvests' from 1645 until 1652, the 'flooding and speculation in grain' and the 'threat of mass starvation' (Greer 1997:52). Perhaps unlike Philip IV and other Spanish monarchs, Joseph is 'overcome with pity' and wants to assist his brothers (174). However, Joseph first wishes to test the authenticity of their repentance: he accuses them of being spies and asks them to bring Benjamin to Egypt, to make sure his beloved brother is still alive; Joseph temporarily imprisons Simeon (the brother who behaved most cruelly toward him in Canaan) so that he 'may be purged of that sin and win pardon' (175).<sup>59</sup> In line with early modern beliefs, the brothers think that 'Heaven is meting out just punishment' and that they are paying 'for the hatred [they] bore one brother' (174). Their words probably sound as a fervent admonishment to Calderón's composite audiences: calamities such as plague and famine may be the consequence of God's wrath; whether on earth or in the next world, sinners will not escape a just sentence.

In addition to the historical relevance, the rest of the *auto* variously divulges its own simultaneous *actuality* and fabrication. To start with, Joseph clearly dissimulates before his brothers, but they (unlike the audience) do not perceive this fact. The brothers think that Joseph is not interested in their plight, whereas he (in numerous asides to the spectators) highlights the seeming/being indistinctness: 'they think I am hard-hearted, when I can't refrain from weeping' (174). In other words, Joseph's performance is so convincing that his brothers believe its truth; possibly, the whole performance with its substantial dreams convinces the viewers of its own genuineness as well as of the *reality* of the dogma. As a

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<sup>58</sup> At the beginning of the *auto* Chastity recounts the two dreams to Dream.

<sup>59</sup> Joseph remarks that he is not revenging himself on Simeon and assures that he wants Simeon to be 'treated with respect' in jail (175).

second point, when the brothers go back to Canaan to take Benjamin, Joseph and the priestess Aseneth are left alone on stage. These two characters, as it were, double up the previous scenes in which Dream and Chastity interacted: indeed, Aseneth is played by the same actress who performed Chastity's part; Joseph, as the prototypical dreamer and dream interpreter, may be seen as the most proper human embodiment of Dream. Joseph believes that Aseneth is the 'divine beauty' who, when he still was in jail, let him see the Canaan dream (through which he found out what his brothers had told his father regarding his disappearance) (168). In a way, Joseph is *both right and wrong*: that divine beauty *was* Aseneth, or, better, Chastity with Aseneth's body; that divine beauty *was not* Aseneth, but simply Chastity (and actually Aseneth denies she has ever shown herself to Joseph).<sup>60</sup> The puzzlement of this scene concretely incarnates the paradox behind the dream-laden *auto*: on the one hand, Aseneth believes that the episode Joseph is so sure of was merely 'some sort of illusion'; on the other, Joseph argues that 'though dreams may be but dreams, sometimes dreams come true' (176). This paradoxical truism will find its apotheosis at the end of the *auto*: dreams *are* simply dreams (i.e., illusions), yet they become flesh on stage and tangibly deliver the religious truth.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, Joseph's (both surreal and concrete) encounter with Chastity/Aseneth may remind one of Bottom's rendezvous with Titania (analysed in chapter 3): during their first meeting, Joseph is a slave imprisoned in the Egyptian jail, whereas Chastity/Aseneth is a divine-like figure of considerable authority. In both *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Sometimes Dreams Come True*, the dream facilitates the abolition of customary class divisions and applauds unprivileged characters like Bottom and Joseph.<sup>62</sup> Reacting to his (fleeting) dream of love for Titania, Bottom (mis)quotes St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians: he shows he has gained spiritual insight by prostrating himself before 'a transcendent source of power and love' (Montrose 1998:233). The dreamlike vision of a goddess (Chastity/Aseneth) has

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<sup>60</sup> Aseneth remarks that the goddess Chastity is her 'spitting image' and says that Joseph must have seen Chastity, not herself (176). Yet the audience knows that the same actress (i.e. the same *actual* body) plays the two female characters.

<sup>61</sup> Though Aseneth is in love with Joseph, she plays the part of the model (early modern) woman till the end: she shows 'disdain' to Joseph and her 'modesty' prevents her from expressing her feelings (177-178). In keeping with early modern practices of matrimonial deals, the Pharaoh himself arranges the marriage between Joseph and Aseneth: the Jew is honoured by the decision; Aseneth states that she has 'no right to choose' and that she 'can but obey' the Pharaoh's 'command' (178). Joseph seems to lose some of his ('female') chastity when he describes his feelings for his brother Benjamin and for Aseneth: the love for Benjamin is 'a love of blood', the love for the priestess is 'a fiery love' (180-181).

<sup>62</sup> As Joseph helps the Egyptian nation to overcome a political and economic crisis (the Pharaoh's doubts about his dreams and the forthcoming famine), Bottom unintentionally restores 'amity' between Oberon and Titania.

similarly mesmerised Joseph: as he explains, he adores Chastity 'as a virtue' and Aseneth as the 'living image' of that virtue (177). Once more, the *auto* calls attention to the divergence between Joseph's spiritual acumen and the ethical and religious dissoluteness of other (on- and off-stage) individuals.

Joseph continues to perform his deliberate fiction once his brothers are back in Egypt with Benjamin. To the brothers' amazement, Joseph (who 'is second only to the king') invites them to dine with him and thus lowers himself 'to the status of a mere man' (180). Like Jesus, Joseph is 'the second person' who becomes 'man', i.e. God's Word incarnated on earth (180). However, in addition to the allegorical meaning, Joseph's supper has a more concrete one: Joseph, the king who gives 'sustenance to all the pilgrims', dispenses a lesson in charity to the off-stage rulers (180). This connotation is confirmed by Bato, Benjamin's servant and the play's fool: Bato voices the needs of (on- and off-stage) commoners and laments that 'many masters sit down to eat without even knowing whether their servants are eating or not' (180). After Bato's complaint, Joseph finishes ascertaining the sincerity of his brothers' repentance: when Benjamin is sentenced to death for the alleged theft of Joseph's goblet, all the other brothers are ready to give up their own lives to save him ('We are all ready to drink [...] our death in that chalice full of bitterness') (182).<sup>63</sup> Finally, Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers (who are 'confused' and 'amazed') and restates that the supper 'foresaw in bread and wine the loftiest sacrament' (183).<sup>64</sup>

As soon as the Pharaoh asks how bread and wine can be a sacrament, a curtain (covering one of the carts) opens and reveals a mountain on whose peak a triumphal chariot transports Dream. Far from being the dumbfounded character he previously was, Dream *now* directs four mini-performances (or dreams) that fully divulge the significance of the *auto's* symbols. Dream (at once a concept and a *real* person) palpably lends a hand to embody the mystery on stage; the spiritual truth seems to count on dreams (and on the visibly fictitious performance) to emerge before the audience.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Joseph himself ordered the Cupbearer to put the chalice in Benjamin's bag and to simulate the theft.

<sup>64</sup> What is (apparently) impossible turns into reality (as dreams sometimes come true): Joseph is still alive after so many years and is ready to forgive his brothers. His rebirth symbolises Jesus' resurrection and is supplemented by the brothers' moral renaissance and by the conversion to Christianity of the Egyptian people.

<sup>65</sup> In their article 'Sounding Sensory Profiles' the anthropologists David Howes and Constance Classen underscore that in various communities 'ritual communication takes place through physical demonstration' (Howes and Classen 1991:278). Also the four dreams Dream stages concretely enact religious assertions (rather than simply referring to them in discourse) and have a 'multi-

In the first vision, Dream makes Jacob enter the stage with Bato; the old man likens Joseph's reappearance to a dream ('Can I *really* be seeing you *alive*?') and verbally re-visualizes the dream he had of the ladder connecting heaven to earth (184, emphasis added).<sup>66</sup> In Jacob's vision, the angels ascending represented man, while 'those descending stood for the Word'; Jacob's past dream reappears in the *present* of the performance and unlocks the mystery of a God who is made man (the 'Incarnate Word', as Dream says) (184).

Soon after Jacob's dream, Dream invites the two Shades (those within the Baker's and the Cupbearer's dream) to 'rehearse' the second mini-dream (184). According to the stage directions, the two Shades appear on a platform 'suspended in midair, with a backdrop that opens like a fan' (184). While Shade 1 and Shade 2 mention the bread and the wine that materialized in the Baker's and the Cupbearer's dreams, another performance begins on another cart: a curtain opens and reveals 'another altar with a sacrifice of wine' (184). The two Shades then conclude their exposition: the bread has become 'bread from heaven' and will serve as 'divine flesh in the bloodless sacrifice'; likewise, the wine has become 'blood of the Lamb' sacrificed on the cross (184).

The Egyptian priestess Aseneth is one of the many on-stage viewers who are observing the multiple dreams taking place 'up above'; importantly, she is a pagan woman who asks Dream how they can be sure 'that all of this is true' (184). Possibly, the priestess voices the doubts the audience itself may have and evokes the contemporary debates between Catholicism and Protestantism.<sup>67</sup> The third mini-show provides the answer to Aseneth's concern by re-staging the Eucharistic rite through the crucial presence of Faith. On one of the two central carts an altar is revealed with a sacrifice of bread; meanwhile, a hinged platform on the same cart opens toward centre stage, revealing a large Host. Another vision takes place on the other central cart: it opens and shows a sacrifice of wine; this cart too has a hinged platform that reveals a chalice as well as the character of Faith

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channel character', i.e. transmit the dogma through bodily movements, special effects, music and singing (Howes and Classen 1991:278).

<sup>66</sup> Bato had openly drawn attention to the *auto's* hyper-fictitiousness; when Joseph unveiled his identity to the brothers, Bato betted that the old Jacob would reach the scene immediately (and unrealistically): 'this [Jacob's prompt arrival] may be rushing things a bit, but what's the difference? *It's in the script*' (183, emphasis added).

<sup>67</sup> Shumway maintains that 'refuting Protestantism' is one of the purposes of the *autos sacramentales*; the sacramental performances do so especially by appealing to the 'exclusive validity of the Catholic sacraments' (Shumway 1981:330 and 348).

'suspended in the air, between the two Shades' (184).<sup>68</sup> Faith herself assures on- and off-stage audiences about the truth of the mystery:

I, who am Faith, can give you that assurance, for I have *inner sight*, and my intellect is held captive by my *hearing* (184, emphasis added)

In traditional devotional and mystical literature (Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, 1520, above all) the senses are shameful when they focus on earthly things; in contrast, they are precious if one uses them to know the mysteries. For instance, for Loyola the eyes should imagine Christ's cross, the ears should hear Christ's praise, touch should dream of touching Christ's wounds and so on (see Vinge 1975:123). According to Faith, hearing is especially important: as seen in chapter 2, in Christian doctrine hearing is chosen 'as the sense of faith, the sense which receives instruction and accepts the divine word' (Vinge 1975:128). Faith can help the senses taste the mysteries; furthermore, in Catholic creed Faith only can give the believer the absolute certainty that the mysteries (in particular, Christ's transubstantiation in the Eucharist) are true.<sup>69</sup>

Finally, Dream himself elucidates that the fourth of his 'dreams' coincides with the Pharaoh's dreams; those visions have prefigured the fertility/sterility alternation caused by human sin and heralded Jesus' and the Church's *future* roles as dispensers of salvation:

DREAM: because of sin, a great famine occurred; but Providence saved the day by giving the church a great barn full of bread [...]

KING: And when will this happen?

DREAM: When a descendant of one of these twelve tribes [...] will give himself to man in so lofty a sacrament.

KING: Though I am a gentile, this miracle has converted me! (185)

Dream makes therefore clear the allegorical significance of the Pharaoh's dreams and of Joseph's ascension as viceroy and 'Saviour'. At the same time, his words admonish the off-stage people and the clergy: Christ's siblings (all the spectators) should be 'the heirs of grace' and should aspire to Joseph's integrity and magnanimity (185). Likewise, the Church should provide the faithful with the necessary spiritual 'bread' and, as Christ's bride

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<sup>68</sup> Each of the two carts at the side of the main stage contains a platform ('suspended in midair') and Shade 1 and Shade 2 occupy a platform each (184). The first cart at the back of the main stage shows the Host on its hinged platform. The second one contains the chalice and Faith who (on the hinged platform centre stage) appears in between the two Shades at the side.

<sup>69</sup> As Tietz observes, the *autos* celebrate the liturgy in a sumptuous way that usually does not employ logical arguments; the sacramental plays stupefy the audience and may provoke admiration for the stunning spectacle they offer (see Tietz 1983:85-86).

on earth, should personify 'every virtue' (as Joseph's wife, Aseneth, has done throughout the *auto*) (185).<sup>70</sup> All of Calderón's *autos*, as Heinz Gerstinger explains, terminate with the exposition of the altar bread. The altar 'is not to be understood only as the reality of God in the sense of the Catholic belief. It is also a symbol of the redeemed world that has now become God's body' (Gerstinger 1973:34).<sup>71</sup> The presence and conversion on stage of Egyptian people such as the Pharaoh and Aseneth (whose new adherence to Christianity seems heartfelt) supports this reading of the Eucharistic mystery as a rite of global significance. The four dreams staged by Dream have both called attention to their own artificiality (via the carts' machinery and technical possibilities) and have verified the truth of the mystery. The musical and joyful conclusion further highlights the spectacular quality of the performance, its educational purposes, and its rather conflicting reliance on dreams:

SOME [They sing]: These wonders we behold,  
 OTHERS: these miracles so great, / have led us to the true fold,  
 DREAM: so let us celebrate!  
 MUSICIANS: We're happy to have learned / that dreams may be but dreams / but  
*Sometimes Dreams Come True.*  
 ALL: Please forgive our many faults! (185, emphasis original)

I believe the conventional epilogue clarifies the paradoxical achievement of Calderón's *auto*. The preacher Juan de Horozco y Covarrubias writes in his *Paradoxas Christianas* (*Christian Paradoxes*, 1592): 'life is as a dream [...] and for that we have to consider that there is brevity in a dream, and there is *deception* in what imagination shows us [...] and once this is learned, *everything is unsubstantial*, and, at the end, it is stuff for a dream' (quoted in Valbuena-Briones 1993:56, emphasis added). At times dreams may become true and feel like reality, as various moments of the *auto* have shown; nonetheless, in early modern Spain dreams are but dreams, i.e. they are (essentially) deceptive and

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<sup>70</sup> Kazimierz Sabik writes that the fourth dream shows the church as 'the granary of bread' ['troj del Pan'] in which the faithful feed themselves' [en la cual se alimentan los fieles] (Sabik 1998:117). However, the early modern Spanish church has more secular than spiritual concerns: it wants 'to intervene in public life' and 'to dominate the political process from within' (O'Connor 2000:213).

<sup>71</sup> Hillach too highlights that the mystic centre of the *autos* is 'the exposition of the real presence of Christ in the sacrament (the host), according to the transubstantiation dogma' (Hillach 1982:22). Yet the sacrament is not venerated in a church, but along the streets and squares of a town: the spiritual aspect is complemented by communal and earthly meanings. In *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual* Erika Fischer-Lichte defines ritual as 'a thing re-done or pre-done': the actions performed in ritual are 'meaningful mimetic acts which are intended to re-present and not to represent something' (Fischer-Lichte 2005:41).

unsubstantial. In *Sometimes Dreams Come True* the religious credo is equated to a dream and is made flesh through dreams: in other words, the dogma itself holds concurrent solidity and insubstantiality and seems to be provable only via dreams. Joseph himself appears to communicate the paradox when he declares his feelings for Chastity/Aseneth: 'I was right to love you, *even if that was an illusion*' (177, emphasis added). Like the final four hyper-theatrical dreams, Joseph's vision of Chastity/Aseneth was both reality and delusion. As the Jew was right to love that illusion, so at the end of the *auto* it would seem that all spectators are right to worship the dream/mystery.

To conclude, the sacramental play *Sometimes Dreams Come True* appropriately terminates with the exposition and celebration of Catholic dogma. Nevertheless, this chapter has demonstrated that the creed is not straightforwardly delivered. The multiple dreams and dream-related elements certainly have a strong symbolical aspect; yet dreams also challenge ordinary political and personal behaviours and, hence, vividly talk to the historical milieu in which the *auto* is produced. In particular, the performance puts on public view the dreamer Joseph's moral and political probity and emphasises the distance between the Jew's virtue and the corruption of other (on- and off-stage) people. Unlike what happens in my other case studies (where the dreams are hidden from view at the end of the performance), the finale of *Sometimes Dreams Come True* makes dreams hyper-perceptible: the *auto*, quite conflictingly, trusts in deeply phenomenal but fabricated dreams to deliver the truth, i.e. the religious credo. Joseph's spontaneous, almost innate faith greatly diverges from the spectators' desire for 'wonders' and 'miracles'; unlike the Jew, the *auto*'s audiences need entertaining dreams to believe (185).

## Chapter 6

### Dreams of Private and Public Concerns: *The Young King*

This last chapter investigates Aphra Behn's *The Young King*, a tragicomedy written in c. 1670 and, according to Behn in her dedication, the first play she ever wrote.<sup>1</sup> *The Young King* was performed by the Duke's Company in 1679 at Dorset Garden and subsequently published in 1683. In this introductory section I briefly present the theatrical background within which this tragicomedy operates and draw attention to what connects it to and differentiates it from my other case studies. I believe that this last chapter aptly concludes my investigation of early modern on-stage dreams for two main reasons: 1) it broadens and de-familiarises my historical and theoretical framework, in that it puts works by canonical authors (Shakespeare and Calderón) side by side with a female-authored and little-known tragicomedy; and, 2) it demonstrates that the dreams in *The Young King* facilitate the dramatization of socio-political anxieties rather similar to those of the other plays at issue. Furthermore, in *The Young King* the main dream Princess Cleomena lives has a predominantly private nature: possibly, her oneiric vision shows that in the second half of the seventeenth century the dream more decisively becomes 'an inward eye' and 'a route to self-understanding' (Wiseman 2008:3).

As recent work by various scholars has suggested, in England early modern theatre history does not stop with the Civil War.<sup>2</sup> In her *Regicide and Restoration*, Nancy Klein Maguire writes:

When the theatres reopened, the Renaissance genres reappeared, and tragicomedy and the court masque stepped to one side of the public theatre and comedy to the other. Tragedy [...] had vanished. (Maguire 1992:1)

After Charles II's restoration, the King's Company (managed by Thomas Killigrew) and the Duke's Company (run by William Davenant) 'retained the old forms of drama', while

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<sup>1</sup> For Derek Hughes *The Young King* could be Behn's first dramatic piece, as it resembles other tragicomedies written in the decade after the Restoration (Hughes 2001:16). The first two plays by Behn to be staged were *The Forc'd Marriage* (1670) and *The Amorous Prince* (1671); like *The Young King*, *The Forc'd Marriage* depicts 'a feudal, militaristic society' (Hughes 2001:16). Susan Owen suggests that Behn may have presented *The Young King* as her first play in order to evade allegations of topicality with the contemporary political situation in 1679 (the Exclusion Crisis) (Owen 1996b:302).

<sup>2</sup> See for example Nigel Smith's *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660* (1994), Susan Wiseman's *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War* (1998) and P.A. Skantze's *Stillness in Motion in the Seventeenth-Century Theatre* (2003).

beginning to practise with new dramatic shapes (Maguire 1992:51). Killigrew inherited rights to Fletcher's plays and staged a few revivals of his tragicomedies (Maguire 1992:56).<sup>3</sup> Davenant produced an unchanged staging of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in 1661 and together with Dryden adapted *The Tempest* in 1667 (Maguire 1992:56 and 131). Adaptations of Shakespeare appeared throughout the 1670s: they were normally politically motivated and served to disapprove of rebellion (Owen 1996:150). Most likely, Behn attended (unaltered or revised) performances of Jacobean and Caroline plays and found in them sources and inspiration for her own work: for instance, as Jacqueline Pearson remarks, the Cleomena plot in *The Young King* resembles Beaumont's and Fletcher's *Love's Cure, or the Martial Maid* (published in 1647) (Pearson 1988:156). Apart from the continuing influence of pre-Interregnum dramatists, Restoration playwrights often looked at Spanish drama: they were searching for intricate plots dramatizing 'an idealized future' in which political crises have been overcome and (regenerated) monarchies can govern confidently (Cohen 1985:390). In *The Spanish Plays of Neoclassical England*, Loftis observes that after the Restoration 'Spanish drama became fashionable'; he details the numerous Carolean plays that drew on Spanish models directly or through the mediation of translations (Loftis 1973:62).<sup>4</sup> *The Young King* is not the only play in which Behn experimented with Spanish sources, conventions, or settings.<sup>5</sup> As Loftis underlines, the Spanish storylines gave Behn the opportunity to dramatize questions of honour, especially female honour, important throughout her dramatic corpus (Loftis 1973:143).

The cultural bonds Restoration playwrights had with earlier English dramatic production and past and contemporary Spanish drama (Calderón died in 1681) make the investigation of *The Young King* an important final step for my thesis. Clearly, Carolean theatre differed from the Elizabethan and Jacobean context in which Shakespeare worked: for instance,

<sup>3</sup> Beside Fletcher's influence, Richard Bevis argues that 'the Webster-Ford-Shirley strain was [...] the most obvious model' for Restoration playwrights: this preference is observable in the 'rant and excess' of their early works (Bevis 1988:16).

<sup>4</sup> Charles II could speak Spanish and spent the last four years of his exile in alliance with the Spanish King Philip IV and in a country (the Netherlands) where Spanish was the language of the court. During the royal exile English Cavaliers wandered in Spain (or in his colonies, as Behn's *The Rover*, set in Naples, shows) and the Low Countries and began to be acquainted with Spanish drama (Loftis 1973:38-39). Dryden recurrently turned to Spanish history for the themes of his serious plays, employed the Spanish intrigue plot, and wrote the first English critique of Spanish drama (*Of Dramatick Poesie*, 1665-66).

<sup>5</sup> In the first part of *The Rover* (1677) various characters are Spanish and follow Spanish social code and manners. *The Dutch Lover* (1673) borrows from Calderón's *No siempre lo peor es cierto* and *Peor está que estaba* (*The Worst Is not Always True*, 1667, and *From Bad to Worse*, 1662-65), two plays translated by Lord Bristol in the early 1660s (Loftis 1973:146). In her *Aphra Behn's English Feminism*, Dolores Altaba-Artal also discusses the 'enormous influx of Spanish texts' and 'Spanish ideas' in Behn's plays and novels (Altaba-Artal 1999:15).

the introduction of movable painted scenery and machinery allowed the audience to see 'bedchambers' or 'battlefields' *really* (Diamond 1989:521). Thus the dramatic language no longer needed to describe the setting precisely: the actors' movements and the disclosure scenes would have suggested a change in time or location and displayed simultaneous and sequential actions.<sup>6</sup> In terms of genre, Maguire reasons that Restoration playwrights had lived tragedy in reality when Charles I was executed. This perhaps explains why in the 1660s they mainly created tragicomedies and portrayed 'the movement from the threatened environment of regicide to the hoped-for stability of restoration' (Maguire 1992:37).<sup>7</sup> Importantly, actresses and not boy actors interpreted female roles on Restoration stages – something that, as seen in chapter 1 and 4, had been happening in Spain since the sixteenth century. This fact, together with Behn's (controversial) status as a professional female dramatist, may explain why a consideration of women's (private and public) position is central to *The Young King*. Elin Diamond has described the Restoration actress as a fetish and a commodity; she has proposed that Behn both exploits this condition of the actress and problematizes it: as on-stage women are commodified in the marriage market, actresses are bought by the king and his circle within the 'mistress market' (Diamond 1989:532). Katherina in *The Taming of the Shrew* and Hermia or Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are played by boys actors: in other words, their femininity is always somehow a feigned construction. In contrast, real women working as actresses perform the female parts in *The Young King*, a play which both exposes female bodies as pleasurable objects to look at and repeatedly interrogates (supposedly fixed) notions of gender identity.<sup>8</sup>

The consideration of a female-authored tragicomedy whose historical and theatrical circumstances diverge from those of Shakespeare's or Calderón's plays broadens my discussion of the (ambivalent) function of dreams.<sup>9</sup> *The Young King* reflects on gender

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<sup>6</sup> Dawn Lewcock argues that Behn incorporates the Restoration new theatrical possibilities into the dramatic structure of her plays. Behn makes the most of the visual effects of a performance, using them 'to affect the perceptions of the audience and change their conception and comprehension' of her plots and themes (Lewcock 1996:66).

<sup>7</sup> In contrast, French dramatists continued to write tragedy under Louis XIV and until the 1830s.

<sup>8</sup> Susan Green remarks that in Shakespeare's plays women express their desires and predicaments mainly via language: real women with their real bodies are not on stage. On the contrary, Restoration audiences see actual women on stage and, very often, what can (or cannot) be represented about the female body is pushed to the limit (Green 1993:139). For example, Restoration dramatists often show extramarital intercourse, whereas the Titania/Bottom encounter in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is more imagined than actually displayed.

<sup>9</sup> As explained in section IV of chapter 2, also Calderón's *Life Is a Dream* may be regarded as a tragicomedy (for Cohen, a romance): it features an exotic setting; one of its characters (Clarín) dies

relations (like *The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Life Is a Dream*) and puts forward the fabricated-ness of traditional sexual roles. Furthermore, it considers issues of ethical primacy (like the two Calderonian plays) and subtly questions aristocratic and monarchical superiority. The two narratives of *The Young King* show the personal and the political spheres as strictly linked to each other: the Cleomena story focuses on the antagonistic relationship of the sexes and presents women as exchange goods within the marriage alliances of royal families. The Orsames plot stages the sudden rise to power of a young king, displays his objectionable conduct, and casts doubt on the suitability of his restoration. As my other case studies do, *The Young King* reaches a predictable (ideological) conclusion: it endorses male and aristocratic authority inside the family and the state. However, the vivid dreams present in the play allow the expression of rival discourses and complicate the fully successful reaffirmation of 'natural' male supremacy. Behn recycles the main story of *Life Is a Dream*, yet she alters its focal point.<sup>10</sup> Unlike Calderón, Behn places a female heroine (Princess Cleomena) and her predicament centre-stage. She doubles the issue of royal succession (through the figures of Cleomena and her brother Orsames) and enlarges the war motif by insisting on the hostility between the Dacians and the Scythians. In *Life Is a Dream* the final father/son reconciliation is possible because Segismundo *seems* to adhere to the (Catholic) 'to do good' principle: the prince's ethical conversion *appears* to sanction his superiority and his right to inherit his father's political power. Rather than on (religious) morals, *The Young King* concentrates on the arbitrariness of gender hierarchies and customs via (*actual* and fabricated) dreams that tackle the play's private and public preoccupations.

The first section of this chapter reflects on the generic and ideological features of tragicomedy by focusing on *The Young King's* first act. I show that the play's opening both meets the expectations linked with tragicomedy and deviates from them also by means of

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on stage; its convoluted, tragic events rapidly reach a serene conclusion in the final moments of the last act; and, the ending underscores the socio-political triumph of male (aristocratic) rule (see Cohen 1985:390).

<sup>10</sup> Calderón's *Life Is a Dream* was not translated into English after the Restoration, but there existed a Dutch translation and the play had been performed both in Amsterdam and Brussels (places Behn had visited). Loftis thinks that the Spanish play was already so famous at the time that Behn did not need to have read it to know its plot (Loftis 1973:134). The fact that the Cleomena/Clemanthis plot in *The Young King* draws from a French heroic romance (La Calprenède's *Cléopâtre*, 1647-1658) may suggest that Behn also found the Orsames plot in a French translation of Calderón's work, Le Métel de Boisrobert's *La Vie n'est qu'un songe* (1657) (Loftis 1973:134). Hughes doubts that Behn had knowledge of Spanish and notes that she became a fluent reader of French only in the 1680s; in contrast, Loftis remarks that Behn's editor Montague Summers believed Behn had borrowed directly from Calderón (Hughes 2001:205 and Loftis 1973:134).

dreams and dreamlike elements. Section II studies the Cleomena/Thersander relationship through three distinct subsections. To begin with, I analyse the dreams in which they first see each other and the (dreamy) grove where they initially meet; I propose that the dream space allows the (temporary) abolition of the gender, class and race restrictions that hinder their rapport. Subsection II.2 validates my previous argument by looking at the two heirs' interaction within the public places: at court and on the battleground Cleomena and Thersander misconstrue each other and literally embody the confrontation between the sexes. In contrast, as subsection II.3 proves, Cleomena's final dream makes her *re-view* Thersander and vitally assists their reconciliation: her dream is a (rather private) *effective* vision which enriches her understanding. The last section examines Behn's dramatisation of Orsames' (fake) dreams within his prison and at his mother's court. The young king's dream experiences lend themselves to a phenomenological analysis, as they literally let Orsames *taste* what other people (women in particular) are. The dreams depict Orsames' socio-political inadequacy and improper sexual desires rather amusingly, yet they also cast doubt on the aptness of male restoration to power. The play's ending reinstates a 'proper' monarchy and traditional social roles: as Hughes puts it, 'men rule, and women are exchanged' (Hughes 2001:29). Nonetheless, the various dreams have challenged this apparently inexorable status quo.

### **I: The tragicomic and dreamlike properties of the first act.**

This section analyses the first act of *The Young King* by focusing on the creation of generic expectations and the introduction of elements that challenge the (predictable) outcome of the plot. On the whole *The Young King* is a conventional tragicomedy: it brings about 'reconciliation following a period of serious conflict' and is mainly complicit with aristocratic and absolutist ideology (Cohen 1992:127).<sup>11</sup> Also, *The Young King* has a 'standard providential plot' and proposes the motif of joy reached via grief: this theme was a propaganda instrument in the 1660s, when the sorrow for Charles I's execution was

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<sup>11</sup> Cohen especially considers English tragicomedies written between 1610 and 1642 (i.e. pre-revolutionary drama). Bevis lists tragicomedy's stock ingredients: a convoluted and fast-moving plot; a group of royal characters who might swiftly change their mind; an exotic setting; 'balanced contrasts in people and ideas' (for example, the love/lust opposition); and, the use of chivalric rhetoric (Bevis 1988:14). Bevis and Maguire view Fletcher's tragicomedies as highly influential for Restoration heroic drama and 'divided tragicomedy', as Maguire calls it. Douglas Canfield proposes that Restoration tragicomedy is normally 'a reaffirmation of feudal aristocratic values, portrayed as under stress by challenges from bourgeois parvenus, libertine lovers, and ambitious statesmen' (Canfield 1984:448). In *The Young King*, however, the challenge comes from within the aristocracy itself (Cleomena fights Thersander, the Queen imprisons her own son) and the only (would-be) libertine lover seems to be Orsames, the young king.

compensated by the delight at Charles II's restoration (Maguire 1992:14). Behn's play follows its generic dictates and sides with the royalist position, but does so ambiguously: its central political intentions are not palpably visible throughout. A (temporary) freedom from generic and ideological rules is possible, I argue, especially because of the presence of dreams or dreamlike figures; this freedom might trouble the conservative ending of the story.<sup>12</sup>

Whether or not it was the first piece Behn wrote, *The Young King* was performed in 1679 probably because of its relevance to the contemporary political events: the Popish Plot of 1678, when Titus Oates claimed that a Roman Catholic conspiracy was under way to assassinate the king; and, the Exclusion Crisis that began in 1679, with the Exclusion Bill aiming to keep James (Duke of York, brother to Charles II, and a Roman Catholic) out of the royal succession.<sup>13</sup> Laura Brown's argument that 'literary form is ultimately imprinted with the ideology of the age' largely applies to *The Young King*, a tragicomedy that overall endorses James' cause against the Exclusionists (Brown 1981:XV). In fact, its prologue clarifies its political allegiances: Behn presents her play as 'the fruits of idleness and ease' (possibly to mitigate its political content) and wishes that 'Heaven bless the King that keeps the Land in Peace' (to admonish against the danger of a new civil war) (Prologue:49-50).<sup>14</sup> At the same time, Behn criticises the Franco-phobia of some of the audience's members (it is hypocritical, as they clearly favour French wine and fashions) and unmasks their supposedly religious concerns (versus James' Catholicism) as irreligious (Owen 1996a:74-75).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Behn dedicates her play ('this first Essay of my Infant-Poetry') to Philaster (perhaps a lover or admirer of Astrea, as the playwright called herself) and writes a prologue to it (probably spoken by one of the actresses) (Dedication:6). For Maureen Duffy, Philaster is either the 'Philly' mentioned in 'Love Letters' or the Duke of Buckingham (quoted in Todd 1996a:82). Todd suggests that Philaster may be Philip Sidney (Earl of Leicester), whereas Laurie Finke identifies him with Behn's lover John Hoyle: the play thus becomes a 'Dowdy Lass' and 'a Virgin-Muse' who asks for the rake hero's protection (Finke 1993:26). Astrea (the romantic heroine of Honore D'Urfé's romance *L'Astrée* (1607-1627) and the goddess of justice whose return on earth was symbolically related to the Stuart restoration) was Behn's code-name while she was spying on English rebels during the second Dutch War (1666). Curiously, Behn chose for herself the same name Rosaura adopts in *Life Is a Dream* when she pretends to be Estrella's waiting lady. Hero Chalmers sees in the name Astrea the combination of 'amatory and political identities', of 'erotic frisson' and 'female heroism' (Chalmers 2004:157-158).

<sup>13</sup> Charles II was compelled to declare his Protestant bastard James Scott (Duke of Monmouth) his heir, yet James managed to succeed his brother in 1685. His monarchy only lasted three years, as in 1688 William of Orange (husband of James' eldest daughter Mary) became king (See Bevis 1988:27-28).

<sup>14</sup> All quotations are from *The Young King* edited by Janet Todd (London: Pickering, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Todd underlines that in prefaces and prologues Behn markets herself as an interesting (new and then experienced) woman writer; similarly, Wiseman observes that Behn's sex 'is constantly

*The Young King* opens with the Dacian Colonel Vallentio explaining that 'the Fighting's past', 'all the Noise over', and 'the whole Camp looks now like a City in a great Plague'; the opening also brings in the plays' three key conflicts (I.i.7-9). Firstly, Vallentio and the fop Pimante mention 'the brave Clemanthis' and say that he would deserve to marry Princess Cleomena if 'his quality' were as great as his military bravery: they thus insinuate that the question of Clemanthis' lineage will have to be answered. As a second point, the two men summarise the political problem of the Dacian kingdom: because of a prophecy, the Queen has kept her son Orsames locked in a castle since his childhood, has raised his sister Cleomena as a man, and wants her to reign instead of Orsames. The third concern of this first scene is the war itself and the suffering it is causing. Pimante and Vallentio hear a noise, stand by, and secretly watch the shepherdess Lyces sing a song to Urania (a Scythian woman). Since her lover Amintas has fallen prisoner to the Dacians, Urania spontaneously hands herself over to Vallentio ('tis a willing Captive I am made') (I.ii.231).<sup>16</sup> She asks to be taken to the place where Amintas is jailed, willing 'to die with him with whom' she 'must not live' (I.ii.239).

Vallentio and Pimante immediately voice the two political viewpoints that are alternatively approved throughout the plot. Vallentio abhors 'the feeble Reign of Women', expresses his desire to have a male leader in the war ('Give me a man to lead me on to Dangers, / such as Clemanthis is, or as Orsames might have been'), and hopes the civilians will restore the young king ('a King, a King again! oh for a mutinous Rabble that would break the Prison-walls and set Orsames free, both from his Fetters and his Ignorance') (I.i.37-40 and 60-62). In contrast, Pimante worries about the past prophecy ('What should we do with such a King? The Gods foretell he shall be fierce and bloody, [...] his Reign but short, and so unfit for Reign'); he fears Orsames' (political and sexual) naivety ('he is very ill bred for a King; he knows nothing of a world, [...] ne'er saw a Woman, nor knows how to make use of one') (I.i.46-48 and I.i.52-54). Orsames' surreal story (narrated by Pimante in this first act) embraces imprisonment since birth in a castle on the sea and 'an oldy fusty Philosopher

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referred to as part of a sales pitch in prologues, epilogues, and prefaces' (Todd 1996b:2 and Wiseman 1996:59). However, Chalmers remarks how in prologues and epilogues Behn's actresses speak up for themselves and for womankind: Behn places her own defence in the mouth of women actors who 'vigorously, but charmingly' defend feminine rights (Chalmers 2004:160). Behn's image - like that of the Restoration actress - is thus 'eroticized and heroic' rather than dishonourably and pitifully sexualised (Chalmers 2004:150).

<sup>16</sup> Urania's figure recalls Hermia and Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in that she voices the female condition of enslavement to a male lover.

that instructs him' and 'tells him that his natural Reason's sin' (I.i.55-58).<sup>17</sup> The relevance of *The Young King* to the events of 1678-79 is immediately clear: the tragicomedy tackles the problem of royal exclusion and will presumably terminate with the restoration of Orsames to his 'natural' place. The play's subtitle – *The Mistake* – may resonate in the audience's ears and imply that the Queen is wrong in keeping her son out of the succession.<sup>18</sup> Even so, Pimante's description of Orsames' likely inaptness could ironically connect to the declining Stuart myth: despite their long exile, Charles II and his brother James knew too well how to 'dress', 'sing', 'dance', and 'play on any Musick'; they certainly knew how to 'make use' of women (I.i.53-54).<sup>19</sup>

The (tragicomic) issues of the first act are located within a pastoral setting that should counter the martial context of other acts.<sup>20</sup> The pastoral genre, indeed, usually juxtaposes contemporary civil war and turmoil (situations with which the Restoration audience is familiar) to a lost golden age of peace and harmony (Charles I's idealised kingdom).<sup>21</sup> Yet

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<sup>17</sup> Segismundo lives a similar situation in his tower, where Clotaldo instructs him in philosophy and religion. The first thing Segismundo laments is his lack of freedom; he reasons that his greatest sin is having been born.

<sup>18</sup> Owen proposes that 'the mistake is the Queen's exiling of the heir to the throne, her son, Orsames, and her training of her daughter, Cleomena, to rule in his stead' (Owen 1996:18). In contrast, Hughes argues that the play's subtitle refers to the fact that at a certain moment of the action Cleomena believes that Thersander murdered Clemanthis (she still has not realised that the two men are actually the same person) (Hughes 2001:22). Hughes in fact maintains that 'mistake' in the seventeenth century did not mean 'moral or strategic error' (Hughes 2001:205). I would say that both interpretations are pertinent; nevertheless, I see Orsames' final restoration as somewhat suspect and Cleomena's political importance in the play too strong to be easily dismissed as 'a mistake'.

<sup>19</sup> Soon after 1660 Royalists began to feel a 'serious disillusionment' with the Stuart dynasty; in dramatic terms, this translated into a continuous emphasis on 'the mythic father' (Charles I) as conflicting with 'the worldly son' (Charles II and then James) (Maguire 1992:140). For Maguire, Carolean audiences 'relished topical commentary' and the dramatists counted on the theatre-goers' 'knowledge of James and Charles' to amuse them (Maguire 1992:134). Analysing Dryden's and Davenant's *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island* (1667), Maguire sees in the character of Hippolito (an added parallel to Miranda) a naivety that reminds one of James' 'celebrated lack of sophistication'; Behn's Orsames is similarly portrayed (Maguire 2002:134).

<sup>20</sup> Amintas and Urania are the characters who principally animate *The Young King's* pastoral background. A Druid gives Urania good advice after Amintas' imprisonment and helps Amintas to recover from the wounds received in an ambush. Urania and Amintas ('the obvious model of aristocratic behaviour') get married in the grove (the Druid ties their 'eternal Knot') dressed like a shepherd and a shepherdess and surrounded by 'dancing Swains' (Canfield 1984:451 and V.ii.7). Both Urania and Amintas would like to remain in 'these pretty Shades', but they must 'hasten to the Camp': the pastoral world is not a long-term viable choice and within it, as Hughes remarks, the shepherd plays the pipe, whereas the nymphs only listen (V.ii.16, V.ii.46, and Hughes 2001:27). When Urania observes that 'there are no Women in the Camp', Amintas states that she 'must be obedient, / and learn to bear [his] Bow and Arrows': his words reposition Urania inside a traditional gender hierarchy and portray her as the submissive carrier of his sexual strength (V.ii.50-51).

<sup>21</sup> Hughes writes that in the decade after 1660 royalist playwrights 'forgot the real grievances of Charles I's opponents: religious oppression, questionable taxation, unparliamentary rule' (Hughes

Behn's scenery for *The Young King* is far from idyllic: Princess Cleomena proposes a romanticized idea of the rustic locale, where 'the wearied Shepherd sleeps, guiltless of any fear' and lovers 'steal delightful hours' beneath the woods' shades (I.ii.15-20).<sup>22</sup> In contrast, her woman Semiris thinks that the woods 'eccho back the sound of Horns and Dogs, or the fierce noise of War' (I.ii.21-22). The shepherdess Lyces also revises the trite image of the shepherds as faithful lovers: 'they change their Loves as often as their Scrips, / and lay their Mistresses aside like Ribbons' (I.i.120-121). The confrontation between Dacians and Scythians threatens the comfort offered by the grove and the pastoral archetype of mutual love seems to have vanished. One may be reminded of the pastoral landscape of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: contrary to Petrarchan stereotypes, 'nymphs' suffer because of their lovers' infidelity and male figures regulate the love arrangements. The dreamlike environment makes possible the twist of customary gender roles; yet the carnivalesque reversal *feels* real and plausibly shows what actually happens in everyday life.

The core clash of *The Young King* opposes a sexually and politically naive brother (Orsames, who at times also appears as licentious) to his rather mythical sister (Princess Cleomena).<sup>23</sup> Cleomena's figure instantly raises political concerns: Pimante calls her a 'Virago', points at her gender abnormality ('if it were not for her Beauty, one would swear she were no Woman, she's so given to noise and fighting'), and explains how the Queen 'breeds her more like a General than a Woman' (I.i.66-67 and I.i.73). Cleomena enters the stage in the second scene of the first act: she and her woman Semiris are dressed like Amazons (with a bow in their hands and a quiver of arrows at their back) and decide to pause their hunting. The Amazon, a mythical figure who cannot be found in reality, *is* on stage for everybody to watch. Her body, traditionally pictured through the absence of the breast, probably attracts the spectators' curiosity because of its 'improper' (sexual and political) aggressiveness. In her essay 'Missing the Breast', Kathryn Schwarz observes:

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2001:16). Through tragicomedy (tragedy turned into comedy) they primarily wanted to market Charles II as the reincarnation of his father Charles I (see Maguire 1992:14).

<sup>22</sup> As Elizabeth Young observes, Behn often employs pastoral convention 'in order to break it' and to highlight contradictory gender politics (Young 1993:525). For example, Behn's poem 'The Dream' uses pastoral codes 'to emphasise the power and pervasiveness of deception in the creation and maintenance of male and female identity' (Young 1993:531). In *The Young King* the pastoral and the dreams carry out a similar function.

<sup>23</sup> In contrast, in *Life Is a Dream* we observe the father/son opposition as to the attainment and preservation of political power. Both Basilio and Segismundo behave contradictorily and their (apparent) respect for the 'to do good' principle does not totally erase their 'darker side'.

Amazon myth plays out the fear that the object of desire, the body looked at or [...] looked *for*, may itself possess sexual agency: that all women might be sexually voracious [...] Amazons endanger not only men's lives but their relationship to sexual agency (Schwarz 1997:158)

The Amazons, in fact, upset customary patriarchal logic: unlike 'respectable' women, the Amazons may actively manifest sexual desire, refuse an object position, and exercise socio-political authority within an all-female community.<sup>24</sup> The Amazon Cleomena will exhibit martial boldness and political ambitions; however, in the first act she has no sexual ferociousness and displays a stereotypically 'female' sexual passivity.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, initially Cleomena seems to ratify an essentialist view of sexual identity: she blames Semiris for not seeing 'what's hid within' herself, 'an Heart all soft [...], all woman, apt to melt down at every tender object' (I.ii.25-27). Soon after, the princess falls in love with Clemanthis (the Scythian Thersander under a false name) and reiterates this 'natural' notion of womanhood: 'oh my Heart, how thou betrayst the weakness of our Sex!' (I.ii.96-97).<sup>26</sup>

Cleomena's central role throughout the performance is what mostly differentiates Behn's play from my other case studies. Surely their dreamlike attributes ease the dramatization of extra-ordinary events and characters: an Amazon (Hippolyta) also features within *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Yet a boy actor performs Hippolyta's part, and she has already been relatively tamed at the play's start: whether she likes it or not, Hippolyta will marry Theseus; her potential threat to male power has been previously neutralised by the Duke's violent subjugation. In *Life Is a Dream*, Rosaura has an ambiguous gender identity (she dresses as a man and carries a sword) and shows her military prowess (she fights in the civil war). Nonetheless, Rosaura's key goal is to vindicate her (affronted) sexual honour, and she does not articulate any political ambition that may counter Segismundo's gain of authority. Unlike Hippolyta, Behn's Cleomena (personified by an actual woman) will openly oppose the status quo and will not inertly agree to her (politically advantageous) marriage to a foreign prince. Unlike Rosaura, Cleomena will constitute a clear hindrance to

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<sup>24</sup> As Montrose explains, the Amazonian 'anticulture' reverses 'European norms of political authority, sexual license, marriage and child-rearing practices, and inheritance rules'; because of their recurring presence in early modern texts, the (exotic) Amazons can look dangerously familiar (Montrose 1991:26).

<sup>25</sup> Schwarz remarks that early modern artists often portray Amazons (for example, Penthesilea) as virginal and sexually inert: as in the case of the Virgin Queen, their military valour is firmly divided from any sexual assertiveness. When Amazons embody 'maternal and erotic excess', the problem is to distinguish them from 'normal' or idealised women (Amazons too are mothers, wives...) (Schwarz 1997:163).

<sup>26</sup> Thersander has joined the Dacian army in order to free his companion Amintas; he himself becomes 'a Captive' by falling in love with his political enemy, Cleomena (III.iii.74).

Orsames' political aspirations for most of the plot. Cleomena's assertion of 'femininity' in the first act forecasts the suppression of her gender anomaly at the end of *The Young King*; even so, she represents a challenge to the patriarchal system all through.



FIGURE 8: Giuseppe Nuvolone (attributed to), *Amazons Preparing for the Battle*, c. 1650.

Besides the presence of Amazons, *The Young King's* opening introduces other dreamlike figures; on-stage characters verbally emphasise the *phenomenal* and surreal quality of various protagonists.<sup>27</sup> On the one hand, they draw the audience's (visual) attention to the physical attractiveness (and, maybe, to the post-performance accessibility) of actual bodies (female ones in particular). On the other, the sensory magnetism of the on-stage bodies initiates hetero- and homosexual enticements and hence interrogates accepted sexual parameters.<sup>28</sup> For instance, the verbal depictions of Urania highlight her dreamlike qualities: Cleomena says that 'so fair an one' merits her esteem and she hopes

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<sup>27</sup> The (dreamlike) grove is 'wondrous pleasant', a (manufactured) work of nature 'much more charming [...] than the productions of laborious art' (I.ii.12-14). Within it, Cleomena describes Clemanthis' 'so divine' 'Shape' and 'wonderous Charms' (I.ii.92 and 100).

<sup>28</sup> Cleomena leaves the stage taking both Thersander and Urania with her hands: the homoerotic frisson suggests that traditional gender relationships are imposed rather than 'natural'.

that 'there are not many such fine Creatures' among the Scythians: 'if there be, the Scythians cannot doubt of Victory' (I.ii.220-223).<sup>29</sup> Urania's beauty appeals to all sexes: the female body of the actress impersonating her is eroticised and possibly fascinates men and women both on- and off-stage; the Restoration actress – a 'Tory icon' according to Chalmers, one of the ornaments of the stage for Diamond – is the object of the desiring gaze of others (Chalmers 2004:162 and Diamond 1989:522).<sup>30</sup> Still, Urania is not only the passive recipient of the look of more powerful characters: her charm so pleases Vallentio and Cleomena that they overlook her (rival) nationality and allow her to visit her captive lover Amintas.<sup>31</sup>

The delineation of Clemanthis's fame (together with the weirdness of Orsames' story) adds to the dreamlike landscape of this first act. The extra-ordinariness of characters and events may indicate the fictitiousness of the performance; in contrast, their vivid embodiment before the audience's eyes makes them *actual*. Clemanthis' name is 'like Thunder' to the ears; Vallentio displays a homosexual penchant at odds with his military profession and says that he 'could grow' 'soft and wanton' describing Clemanthis' 'Charms' and 'Valour' (I.i.17 and I.i.21-25). Cleomena too likens Clemanthis to 'something more than mortal', something "twixt Humane and Divine' (I.ii.40-41). The theatregoer is the first to realise that Clemanthis is none but Thersander (the Scythian prince): ironically, Vallentio and Cleomena praise their worst enemy and their military successes depend on his heroism.<sup>32</sup> As Diamond contends in her analysis of *The Rover*, the disguising casts doubts on the relation of sign and referent:

the difference between 'natural' and 'feigned' rests on highly unstable assumptions about identity which, both 'on stage' and 'in common conversation' are capable of shifting. (Diamond 1989:530)

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<sup>29</sup> The Scythian woman (Urania) is 'so fair a creature' that the Dacian Vallentio immediately obeys all her 'Commands' (I.i.131 and I.i.157).

<sup>30</sup> As Pearson writes in *The Prostituted Muse*, 'the female performers were a major theatrical draw' in Restoration theatres (Pearson 1988:27). Correspondingly, Maguire maintains that 'female casting improved the box office' (Maguire 1992:115-116).

<sup>31</sup> Urania (and the actress performing her part) is 'a spectacle unto herself', yet she also exerts a certain agency on other characters (Diamond 1989:523). Analogously, 'the equation of poetess and 'punk' may be inescapable in the Restoration, as Catherine Gallagher argues; all the same, Behn exploits her playwright/prostitute status consciously and successfully (Gallagher 1999:16).

<sup>32</sup> As Dawn Lewcock underlines in her study of Behn's dramatic technique, Behn's spectators usually 'see and hear all the complicated deceptions' and 'know much more than the characters about what is going on': this privileged acquaintance with the events lets them enjoy the characters' bewilderment (Lewcock 1996:67). In an aside to the audience, Urania makes clear that 'the Prince of Scythia' (Thersander) is 'in the Camp of Dacia' (under the name of Clemanthis): she would hate her eyes for 'deluding' her, if she were 'mistaken in that form' (I.ii.253-255).

The form Thersander adopts is at once natural (he is still himself as Urania knew him in Scythia) and manufactured (he is playing the part of Clemanthis among the Dacians). Accordingly, in *The Young King* (as in my other case studies) truth and illusion, natural and unnatural positions cannot be easily separated.

To sum up, within the first act three main elements interrogate ordinary gender and cultural politics: 1) the presence of Amazons; 2) the attendance of an eye-catching and racially other woman (Urania); and, 3) the double identity of Clemanthis/Thersander as an ally and a (political and ethnic) enemy of the Dacians. The Amazon Cleomena (the leader of the Dacian army) paradoxically embodies both a threatening sexual irregularity and a conventionally mild 'femininity'. The Scythian Urania is the scopic object of foreign and powerful gazes, but her (alien) beauty also allows her to reach her goals; the ease with which the Dacians forget her hostile race may point to the inanity of the harmful martial conflict. Likewise, Thersander's twofold characterisation as friend and opponent highlights the absurdity of the war and the reality/appearances quandary: a dilemma which indicates the manufactured-ness of apparently fixed (sexual, racial, and political) functions inside and outside the playhouse.<sup>33</sup> The allegorical quality of the pastoral enables the introduction of otherworldly figures and the staging of circumstances that look remote enough from the contemporary scenario; crucially, this aspect protects Behn's tragicomedy against possible charges of excessive topicality and nonconformity.<sup>34</sup> Despite this safety, the dreamlike quality of the first act suggests that *The Young King* does not limit itself to a transparent and clear-cut achievement of its own generic diktats (i.e., the king will be restored and women will give up their influence). Though the play's closure may appear unadventurous, the (dream-laden) plot makes that conventionality debatable.

## **II: The relationship between Cleomena and Thersander.**

This section focuses on the relationship between the Dacian princess and the Scythian prince by considering the areas within which they interact. The first subsection looks at the dreams and the dreamy grove in which the two heirs first see each other and argues that in these locales anxieties regarding gender, rank and race can be temporarily neglected. Subsection II.2, on the other hand, studies the public places Cleomena and Thersander

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<sup>33</sup> Subsequently, Cleomena's repeated cross-dressing and defiance of customary gender positions will stage the categories of the 'natural' and the 'feigned' as persistently intermingling.

<sup>34</sup> My other case studies do something similar, in that their settings (Padua, Athens, Poland and Egypt) distance the (worrying) dramatized issues from the playwrights' and the acting companies' actual contexts.

cross and proves that within these settings the lovers visually misread each other. Finally, subsection II.3 analyses Cleomena's last dream and verifies that the oneiric vision enables her to secure a deeper comprehension of herself and of Thersander/Clemanthis.

**II.1: Dreams that 'present' 'ideas much more bright and conquering' 'than e'er approach'd' the 'waking sense' (I.ii.128-130).**

In the second scene of *The Young King* Thersander lies sleeping on the grove's ground, 'his Cap and Feather at a distance from him'.<sup>35</sup> The Amazon Cleomena enters and again contradicts her fame and outfit by telling Semiris that she is in love. However, Cleomena does not know with whom exactly: 'For yet I never saw him, but in's Character, / unless sometimes in Dreams' (I.ii.55-56, emphasis added). The object of her nocturnal speculations is Clemanthis, who has made the princess fall in love through his martial valour. Cleomena's *phenomenal* dreams have allowed her to see the legendary warrior; in the (dreamlike) grove he suddenly materialises. Semiris finds Clemanthis' cap and feathers on the ground and the princess soon discovers their owner: 'Ha! he sleeps, tread softly lest you wake him' (I.ii.91). Initially, Clemanthis' unconscious status allows Cleomena to perfect her vision of him (for example, she asks Semiris to remove the hair from his face) and to nurture her desire to watch ('May not my Eyes have leave to gaze a while?') (I.ii.106). Subsequently, she is torn between the inappropriateness of watching (she says: 'but I'll no longer view that pleasing form' and 'turns from him') and the addictive pleasure of doing so (she says: 'and yet I've lost all power of removing' and 'turns and gazes') (I.ii.109-110).

The scene underscores the *actuality* of what the audience is looking at: objects that exist also outside the playhouse, actions (sleeping, for instance) that take place in everyday life, and people who employ their senses and bodies in *real* space and time (by walking, touching, talking, and, as the audience does, watching other people). Here Cleomena (and the actress embodying her) is primarily a woman who gazes and desires, not the object of somebody else's visual enjoyment. Whereas before she was in love 'with Fame alone', in the grove Cleomena indulgently watches a real body ('here's *substance*') (I.ii.72 and I.ii.102, emphasis added). The sexual agency Cleomena exercises tones with her Amazonian traits and tangibly highlights the question of female empowerment that will be

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<sup>35</sup> The productions of Robert Howard's *The Indian Queen* (1664) and Dryden's *The Indian Emperour* (1665) used 'lavish costumes', including the feathers Behn had brought from Surinam (Maguire 1992:120). Perhaps also *The Young King* employed the same exotic props.

diluted in the last act. I think it is important that Cleomena started *looking at* (a hypothetical) Clemanthis within her own dreams. Despite their private nature, her visions first incarnated the question of her atypical sexual and political status. Her uncommon upbringing taught Cleomena to behold all men 'with much disdain' and to equate emotions to a 'crime' (I.ii.118 and 84). In contrast, her dreams of Clemanthis begin to modify her (literal and metaphorical) viewpoint. In fact, her dreams display a (male) person as exceptional as she is and suggest that marrying him would be laudable notwithstanding his (still unknown) race and extraction. The dream space demolishes ethnic and class boundaries, while in *reality* Cleomena still intends to marry none but the man who will 'kill the King of Scythia' (I.ii.121).

Perhaps hearing Cleomena's propositions, Thersander/Clemanthis 'wakes, rises, and gazes': he swaps roles with the princess, as he is *now* the one who sets eyes on her. His first words remind one of Sly's or Segismundo's awakenings and again connect the play's central couple to dreams:

Am I awake, or do my Dreams present me / ideas much more *bright and conquering* /  
than e'er approach'd my *waking sense* by far? (I.ii.128-130, emphasis added)

Awakening, Sly and Segismundo are dumbfounded because of the luxurious (and never seen before) items they observe. In *The Young King* the surreal spectacle of Cleomena's beauty ('sure 'tis Diana, the Goddess of these Woods', 'can you be mortal! / what happy Land contains you?') makes the prince doubt his own senses (I.ii.131 and 140-141).<sup>36</sup> The sight of the princess – for the audience, the sight of a woman/actress – may be a dream, yet it is more intense than anything he has ever watched. In the woods of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Lysander and Demetrius have reactions similar to Thersander's when they awake and gaze at Helena. Yet their eyes have been altered by Oberon's juice and what they see is actually a boy/actor disguised as a woman. In contrast, Thersander looks at a woman *in the flesh* and falls in love with her spontaneously.

In the woods the on-stage movements of Cleomena and Thersander seem to sculpt the (unconventional) parity of their relationship. Having found out her name, Thersander 'kneels' in front of Cleomena; when he introduces himself as Clemanthis, the princess 'raises him' and conventionally alludes to his martial (and sexual) prowess: 'this Crown's in

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<sup>36</sup> In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the presence of the moon and Titania herself recall the goddess Diana. By comparing Cleomena to Diana, Thersander links her with ideas of chastity, royal majesty and mutability (as appropriate to a character who frequently changes from Amazon into 'orthodox' female and vice-versa).

debt to your all-conquering Sword; / and I'm the most oblig'd to make Returns' (I.ii.165-166).<sup>37</sup> Afterwards they meet in the wood for the second time and continue to exhibit a body language that erases customary gender hierarchies and stresses the princess' sexual agency. In fact, Thersander 'bows low' as soon as he sees her; Cleomena tells him to stop his 'ceremony', takes his hand, and sits down with him 'on a bank' (II.iii.70). Thersander's kneeling may be a standard gesture of chivalrous behaviour, as Hughes writes in his study of *The Young King* (Hughes 2001:23). Still, in the role of Clemanthis he is one of Cleomena's subjects: in spite of his inferior rank, Cleomena treats him as her equal. Crucially, in subsequent scenes she will conduct herself as a man.

The dreamy grove is not totally detached from the bellicose situation around it: as soon as Cleomena reveals her identity, Thersander reminds himself and the audience of the conflict ('the Princess Cleomena! my mortal Enemy!') (I.ii.145). The woods and the dreams that abolish traditional restrictions will have to be abandoned soon. Nevertheless, the grove's oneiric territory has actually proposed ideas more 'bright and conquering' than *reality*: Thersander begins to love Cleomena notwithstanding her inimical national identity. As Pearson underlines, Behn often dramatizes gender difference through 'the difference in nationality': in *The Young King* characters of rival ethnicities love each other within their dreams and the grove's dreamlike area; in contrast, at court or in the battlefield socio-political grounds promote hate and conflict (Pearson 1996:221).<sup>38</sup>

The discord between Dacians and Scythians portrays the personal (the lovers' feelings) as permanently bound to the political, as Owen remarks:

The conflict between love and honour [...] modulates in the political tragedy of the Exclusion Crisis into a tormented sense that political conflict vitiates both the macrocosm of state and the microcosm of family (Owen 1996a:31)

However, Thersander easily abjures his (ethnic and public) honour in favour of his life's more personal sphere: in the grove he informs his page Lysander (and the audience) of

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<sup>37</sup> The equality between Thersander and Cleomena in the woods differs from the hierarchical nature of the (changing) relationships between the lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Demetrius and Lysander are slaves first to Hermia and then to Helena, Helena is a slave to Demetrius, and Hermia to Lysander.

<sup>38</sup> Analysing both parts of *The Rover*, Heidi Hutner reasons that Behn longs for a past golden age of 'unrepressed sexuality and idyllic royalism': an era when Tory heroes and women spontaneously loved each other and desire was 'demasculinized' (Hutner 1993:113). The woods and the dreams of *The Young King* are a setting in which class and gender constraints are temporarily less tyrannical than in other (more public) locations.

the priority he gives love over politics ('they're such glorious Fetters that confine me, / I wou'd not quit them to preserve that life / thou [Lysander] justly sayst I hazzard by my Love') (II.iii.3-5). Thersander sees his love for Cleomena as divine (the gods themselves encourage it) and (rightly) foresees that their relationship will put an end to their peoples' war: 'I know she is my Enemy, [...] but what of this? she loves me as Clemanthis, / which will surmount her hatred to the Scythians' (II.iii.8-13).

For Cleomena, the private and the public areas are less effortlessly separable. She plainly links her own private life to her subjects' will ('my Destiny depends upon my people: / [...] they've made a resolution to give me to that Prince who does most powerfully / advance the ruine of the King of Scythia'); ironically, she wishes Clemanthis were 'that Prince' and is unaware of his position as the Scythian heir (II.iii.156-159).<sup>39</sup> Discussing the problem of Clemanthis' lineage, Thersander (i.e. Clemanthis) explains that he has 'to conceal' his 'birth' and 'name' 'for some time', but assures Cleomena that he has 'quality' enough 'to merit' her (II.iii.130 and 136).<sup>40</sup> Rank and race issues, therefore, appear to encroach on women (Cleomena) more powerfully than on men (Thersander). Cleomena's father is dead, yet the Queen her mother fully represents a patriarchal power: she will arrange her daughter's marriage taking into consideration political benefits, not Cleomena's will. The Queen will disregard the problem of inimical nationality and agree to give her daughter in marriage to the Scythian heir. The question of status, however, is not superfluous: Cleomena knows that her future husband cannot be of lower blood than her and is worried because she (unlike the audience) does not know that Clemanthis too is of royal extraction. In this sense, *The Young King* seems to be less tolerant of intra-class relationships than, for example, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with its (brief) dramatization of the Titania/Bottom intercourse. All the same, in her dreams and in the grove Cleomena accepts and returns the love of an (unidentified) valorous warrior. Albeit momentarily, the dreams and the dreamlike woods offer a location alternative to the court and the

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<sup>39</sup> Later on in the action, the Queen underscores how her daughter's life is tied to the nation's military achievements: Cleomena is the army's 'General' and she must 'share the danger' as well as 'the glory' of war (II.iii.177-179). Likewise, Thersander manifests his vacillation between serving Cleomena (Love) or his father (Nature and Political Benefits): 'Interest and Love but rarely do agree, / yet I must reconcile 'em both in me' (III.iii.117-118).

<sup>40</sup> Whereas Cleomena does not know Clemanthis is actually 'more worthy' of her than the other princes who court her (Ismenes and Artabazes), the audience understands the double sense of his discourse: 'I never will demand / the Divine Cleomena till I have crown'd her [...] Queen of Scythia' (II.iii.141 and 168-170).

battleground. They allow the lovers to be relatively independent of gender, race, and class limits and suggest the emptiness of those constraints.

## **II.2: The public space as the site of irreconcilable differences.**

Cleomena and Thersander see each other correctly in the dreamy grove (in spite of the prince's false identity), but misapprehend their own intentions at court and on the battleground. Significantly, acts III and IV leave the (racial and sexual) conflict unsolved, whereas Cleomena's last dream in act V finally puts an end to the misunderstanding.

As section II.1 has demonstrated, in their dreams and in the grove Cleomena and Thersander enjoy visual egalitarianism: they mutually look at each other and alternate their positions as desiring subjects and objects of desire. At court this optical parity disappears and Cleomena's active gazing somewhat impairs her relationship with Clemanthis. For instance, Honorius (Cleomena's uncle) wishes to reward Clemanthis for his military services and offers him his daughter Olympia in marriage; in order not to offend Honorius, Clemanthis pays a visit to Olympia ('but to prove / no torment can be like dissembled Love') (II.iii.276-277). A discovery scene displays 'Thersander seemingly courting Olympia': Cleomena enters, 'sees them, starts, gazes on them, then goes out unseen'. When the scene closes, the location moves to the princess' apartment, where she can openly manifest her wrath ('Perfidious man! am I abandon'd then?') (II.iv.42).<sup>41</sup> Her first (visual) misunderstanding of Thersander had actually taken place in an earlier scene: Semiris told her she had found him in the 'Antick Gallery' and that 'he was viewing' the picture of Olympia (II.iii.54-57).<sup>42</sup> In contrast to what happens in the grove and in her dreams, at court Cleomena does not exert scopic pleasure safely: she misinterprets what she sees (something that *appears* what is not) and is hurt by it. In the royal palace male gaze has conventional functions: Thersander is the privileged and secure viewer of Olympia's picture, a still and silent object which can be effortlessly craved.<sup>43</sup> The portrait motif – present also in *Life Is a Dream* through Rosaura's portrait – refers to the

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<sup>41</sup> Behn exploits the scenic possibilities of the Restoration theatre to craft a fast episode that appears to harm the Cleomena/Thersander relationship. As Todd proposes, two shutters open to reveal Thersander's seeming wooing of Olympia. They maybe close and open again to show Cleomena's room in the subsequent scene; alternatively, they stay closed to allow her room to be in front and to represent 'a public space' which Thersander can enter (Todd 1996a:429)

<sup>42</sup> Unlike Cleomena, Olympia is a more stereotypical female image, a rather passive object of others' sight. Her visual docility possibly justifies her marriage to Orsames, a typically 'male' and active onlooker of female bodies.

<sup>43</sup> Discussing the exposition of Angellica Bianca's pictures, Skantze writes that Behn juxtaposes 'the artistic representation of female beauty preserved and motionless in portraiture' to 'the concomitant offering of that beauty for a price' (Skantze 2003:115).

commodity status of the female body both in the flesh (on- and off-stage) and as artistic manufacture.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, Cleomena riskily observes Thersander performing an uncertain act (is he courting Olympia or not?): her dynamic gazing constructs her as an atypical female subject, but it is also a source of trouble.<sup>45</sup>

The optical delusions Cleomena lives at court prompt her to recover her initial, Amazonian characterization: the princess does so principally through the use of 'male' objects such as daggers and pens. In *The Prostituted Muse*, Pearson observes that Behn often achieves sexual reversal by showing a woman who draws sword (or dagger, or pistol) against a man who has affronted her. Behn empowers her heroines by letting them 'share the phallic power' of these 'male' tools (Pearson 1988:158). Nonetheless, these 'masculine' items seem to work against Cleomena and jeopardize her nonconformist gender identity. When Clemanthis enters her apartment after the scene with Olympia, Cleomena 'draws a dagger' and 'offers to kill him' (II.iv.57-59). Cleomena points her dagger at him three times, whereas Clemanthis (unable to understand her fury) 'offers to fall on his sword'. Through the sexual nuances, Behn overturns traditional gender depictions: Cleomena owns a dagger (phallus) with which she can kill a man, while Clemanthis seems 'femininely' ready to die by falling on a sword (phallus).<sup>46</sup>

In the third act, the military camp resembles the Dacian court: it is a place where the Cleomena/Thersander rapport suffers from optical misconstruction and where Cleomena's employment of 'male' devices hinders her objectives. Furthermore, the performance draws attention to the fabricated-ness of gender differences (a cross-dressed woman is unanimously taken for a man) and to the fact that male socio-political dominance derives

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<sup>44</sup> Diamond sees Angellica Bianca's three portraits in *The Rover* as 'fetishes, as substitute objects for the female body' (Diamond 1989:532). Willmore's appropriation of one of them shows 'the patriarchal and homosocial economy that control the apparatus' and 'the commodity status of paintings, of their model, and [...] of the painted actress and the painted scenes' (Diamond 1989:534).

<sup>45</sup> Cleomena's previous reaction to the news that her uncle Honorius has offered Olympia to Clemanthis corroborates the play's game with double meanings: 'By Heaven this Stranger's false! [...] 'Tis so – he loves Olympia!' (II.iv.13-15). In fact, Clemanthis is at once false (his real name is Thersander) and honest (he is not in love with Olympia).

<sup>46</sup> Despite her determination, Cleomena finally decides to ban Clemanthis from the court rather than kill him ('But oh, I cannot; / but canst thou live, false man, and see me frown?') (II.iv.94-95). The third act opens with Cleomena carrying 'a truncheon in her hand, a sword and quiver of arrows by her side'. She has fully readopted her Amazonian image and reproaches Semiris who believes Clemanthis 'innocent': 'Innocent! [...] did I not see him courting of Olympia? / And can my Eyes deceive me?' (III.i.10 and 13-14). Cleomena's eyes have actually deluded her: she has gazed at something that looked *real* but was not. This first misinterpretation of Clemanthis' behaviour is mended by Semiris, who explains to the princess that he had visited Olympia only in order not 'to disesteem' Honorius (III.i.23).

from the use of violence. After a battle in which Thersander (this time performing his *true* Scythian identity) has proved all his valour, the Dacians have a draw to decide who will fight Thersander ‘in a single Combat’ (III.iv.23). Cleomena herself writes Thersander’s name on a piece of paper and Clemanthis (i.e. Thersander himself) is the one who extracts the Scythian’s name.<sup>47</sup> Analysing this and other scenes, Hughes writes that ‘acts of writing [...] push language towards the domain of violence and away from pure female control’ (Hughes 2001:22). Indeed, Cleomena’s ‘male’ writing is ‘self-undermining’: in designating the one who should kill her worst enemy (Thersander), it also contradictorily aims to eliminate her lover Clemanthis (Hughes 2001:22).<sup>48</sup> I believe Cleomena’s writing counteracts Behn’s own status as a successful playwright: the princess’ texts are ineffective because of her inability to understand the events around her - essentially, her incapacity to discern that Clemanthis *is* Thersander. In contrast, as Chalmers reasons, Behn knows that her pen can be a profitable weapon; the female author achieves ‘political agency’ when she manages ‘to control the very processes of literary representation’ (Chalmers 2004:153).

Towards the end of the third act, the action moves back to the woods and presents them as a locale increasingly contaminated by (male) violence. The weakening of the dreamlike quality of the pastoral setting brings the play’s gender relationships to a tragic climax and stresses the theatricality of conventional sexual categories. Thersander exchanges clothes with his friend Amintas – thus sharing with the spectators the dramatic process of *becoming* somebody else – and asks him to play the part of Clemanthis (i.e. his own part) in the duel (‘so, now thou dost appear so like Clemanthis, / that not a Dacian but will be mistaken in thee’) (III.iv.106-107).<sup>49</sup> Yet Amintas will be unable to ‘act Clemanthis well’: ‘some fellows in Cloaks’ sent by Artabazes (jealous of Clemanthis’ popularity at the Dacian court) wound him; when the draws open, they discover ‘Amintas lying as dead all bloody’

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<sup>47</sup> Only Thersander and the audience fully comprehend the irony of the situation: the prince has two identities and is going to fight with himself in a paradoxical duel; Cleomena is at once concerned about Clemanthis’ destiny and eager to see Thersander dead.

<sup>48</sup> Cleomena’s first act of writing has been a letter sent to Clemanthis to announce his banishment: this letter also threatens the princess’ happiness, as it charges Clemanthis with something he has not *actually* done (the courting of Olympia). Semiris likens the letter to ‘unlookt-for Sentences of Death’ (III.ii.7).

<sup>49</sup> As Hughes points out, before the duel Thersander must choose between ‘his identity as lover and as feudal warrior’ and prefers the latter role (Hughes 2001:20). Thersander’s split identity (as lover/Clemanthis and as warrior/Thersander) incarnates the inner contrast between female and male principles: his male part almost kills his lover Cleomena. Nevertheless, he also seems to regret his ‘dishonour’ sincerely and describes his sword as the ‘cruel instrument of [his] shameful Crime’ (IV.iv.13-14).

(III.iv.120).<sup>50</sup> Having decided not to look at the Clemanthis/Thersander duel, Cleomena seeks refuge within the grove: alarmed about her lover's fate, and because she has 'fears, and fits of Cowardise', she calls herself 'a perfect Woman' (III.iv.154-155). However, the spectacle in front of her eyes ('a sight so dismal and bloody') encourages her to re-embrace her rebellious femininity (III.iv.162). The princess tries to purchase a masculine identity by wearing Amintas/Clemanthis' clothes and carrying his sword.<sup>51</sup> When Cleomena asks Semiris whether she may 'not pass, thus habited, for Clemanthis', the maid answers: 'Yes, Madam, till you come to the fighting-part' (IV.i.5-6).<sup>52</sup> Semiris' bitter prediction soon livens up on the stage's battlefield, when trumpets announce the duel between Cleomena and Thersander: their key fighting *factually* embodies *The Young King's* racial and political clash and the everyday collision of the sexes.<sup>53</sup> Thersander realises that the *man* in front of him is not Amintas/Clemanthis ('thou art not him thou represent'st'); yet it is only when Cleomena falls and he 'stoops to look on her' that he locates her *actual* identity (IV.ii.3).<sup>54</sup> Cleomena's cross-dressing and her swordfight with Thersander crucially highlight that violence has established gender hierarchies. Male socio-political rule is not something 'natural' and, therefore, unquestionable: it is the result of a predatory and brutal thirst that a woman like Cleomena, though valiant, cannot overcome.

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<sup>50</sup> Artabazes' resentment towards Thersander is also due to the fact that the Scythian has killed Artabazes's nephew (Philemon) on the battleground (III.iii.21). Prince Ismenes asks Amintas (Clemanthis) to tell the name of the murderer, and Amintas mutters 'Thersander' before fainting.

<sup>51</sup> Cleomena believes that her lover's (apparent) death has 'masculinised' her ('tis that creates me a man, and valiant too') and counts on his weapon to overcome Thersander ('come, my dear Sword, from thee I must expect / that service which my Arm may fail t' effect') (IV.i.31 and 35-36).

<sup>52</sup> Urania too dressed as a 'Youth' and managed to help her lover Amintas during a battle (II.ii.18). Her disguise was successful, but the Dacians then managed to capture Amintas. In contrast, in the third act Urania passively waits for Amintas inside a tent and complains about her own gender: 'Why was I made a Woman? or being so, / why had I not a Masculine courage given me?' (III.iii.5-6). When Amintas has to speak to the King and Thersander, he asks her to 'retire' into the wood near the tent and thus keeps her out of 'masculine' discourses (III.iii.57).

<sup>53</sup> The two warring factions – possibly similar, despite the exotic setting, to the parties that fight each other in Behn's society – are tangibly visible on stage: on one side stands the Scythian King and his people, on the other the Dacians led by Cleomena's mother.

<sup>54</sup> Green observes that, unlike Shakespeare's heroines, Behn's female characters usually do not employ male disguise successfully: men normally discover the real female selves, perhaps after the woman has been injured in swordplay, as in Cleomena's case (Green 1993:137). Green also notices that in Behn's plays disguise across class works better for women: for instance, when women become courtesans men find it difficult to discern their status (Green 1993:137). Wiseman remarks that disguise 'requires both characters and audience to have a particularly expert eye in order to differentiate virgins from prostitutes and financial opportunities from trickery' (Wiseman 1996:51). The use of disguise raises the problem of interpreting signs correctly: Behn's heroines try to fashion the world through disguise and become symbols 'to be read and misread' (Wiseman 1996:52).

The battleground re-enacts the two heirs' gazing in a radically different way from that in the grove. The grove gave the lovers the opportunity to exchange mutual and accurate glances, whereas in the war arena their sight fails to see correctly. Indeed, Cleomena does not see that (the apparently dead) Amintas *is not* Clemanthis and she cannot distinguish her lover in Thersander's figure; Thersander acknowledges her presence only when it seems too late. We are reminded of the lovers' impaired vision in the woods of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: in Shakespeare's comedy, Oberon's will and Robin's imprecision are responsible for the lovers' optical distress. In *The Young King*, the main couple suffers as a result of the political climate of hate and because the *reality* they live is but a believable fiction. As Ros Ballaster clarifies, in the late 1670s and early 1680s Behn's works investigate the power of artifice as a form of political agency. Because of the Popish Plot ('the greatest political 'fraud' of the century'),

the 'real' world has become a vast fiction which provides the source for the 'fictional' worlds' attempt to filter out the reality behind the plots. (Ballaster 1996:50-51)<sup>55</sup>

Drama employs the same fictional strategies that operate within the audience's everyday reality: in particular, *The Young King* shows the nearly tragic consequences of disguise and role-play. In the course of the action Thersander and Cleomena employ the same disguise: they both dress up as Clemanthis (Thersander's 'second self', his at once feigned and real identity as lover) (Hughes 2001:20). Cleomena lends Clemanthis an actual female body; yet she cannot make Clemanthis triumph over Thersander and nearly dies in the confrontation. The on-stage swordfight between a man (Thersander) and a cross-dressed woman (Cleomena) exemplifies two fundamental issues: the two lovers are still strangers to each other and violence jeopardizes their relationship.<sup>56</sup> The duel renders this aggressive component hyper-visible and perhaps suggests that the previous wooing hid other, more disturbing elements. Nonetheless, in spite of her martial defeat, Cleomena has shown her 'masculine' valour and has actively performed to redress an injustice (Clemanthis' apparent murder). Like Pearson, I believe that in *The Young King* cross-

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<sup>55</sup> Ballaster mainly refers to *The False Count* (1681) and the short comical fiction 'Memoirs of The Court of the King of Bantam' (1685). As seen in chapter 4, early modern Spanish culture is similarly concerned about the fictitiousness and *seeming* hollowness of everyday experience.

<sup>56</sup> *The Young King* portrays a 'feudal and militaristic' community: within this society, male rule springs from 'the priorities of a military culture' (Hughes 2001:16). For Hughes, in Behn's plays even the finest heterosexual relationship may conceal 'some residue of the threatening alienness of the predatory male' (Hughes 2001:20).

dressing chiefly signifies 'the strength and independence of women', not their foreseeable loss to the physical superiority of men (Pearson 1988:157).<sup>57</sup>

As a final point, I would like to underline that Cleomena essentially resolves the key public problem (the restoration of a king) from within the play's communal spaces (the court and the military camp). In contrast, the core private problem (her relationship with Thersander) goes unanswered almost until the end and only Cleomena's final dream solves it. In a bedroom scene after the swordfight, the Queen explains that the Scythian King has proposed a marriage between his son and Cleomena; the Dacian 'Council' approves it and the Army is happy with 'the blest news' (IV.v.22-23). Cleomena opposes the wedding and openly manifests her resentment towards Thersander ('do you not say he is my Father's Murderer?') (IV.v.7). She does not conceal her racial revulsion nor her atypical femininity: 'is this the hate which with my Milk you made me suck / for all that Race? is this th'effects of my fierce Education?' (IV.v.22-23).<sup>58</sup> Once her mother has left, Cleomena fully re-exhibits her Amazonian 'manliness': she pulls out a dagger and states that she will not marry Thersander, 'no, not whilst *this* – remains in my possession' (IV.v.32, emphasis added). The bedroom scene may mesmerise the audience's sight through the spectacle of the (barely dressed) body of the actress.<sup>59</sup> Cleomena's image, nonetheless, is not easily categorized: it is the object of scopic pleasure; it is the (presumed) prey of political power (the Queen's and the King's authority); and, it is the site of attempted resistance to despotic rule and conventional gender characterization. It appears that the dagger/phallus she puts on view will have to be severed for the wedding to take place. Even so, one must remember that at the closure Cleomena is about to marry the man she actually loves: on a personal level, she will gain what she originally desired.

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<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, Cleomena's decision to challenge Thersander forces him to declare his feelings to his father ('I'll not deny the Eyes of Cleomena / have given me Wounds which nothing else can cure') and hence accelerates the resolution of the conflicts (as the King says, 'I'll offer Peace in such a time [...] / and with it Propositions of a Marriage') (IV.iv.31-32 and 27-29).

<sup>58</sup> Cleomena's rage does not stop the Queen's patriarchal conduct and political opportunism: 'all things must be prefer'd to th' Publick good' and, as habitual practice within early modern societies, weddings are arranged for political and economic conveniences (IV.v.24). The 'femaleness' of Cleomena's night-gown perhaps suggests her future (and expected) acceptance of habitual gender roles.

<sup>59</sup> Although the scene with Cleomena in a night-gown occurs in her tent (probably located around the battleground), I believe it can be regarded as a bedroom scene. Holland underlines Behn's preoccupation with bedroom scenes and explains that they were normally kept upstage, in part 'to separate the undressed actor/actress from the character' (P. Holland 1979:42). Diamond argues that in bedroom scenes the actress' distance from the audience allows 'the male spectator the pleasure of being seduced by and, simultaneously, of being protected from the effects of sexual difference' (Diamond 1989:535). However, in this scene the presence of Cleomena's dagger - a metaphorical penis - seems to negate sexual difference, at least symbolically.

On a more public level, Cleomena renounces her political aspirations and relinquishes her right to royal succession.<sup>60</sup> Her words pass the tragicomedy's (main) ideological stance on to the spectators and visualise the royal restoration that will close the performance: 'I'll have this Nation happy in a Prince; / a Prince they long in silence have bemoan'd [...] / I my self will be his Oracle now, / and speak his kinder fate' (IV.v.84-100). Still, the endorsement of male succession does not forbid the ambiguous depiction of Cleomena to continue throughout: the audience is unable to assume a steady viewpoint towards her.<sup>61</sup> By favouring Orsames, Cleomena is giving up her political command; yet she also compellingly replaces the oracle that has so far shaped her brother's fate. Because of the rules of tragicomedy and the 1670s' political climate, Orsames' restoration is (probably) obligatory; in *The Young King*, however, it is mainly a woman (Cleomena) who makes the male return to power possible. Cleomena – a woman with opposing male and female attributes – publicly empowers her brother Orsames. In addition, at the end of the performance she somewhat recovers political agency by marrying Thersander and hence becoming the Scythian Queen.

In conclusion, this section has proved the hostility of the play's public spaces (the court and the battleground) to the resolution of the (racial and sexual) conflict between Cleomena and Thersander. At court and in the military camp the princess and the prince cannot see each other correctly and evenly; Cleomena's employment of 'male' means (the sword and the pen) challenges traditional gender constructions, but delays her targets; and, the violent context provokes the almost fatal fighting between the two lovers. As the next section argues, Cleomena needs to dream again to reconcile Clemanthis (the lover) and Thersander (the warrior) into a single person.

### **II.3: 'How this agrees with my sad dream': the dream as the site of visual learning (V.iv.85).**

The end of act IV and part of act V continue to present Cleomena as a forceful woman who wants to revenge the (seeming) death of her beloved Clemanthis. Once more, the

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<sup>60</sup> Cleomena meets Vallentio in her tent and enquires whether he and the army are 'contented' she should be their queen (IV.v.71). Vallentio answers he is, but when asked about Orsames he also communicates his propensity towards the young king. Vallentio contradicts what he said in the first act and, most likely, does so only because he fears Pimante has told Cleomena about his contempt for women who reign. In an aside to the audience, the Colonel says: 'Pimante has been prating'; Cleomena thus seems to trust somebody who is not really reliable (IV.v.72).

<sup>61</sup> Cleomena's multiple stances might recall Petruchio's and Katherina's in *The Taming of the Shrew*.

spectator watches Cleomena sit down and write: the pen she uses ('a metaphorical penis') reminds the onlookers of Cleomena's writing agency and, possibly, of Behn's own authorial status (Diamond 1989:535). Both Behn and Cleomena possess bisexual features: their womanly part is 'defenceless' and inclined to love passionately, their manly part is active and performs male occupations (Diamond 1989:535).<sup>62</sup> Warning about the seventeenth century's close association of the terms 'public' and 'publication', Catherine Gallagher has argued that in Behn's times 'a woman's publication automatically implied a public woman' (Gallagher 1999:16).<sup>63</sup> Though to a lesser extent than Behn, Cleomena too publicises her own persona: she gives a Page a letter for her mother, the Queen hands it over to Thersander, he reads it aloud 'o'er again' and shares its content with the audience (IV.v.176). In the letter the princess elucidates that she is 'fled' in order not to marry Thersander ('that Barbarian'): plainly, she has rebelled against her mother's order and has preserved her own integrity (IV.v.179-180). By broadcasting her mind – her decision not to comply with the dominant socio-political needs – Cleomena (at least temporarily) asserts that her physical and mental property belong to none else but her. The audience has so far seen the princess as 'divided' (male/female selves) and 'doubled' (Cleomena/Clemanthis): her letter also demonstrates that she is 'unavailable' and cannot be easily and fully seized.

The portrayal of writing as a possible weapon of female power persists within the male area symbolised by Thersander's tent. 'Drest like a Country-Shepherd', Cleomena enters Thersander's tent saying that he/she has a letter for him (IV.v.110). She has therefore transformed her identity again and metaphorically pierces Thersander's space using her writing. The infringement becomes *real* when Thersander reads the note ('Guard thee well, Thersander; for thou shalt die by the hand that brings thee this') and Cleomena exploits his distraction to stab him (IV.v.198-199).<sup>64</sup> Again, her writing turns into a potential instrument

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<sup>62</sup> Diamond proposes that Behn's divided (male/female) authorship shows up when she stages 'the equation between female body and fetish, fetish and commodity'; as her actresses are, Behn the dramatist is 'sexualised, circulated, denied a subject position in the theatre hierarchy' (Diamond 1989:535).

<sup>63</sup> In an epoch when women were required to renounce self-possession – essentially by giving themselves 'in mind and body' to their husbands – Behn made her own mind and body public through writing: 'publication [...] ipso facto implied the divided, doubled, and ultimately unavailable person whose female prototype was the prostitute' (Gallagher 1999:16-18). Chalmers, however, underlines the force of the political commitment of seventeenth-century women writers (Margaret Cavendish, Katherine Philips and Behn in particular) and calls attention to the interplay of 'individual drives, historical circumstances, and coincidental opportunities' which fashioned their surfacing as authors (Chalmers 2004:8). In Chalmers' opinion, male peers accepted female writing as long as it expressed their own political beliefs.

<sup>64</sup> Predictably, Thersander's reaction further illustrates the chivalrous ideals that have permeated the heterosexual relationships within the grove. As soon as Cleomena 'discovers her self' – i.e. she

of emotional and political intervention: to murder Thersander through her pen/dagger would mean to revenge Clemanthis and get rid of her nation's main opponent. Yet her defiant act also bears incongruous signs: Thersander *is* Clemanthis and the princess' pen/dagger would harm its own holder, should Cleomena succeed in her plot.

In his analysis of this genre, Cohen remarks that tragicomedy raises and answers 'interdependent fears about women and monarchs'; its apprehension about unrestrained female sexuality suggests 'the threat of women's independence from men' (Cohen 1992:128).<sup>65</sup> The 'trouble' with *The Young King's* female characters does not lie in their uncontrolled sexual desire. Rather, it results from their 'masculine' thirst for political power (the Queen reigns instead of Orsames) and from their 'masculine' performing (Cleomena acts as a man). *The Young King's* final act resolves the issue of female insubordination, but does not eradicate it completely. The attempted assassination has made Cleomena a prisoner (she is 'in fetters'); when the Scythian king reveals that Thersander is still alive and wants her to be gloriously 'conducted into Dacia', the princess is amazed (V.i.3 and 46).<sup>66</sup> Cleomena cannot reconcile Thersander's *present* 'virtue' with the assumption that he killed Clemanthis: in other words, she still cannot see her lover's and her enemy's silhouettes as one single shape (V.i.57).

The spectators next observe Cleomena (released from prison) in a tent, dressed as a woman again.<sup>67</sup> The princess asks Semiris to play the lute, 'lies down on a couch', and falls asleep.<sup>68</sup> Stimulated by the music, Cleomena 'rises as in a dream' and sleepwalks towards a fuller awareness of her own feelings. Moving on the stage insensible to Semiris'

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shows that the mutinous pen/dagger belongs to a woman – Thersander likens love to a happily-received injury: 'it is her hand that wounds me; / and I'll receive my death with perfect joy' (IV.v.206-207). He may be parodying the typical Petrarchan lover by saying he is dying for love (he will not actually die). Yet his behaviour seems to me depicted as heartfelt and sincerely motivated, not simply rhetorical (IV.v.220).

<sup>65</sup> For Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope, tragicomedy's final renewal of a community takes 'the form of a displacement of the political status quo' and of a liberation from despotism (McMullan and Hope 1992:10). *The Young King* ends with Orsames' restoration, but does not portray the Queen's and Cleomena's preceding sovereignty as tyrannical.

<sup>66</sup> Called in front of the Scythian King, officers, attendants and guards, Cleomena figures as an object of male visual pleasure: the King exclaims 'how beautiful she is!' and 'gazes on her' (V.i.3). Yet Cleomena takes advantage of her social and gender position to ease her situation ('if my Birth and Sex can merit aught, / suffer me not to languish [...] / under these shameful Irons'); initially she speaks to the King 'with scorn', then she 'weeps' (V.i.11-12).

<sup>67</sup> Before letting her go, the King orders to 'dismiss her Fetters' and, if she agrees, 'to let her have Garments suitable to her Sex' (V.i.65-66). A more 'appropriate' gender characterisation seems therefore to picture Cleomena towards the closure of the performance.

<sup>68</sup> Semiris' music appears to transfer the performance back to the idyllic location of the first act; yet her song actually illustrates the animosity of gender relationships. In fact, she sings of a 'pitiless', scornful nymph who, as Cleomena has done, wounded the 'true' heart of a shepherd (Thersander).

questions, the princess enacts part of her dream in front of the audience: ironically, the onlookers grasp the meaning of her oneiric experience better than she does. Initially, the dreaming princess follows and talks to Clemanthis' ghost ("tis not into thy lov'd bosom / that I have sent my vengeance'), then she cries against Thersander's spectre ('why dost rob me of that face?') (V.iv.29-30 and 36). Still in between sleeping and waking, Cleomena asks Semiris whether she sees something; after a negative answer, she pictures what she perceives: 'Yonder's the Scythian with Clemanthis Face, / or else Clemanthis with Thersander's Wound' (V.iv.41-42). Semiris equates the vision to a dream ("twas a dream, / an idle dream, born from a troubled fancie') and encourages Cleomena to recount it (V.iv.43-44). The princess' description reminds one of Hermia's, Titania's and Bottom's narration of their own dreamlike experiences:

Methought I saw Clemanthis, / as when he was most charming to my Soul, / but pale and languishing, having a Wound / like that I gave his Murtherer / [...] and gazing on me, - thus methought he spoke: / - see how you recompence my faithful sufferings, / - see the performance of your promises; / [...] - thus spoke the lovely Phantome.  
(V.iv.46-60)

The dream displays Clemanthis (the lover) and Thersander (the enemy) as the same person and makes Cleomena feel concrete sensations: she both sees her lover's paleness and her enemy's injury; she is looked at by the spirit and hears his voice. The ghost implores her to observe his wound (the literal lesion on his body and the metaphorical one in his 'heart') and clarifies that he is still 'faithful and submissive' towards her, in spite of her 'cruelties' (V.iv.55-59). Like Hermia's, Cleomena's dream is a powerful on-stage bodily experience and incarnates *real* facts she is not aware of. In his essay *On Dreams*, Thomas Browne writes that dreams 'intimately tell us ourselves': suitably, Cleomena's dream has a very intimate quality, deals with her private concerns, and attempts to amend her still erroneous sight - her inability to view Clemanthis and Thersander as the same person (*On Dreams*:400). In this sense, the princess' dream differs from the (genuine or contrived) oneiric encounters of Sly, the lovers, Titania, Bottom, or Segismundo. Indeed, Cleomena's vision is wholly spontaneous, while those characters' dreams are the manufacture of a male, dominant figure manipulating their eyes. Cleomena's dream mainly expresses her soul's inner torment. Nevertheless, it also has a more communal peculiarity, in that it points to the future resolution of the political conflict: the love Cleomena feels for Thersander (Clemanthis) will put an end to their peoples' antagonism. The dream confirms

what the spectators already know and immediately precedes Cleomena's achievement of understanding.

What happens after the dream proves its veracity. When Lysander foresees that Clemanthis' spirit will haunt Cleomena after Thersander's death, the princess comments in an aside to the audience: 'to send the Spirit of Clemanthis to me - / how this agrees with my sad dream!' (V.iv.84-85).<sup>69</sup> Afterwards, Pimante clarifies that Artabazes' men, and not Thersander, killed Amintas/Clemanthis: Cleomena hence realizes why Clemanthis' 'generous Spirit [...] pleaded for the Prince' within her dream space (V.iv.94-95). Finally, Cleomena enters Thersander's tent and sees him 'in a night-gown sitting on a couch'; the prince's 'feminine' attire draws attention to his own body as the object of scopical pleasure and contrasts with his previous martial boldness. A more 'feminine' Cleomena weeps while describing the past incidents ('Love and my Revenge made me a Souldier'), whereas Thersander kneels before her and professes he is happy to know she still loves Clemanthis (V.iv.134).<sup>70</sup> At last Cleomena's dream becomes *reality* and she sees Clemanthis within Thersander's body. She concretely tests the physical sameness of the two men, as she recognizes Clemanthis' 'Voice' and holds him 'fast' (V.iv.139-143). Even so, Cleomena likens her experience to 'enchantment' and is sure her eyes 'beheld' Clemanthis dead (V.iv.150-151).

Cleomena's incredulity emphasises the dream motif with its seeming/being features. Dressed as Clemanthis, Amintas did *really* look like him: this resemblance induced Cleomena's mistake and the nearly tragic phases of *The Young King*. Various *genuine* episodes within the performance have presented pretence as reality, while Cleomena's 'idle' dream has actually displayed the truth about Thersander.<sup>71</sup> Dreams have set in motion the Cleomena/Thersander relationship, as in dreams and in the dreamy grove the two heirs first *viewed* each other accurately. While at court or on the battlefield the prince and the princess have repeatedly misinterpreted each other, Cleomena's final dream *perceptibly* uncovers her interpretative error about Thersander. In the royal palace or the military camp Cleomena has continually defied traditional gender norms. However, only

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<sup>69</sup> Although Cleomena recognises in Lysander Clemanthis' page and he tells her he has always served the same master, she still does not grasp the truth about her adversary.

<sup>70</sup> Thersander thought Cleomena had stopped loving him after knowing he was Clemanthis ('was't then a secret to my Cleomena, / that her Clemanthis was the Prince of Scythia? / I still believ'd that was his onely crime') (V.iv.146-148).

<sup>71</sup> As Lewcock observes, Cleomena's optical failure may be 'a comic allegory of what had been happening in real life where during the hysteria surrounding the Popish Plot many people from the king downwards had been 'in the dark' about who was plotting what with whom' (Lewcock 1996:82).

within her dreams she has prevailed over class impositions (by loving her subject Clemanthis) and racial hatred (by loving the Scythian Thersander). Her dreams have visualised 'ideas much more bright and conquering' than *reality*, in that they have encouraged Cleomena to abandon the elitist and racist ideas of her upbringing. Dreams have made possible the reconciliation of Clemanthis and Thersander; in Browne's words, they have enabled Cleomena to 'more sensibly understand' herself and her desires (*On Dreams*:400).

### **III: Dreams as the site of critique of the nobleness of male supremacy.**

This last section focuses on *The Young King's* second main plot, the one more closely resembling Segismundo's story in *Life Is a Dream*. Behn shapes Orsames' socio-political training by means of (made-up) dreams; as long as his fate is uncertain (i.e. his mother has not decided whether to restore him or not), his tutor Geron makes him believe that the various surreal happenings are but dreams. These dreams display Orsames' (imperfect) maturing and, I argue, circuitously cast doubt on his fittingness for government and on his 'natural' nobleness.<sup>72</sup>

The Orsames plot visibly differs from the Cleomena and Thersander story. Maguire defines as 'divided' the Restoration tragicomedies that use two plots to depict 'divided kings', the supreme Charles I and his less than perfect son Charles II (Maguire 1992:11). Divided tragicomedy features two rather independent actions, two dissimilar psychological states, two disparate 'kinds of kingship':

The public and official upper plot (the body politic) [...] magically evokes the entertainments of his [Charles I's] court – love and honour debates, for example, Platonic love, and inserted masques and masque-elements. The private and unofficial lower plot (the body natural) describes the gregarious and social Charles II [...]  
(Maguire 1992:144)

*The Young King* fits into this paradigm of divided tragicomedy: the Cleomena strand (Caroline and heroic) stages extra-ordinary characters who value honour above all and platonically profess love for each other, though (innocuous) physical contact between them

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<sup>72</sup> Like Segismundo, Orsames has been locked up in a castle/prison since his birth because 'the Decrees of Heaven' predicted his reign would be short and bloody (II.iv.26). Like Segismundo, Orsames is put on the throne for one day, fails the test, and is sent back to the prison, where he believes all he lived was but a dream. In both plays, the Polish and the Dacian subjects champion their young kings ('we will have a King: [...] we have thought of a King, and therefore we will have one') (IV.v.135-136).

sporadically appears. In contrast, the Orsames plot (Carolean and mundane) handles an imprudent and would-be immoral king who chiefly treasures his own physical pleasure. Notwithstanding the presence of a king, the Orsames story is the lower component of *The Young King*, whereas his sister Cleomena powerfully incarnates a 'masculine' sovereign who provides for his people. Obviously, Orsames cannot perform on the battleground because of his mother's diktat; all the same, the audience sees Cleomena fight against her enemy and decline any political compromise till the very end.<sup>73</sup> The subjects' craving for a king would have probably restored Orsames in any case. Even so, in *The Young King* it is Cleomena who renounces her position and orders Vallentio to reinstate Orsames. Her resolution juxtaposes her own idyllic incarnation of sovereignty to 'the practical need for a king', as represented by her brother's return to power (Maguire 1992:11).

The play's second act moves to 'a castle or prison on the sea' and introduces the audience to a dreamlike scenario in which a lute plays. Orsames enters 'with his arms across looking melancholy', while his tutor Geron (the equivalent of Calderón's Clotaldo) follows him with the lute in his hands. The young king's first words underscore his discontent with the philosophy his teacher has imparted ('I, to my self could an Idea frame, / of man, in much more excellence') and his predisposition towards dominion (II.i.20-21). Had he been 'Nature', Orsames would have created men 'with mighty Souls' who would have had rule 'o'er the lesser world, / a sort of men with low submissive Souls' (II.i.28-34). In addition, Orsames is vexed by the thought of his mortality ('thou and I, / [...] must unregarded fall') and laments his captive condition ('why did my Soul take habitation here, / [...] in this dull unactive piece of Earth!') (II.i.52-60). To respond to the youth's disappointment, Geron stimulates him to think about the 'future bliss' he will obtain 'by patient suffering *here*' (II.i.57-66). Nonetheless, Orsames appears to reject his tutor's philosophy ('I'll hear no more of your Philosophie') and to be 'weary of' his own life (II.i.73-77). As Geron explains, the young king seems to have become 'too wise to be impos'd upon' (II.i.78). Orsames' situation may remind Restoration audiences of Charles II's and his brother James' past exile, whereas the tragicomic opening may forecast his future

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<sup>73</sup> *The Young King's* masque-like movement shows two diachronic, alternating threads: Cleomena and Thersander meet Orsames just before the end of the last act. If one sees the Queen's behaviour as an example of despotism and 'unnatural motherhood', the Cleomena plot may be regarded as the antimasque (Owen 1996b:19). The Orsames strand may be judged as the main masque, the one (inevitably) running towards the re-establishment of 'natural' 'male' rule. However, I think that the significance of Cleomena's 'unnatural' femininity somehow reduces the criticism of the Queen's conduct and of female rule. The Orsames story could also be seen as the antimasque part of Behn's play: it moderately presents 'a world of disorder or vice', but in the end it itself puts an end to the preceding chaos (Orgel 1975:40).

rehabilitation – in Maguire’s words, the topic of ‘joy reached through grief’ (Maguire 1992:14).<sup>74</sup> Yet the play’s aristocratic ideology does not stop Behn from criticising (if only subtly) the monarchy: the depiction of Orsames as ‘too wise’ ironically struggles with the inexperience he will show in subsequent moments.

Left alone by Geron, Orsames ‘lies down on the ground’ and is soon stunned by the arrival of Urania (who has been authorized entrance into the castle to meet her captive lover Amintas). Orsames hears a ‘noise’ (Urania’s voice) and rises; the young woman starts screaming ‘Amintas’ and Orsames, surprised by the ‘sweetness’ of her voice, looks at her and then ‘runs fiercely to her’ (II.i.92 and II.i.94). Because he has never met a woman before, the young king does not know how to name what he sees (‘ha – what charming thing art thou?’) and the strange encounter astonishes his senses:

ORSAMES: Oh Gods! it speaks, and smiles, and acts like me! / It is a man, a wonderous lovely man! / whom Nature made to please me / - Fair thing, pray speak again: / Thy Voice has Musick in’t [...] / Speak on, thou harmony to every Sense, / ravish *my Ear as well as sight and touch*.

URANIA: Surely he’ s mad [aside] – nay, Sir, you must not touch me. [...] Alas, I am a woman.

ORSAMES: A Woman! what’s that? [...] What things are these, that rise and fall so often? / [touches her breasts] [...] Sure thou hast other wonders yet unseen, / [...] Can you instruct me what I am to do? / Undress, and let me lead thee to my Bed. (II.i.100-143, emphasis added)

Urania (and the actress performing her) stands attractively in front of Orsames (and the spectators): unlike Cleomena’s and Thersander’s reciprocal gazing in the grove, Orsames exerts a typically ‘masculine’ gaze on a vulnerable and pleasant ‘female’ object. Orsames at first labels Urania as a ‘thing’, a material entity able to generate physical gratification. Subsequently, he realises that that ‘thing’ behaves as he does – it speaks, smiles, and acts – and terms her ‘a man’. Probably, the erroneous tag (‘man’) both stirs the audience’s laughter and evokes the theatrical device of cross-dressing: women disguised as men deceive on- and off-stage people about their *actual* gender identity. Orsames’ mistaken categorization tangibly illustrates his ignorance of the world, yet it also indicates that gender distinctions are more constructed than ‘natural’. Orsames wishes to make the most of this enjoyable experience and invites the peculiar creature to give further delight to his

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<sup>74</sup> Orsames’ comments about creation might call to mind the contemporary practice of colonialism, as the young king seems to fantasize ‘about having slaves’ (Altaba-Artal 1999:40).

hearing, sight and touch.<sup>75</sup> Unaware of Orsames' untested past, Urania thinks he is crazy and tries to recommend proper manners – for example, the young king should not touch her.<sup>76</sup> In contrast, the audience knows of Orsames' rawness and possibly expects him to behave as he does.<sup>77</sup> Urania christens herself 'woman' and underlines the distress linked to her status: since she is not the 'Deity' Orsames thinks she is, she fears the man facing her (i.e. his rape threat) and tries to leave the room (II.i.120). In spite of Urania's aloofness, the young king continues his sensual exploration of the woman's body. In fact, he touches her breasts (wonderful 'things' he contemplates for the first time) and guesses she hides other marvels beneath her clothes ('these gay things') (II.i.136). Orsames is 'apprehensive' to investigate the whole of Urania's body: notwithstanding her resistance, he 'goes to take her in', 'struggles with her', enjoys the bodily collision, and in the end 'takes her in his arms to carry her off' (II.i.139). The Orsames/Urania clash resembles the swordfight between Thersander and Cleomena on the battleground: Behn stages gender interaction in terms of a belligerent, concrete combat between a man and a woman. In the castle Orsames and Urania enact the 'war' solely by means of their bodies and, inevitably, he proves to be stronger than her.

Orsames' apprehension to know Urania might recall Theseus' words about the lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: lovers who have 'such shaping fantasies that apprehend / more than cool reason ever comprehends' (V.i.5-6). According to Skantze, the Shakespearean apprehension/comprehension dyads put forward 'a parable of learning by the senses' (Skantze 2003:1). Apprehension is 'a sensuously participatory phenomenon', a mode of 'sensuous knowing' that takes place in and around 'a performed, peopled experience'; comprehension is 'intellectual learning' achieved by 'pouring over a comprehensible text' (Skantze 2003:1-2). Orsames begins his performance by expressing his dismissal of Geron's philosophy (cold comprehension). Immediately after, Urania's hyper-sensual, moving shape – unwillingly but perhaps inevitably – stimulates him to learn through his senses. Because his tutor and the castle are the only reality he has faced so

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<sup>75</sup> Meeting Rosaura in the tower, Segismundo has a reaction similar to Orsames' and seems to become addicted to the woman's phenomenal presence. Nevertheless, as Loftis points out, Behn stages a more 'frank if unwitting sexual response' (Loftis 1973:137).

<sup>76</sup> Initially, Urania's admonishment seems to work, as Orsames 'retires and bows'. Afterwards, however, he does not listen to her reprimands and shows that his physical strength can easily subdue her.

<sup>77</sup> Again, the impropriety of the scene may be reminiscent of Charles II's and James' often reprehensible conduct: as Todd reasons, the figure of Orsames may serve to criticise Charles' and James' 'stunted education in exile' (Todd 1996b:5). In contrast, in *Sometimes Dreams Come True* Joseph's moral integrity strikingly differs from King Philip IV's and his subjects'.

far, Urania embodies a new, mysterious world accessible via his sight, hearing and touch. To answer his urgent eagerness to pin down Urania, Orsames employs his own imagination: 'I have a Garden compass'd round with Sea, / which ev'ry day shall send fresh Beauties forth, / to make thee Wreaths to crown thy softer Temples'; his elegiac language likens her breasts to 'Waves, blown gently up by swelling Winds' (II.i.127-134). Yet his 'apprehensive' body mostly conveys a sense of appalling trepidation, an ominous anxiety which Urania mirrors back through her own dread. The spectacle of Urania's body principally trains Orsames' physical superiority: the scene, both amusing and disturbing, shows that his 'masculine' power can easily get hold of that pleasant 'thing' (Urania).<sup>78</sup> The novelty Urania brings in Orsames' sensorial sphere parallels the advent of actresses on Restoration stages ('This is the prettiest play I e'er was at', says Orsames): female performers added to the splendour of the productions and became objects of visual - and at times more than visual - male consumption (II.i.154).

The second, alien encounter Orsames lives in the castle is with Amintas, Urania's lover. Hearing 'a womans voice', Amintas enters the stage 'in fetters' (he is a war prisoner) and 'snatches Urania'; Orsames looks at him with awe, 'strikes him', and fights with him (II.i.157).<sup>79</sup> Drawn by the noise, Geron too arrives: shocked by the sight of 'a woman', he asks Urania to leave, 'for *here*' (both on- and off-stage) there is 'no safety' for her sex (II.i.162-164). Amintas' alluring presence turns Orsames' heterosexual longing for Urania into homosexual attraction. In *The Young King* male bodies appeal to the sight of men and women alike, a fact that challenges the 'naturalness' of customary heterosexual relationships:

ORSAMES: What art thou?

AMINTAS: That which I seem to be.

ORSAMES: Then thou'rt a God; for till I saw a woman, / I never saw a thing so fine as thou: [...]

AMINTAS: It is the King - I know it by his Innocence and Ignorance - [aside]

ORSAMES: Sure I could live a year with looking on thee (II.i.166-174)

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<sup>78</sup> Orsames openly verbalizes his controlling desire for Urania and his sexual inexperience: 'I will hold thee - thus, between my Arms, / - I'll see thee sleep, and wonder at thy form, / - then wake thee to be gazing on thy Eyes, / - and something more - but yet I know not what' (II.i.145-148).

<sup>79</sup> The motif of real and metaphorical 'fetters' recurs often throughout the play. Importantly, Urania 'takes off' Amintas' 'chains' in Orsames' castle (Cleomena has given her permission to do so) and tells him he 'must only wear Loves Fetters *now*' (II.ii.48). While Amintas re-joins the fighting, Urania returns to a more passive role: she will wait for him 'at the Druids Cell' (II.ii.53).

Once more, Orsames needs to classify the 'things' he sees; yet in performance these things - despite what Amintas says - often are not what they appear. The audience does not need Amintas' aside to identify Orsames, but his words again underscore the young king's (and James') ingenuousness. This same candour allows Geron to mislead Orsames' previously sturdy physical perceptions: when the young king asks where 'the woman' is, the tutor denies her existence ('I saw none such') and pretends not to understand what Orsames means (II.i.180).<sup>80</sup> Amintas leaves the room almost unnoticed and Geron, determined to 'delude' Orsames, does so by equating Urania to a dream:

GERON: no Humane being can get entrance here: / [...] – what Airy Vision has  
possess'd your fancy? [...]  
ORSAMES: Ha! an Airy Vision! – oh but it cannot be; / by all that's good, 'twas *real  
Flesh and Bloud*.  
GERON: And are you sure you were awake?  
ORSAMES: As thou art now. [...] here it was, *a solid living thing*: [...]  
GERON: I heard you talk [...] / and found you struggling on the ground alone: [...]  
ORSAMES: 'Tis so – I grant you that it was a Vision - / how strong is Fancy! (II.i.195-  
216, emphasis added)

At first, the young king tries to dispute Geron's argument by underlining the *phenomenal* nature of the *dream* (Urania's performance on stage). The insistence on Urania's solidity evokes the life/dream and life/theatre paradoxes analysed in Shakespeare's and Calderón's plays: dream and performance *look* and *feel like* reality (and actually, they occur for real) and may fool the discernment of dreamers and spectators alike. Notwithstanding the vividness of Orsames' memories, Geron gradually manages to make Orsames doubt of his capacity to discriminate between waking and sleeping.<sup>81</sup> The young king seems to accept the possibility that Urania was a dream, yet he recounts the *actuality* of the vision: 'the musick of its words' and her 'fair Hand' that left 'sweet remains of warmth' on his 'Lips' (II.i.217-222). Like Segismundo's, Orsames' dramatic development heavily depends on the oneiric visions he experiences throughout the performance: unlike

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<sup>80</sup> The servants in *The Taming of the Shrew's* Induction also negate the existence of the hostess and present her as an apparition within Sly's dreams. In *Life Is a Dream* Clotaldo orders Rosaura (and Clarín) to leave Segismundo's tower: the prince laments his loss, but does not initially discuss whether Rosaura was a dream or not.

<sup>81</sup> Like the Lord, Petruccio, Oberon and Basilio, Geron is a powerful male figure who seems to determine what is real and what is not; nonetheless, the audience knows that Urania's image was not a mere dream.

Segismundo, however, Orsames does not employ them to reflect on metaphysical questions.<sup>82</sup>

Urania's and Amintas' dreamlike apparitions and disappearances in the castle force Orsames to deal with his (untried) gender self. In contrast, the trial the Queen organises at court should verify the young king's aptitude to reign.<sup>83</sup> The third act starts with the stage's curtain 'let down' and then 'drawn up': the movement discovers Orsames 'seated on a Throne asleep', dressed with 'royal robes', the crown and sceptre 'lying by on a table'. Courtiers 'richly drest' and a 'multitude of lights' enliven both sides of the stage; the Queen, Olympia and other characters are discovered 'above' (probably upstage, behind the proscenium divide). 'Soft Musick' plays (an otherworldly element that often accompanies Orsames), while the young king 'wakes by degrees' and looks around and at himself 'with wonder'. Orsames' immediate reaction to the court spectacle highlights his propensity towards unlimited power ('Gods! what am I? / - or, is there any other God but I?') (III.i.1-2).<sup>84</sup> Orsames promptly wears the crown Geron gives him, 'walks about', and wonders about the 'things' (people) he sees (III.i.16-17). When the Queen kneels before him, the young king 'snatches her up' and articulates his sexual desire for her: 'by my great self it is another woman, / which I have burnt with a desire of seeing: / - begone, and leave us here alone together; / I've something to impart to this fair thing' (III.i.25-28). Despite Geron's and the Queen's reproaches ('this Woman was / not made by Heaven – for you'), Orsames wishes to exploit his divine-like status ('by that Power I may do anything') and to apply 'a new Philosophy inspired by Nature' to his own mother's body (III.i.44-45, 48 and 32). At court as in his prison, the sight of women rouses Orsames' senses and makes him forget Geron's brainy precepts. Possibly, his earthy comments provide the performance with humorous touches: as soon as he is told that his mother gave him life, he states he wants to pay her back 'such kind returns'; when Olympia and

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<sup>82</sup> The ending of the scene points at the initial interpretation Orsames gives his (feigned) dreams. Whereas Geron encourages him not to wish for 'shapes divine' as Urania's ('the greatest torment of the mind'), Orsames believes the 'Gods themselves' prompt him to sin. In his opinion, he would have never been guilty, had he not seen Urania: her beauty seems therefore to be held responsible for the rise of male unlicensed lust.

<sup>83</sup> Unlike Calderón's Basilio, the Queen rejects any accusation of despotism and wants to see whether his son has 'Virtue fit to wear his Fathers Crown' (II.iv.41).

<sup>84</sup> Geron confirms the early modern notion of monarchy as divine-like: 'your Frowns destroy, and when you smile you bless; / at every nod, the whole Creation bows, / [...] their Lives are yours, [...] / but that you may the more resemble Heaven, / you should be merciful and bountiful' (III.i.7-13). As Maguire clarifies, Stuart mythographers assign 'the human and divine natures of Christ to the king's two bodies and to Charles I and Charles II': the king's body natural represents Christ's suffering humanity, his body politic stands for his divine authority (Maguire 1992:144).

other women enter, he cries 'ha, more Women!' and thanks 'Nature' for having 'furnish'd' him 'with store' (III.i.43 and 54-55).<sup>85</sup> The young king's appetite for women alludes to Charles II's and his brother's licentiousness and dramatizes accepted taboos – incest, for instance – as contrived impositions. I believe the dreamlike background of the whole story tolerates the staging of such uncomfortable issues. Because they regard the king, the play's concerns are all the more disturbing; yet its exotic locale and the dream motif distance *The Young King* safely enough from the audience's everyday context. It may be, as Owen proposes, that Behn exposes Charles' and James' misconduct as the consequence of 'their respective exiles at the hands of an ungrateful and misguided nation' (Owen 1996b:19). Nonetheless, I think that Orsames' figure primarily personifies the seeming/being discrepancy and the rapacity of male sexual desire. Orsames *appears* royal, as Urania and Olympia assert when they first see him: for instance, the former says that 'he looks above the common rate of men' (II.i.97). In spite of his regal appearance, for most of his on-stage performance the young king's central interest is his longing for charming female 'things'. His allegedly innate majesty is a fabrication of his subjects' hunger for a male sovereign; his disreputable behaviour towards women does not suit his noble birth.

Orsames' lack of socio-political understanding dominates the second part of his court *dream*. His is a hierarchical society with a strict code of conduct, a firm system whose regulations he fails to respect: enthralled by Olympia's beauty, Orsames kneels to her, but she underscores the unsuitability of his gesture ('I am your Slave, you must not kneel to me') (III.i.63).<sup>86</sup> When Olympia's 'greater power' compels him to take off his crown, put it on her, and sit on the throne together with her, Pimante and Artabazes rebuke his behaviour ('that Throne she was not born to') (III.i.102). Like Segismundo, Orsames does not want his dream space to be crossed by the expectations of those around him and threatens his opponents with death. Though the spectacular aspect of his *dream* increases

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<sup>85</sup> Browne argues that 'there is surely a neerer *apprehension* of any thing that delights us in our dreames, than in our waked senses' (Browne 1643:83-84, emphasis added). Orsames' behaviour at court is similar to Sly's in the Lord's house and to Segismundo's in his father's palace: the three *dreamers* manifest their sexual desire for women or openly threaten women with rape. Whereas the commoner Sly accepts his wife's advice to postpone their sexual intercourse, the royal Segismundo and Orsames exhibit a more aggressive and uncontrollable lust.

<sup>86</sup> The Queen's court, like Basilio's in *Life Is a Dream*, is a theatre in which everybody must perform his/her part appropriately. Orsames' intercourse with Olympia resembles that he had with Urania and his mother: he objectifies Olympia ('who tells me *what* she is?') and repeatedly 'gazes on' her (III.i.60). Olympia unadventurously names herself 'a Maid', 'a Woman' and 'a Virgin'; Orsames appears to appreciate this last definition a lot ('I did believe that thou wert something more') (III.i.62-70 and 71). Olympia's conventional gender identity strongly differs from Cleomena's.

through the staging of a masked dance and a banquet, Orsames continues to focus on the sensual enjoyment Olympia's sight gives him: for instance, his gazing on her eyes is 'some Celestial Food' (III.i.114). Because the *dream* is man-made, the people around Orsames can bring it to an end. Indeed, he begins to drink the poisoned wine Olympia offers him, his eyes 'grow heavy in the play', and he falls asleep after having affirmed his desire to dream again:

Is it not Sleep? – Sure Kings do never sleep; / [...] but I must – and lose this lovely object: / grant, oh ye Gods, that I may find it in a Dream (III.i.143-149)

In all probability, his past, vanished *dream* of Urania in the castle sets in motion his re-education process at court: Orsames knows that he will lose Olympia's mesmerizing view by falling asleep and hopes he may live similar sensations within another dream. He possibly suspects that his domineering attitude towards Urania caused her evaporation and thus cautiously modifies his performance in front of Olympia: the scene where he briefly shares the throne with her shows the audience a daring image of personal and political gender parity. Geron optimistically suggests that Orsames 'can be tam'd by Love and Beauty' (III.i.158). However, the court *dream* has vividly exposed the king's sexual lust and despotic character; it may also imply that Orsames, like Segismundo, conveniently begins to alter his behaviour in order to enjoy the advantages of his status in an apparently blameless way.<sup>87</sup>

Orsames reappears on stage in the fourth act and manifests his disappointment to Geron. He verbalises the phenomenology of his own sleeping: every time he is asleep, his 'active Soul' keeps feeling and his 'divertive Fancy' seizes him (IV.iii.20-24). In spite of the intensity of his last oneiric vision, he 'wak'd' to discover that 'all was but an airy Dream' (IV.iii.26-27). Like Hermia, Bottom and Segismundo, Orsames puts his *dream* experience into words and stresses its sensory quality:

Methought I saw the Firmament divide, / and all the Clouds, like Curtains, drawn aside / [...] in Jove's illustrious Throne I only sate, / [...] the brightest Stars in all Heav'ns Canopie / were chosen out to make a Crown for me; / [...] the World was mine, and Thousands such as thou / still as I mov'd low to the Earth did bow; / [...] almighty Woman at my feet did bow, / [...] but one among the rest (for there were store) / [...] did unking me [...] / though I onely do relate a Dream, / my *torments* here would make it

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<sup>87</sup> Despite Orsames' improving manners and Geron's comment, the Queen fears her son 'is a Tyrant in his nature'; she orders that he be taken back to the castle, in order to 'continue to impose upon him' (III.i.157-161).

*real* seem. (IV.iii.30-63, emphasis added)

The detailed depiction compares Orsames' restoration *dream* to a magnificent performance visible after the curtains' opening. Surreal elements adorn the event (the 'lesser Gods' revered him, he had the 'Thunder' in his hands) and emphasise the prodigious 'nature' of kingship (IV.iii.37-45). The presence of women especially electrifies the young king's imagination and is described through Petrarchan stereotypes: Olympia deprived him of power and her 'Looks were Law' for him (IV.iii.58). The emotional and physical impact of the *dream* still affects him and makes the occurrence seem *real* – indeed, his dream did *actually* take place. His dreamy fancies 'make a strange impression' on Orsames; he esteems them above Geron's philosophy and resolves that he 'will no longer be impos'd upon' and will 'follow all the Dictates' of his 'Reason' (IV.iii.67-68 and 70-71). Through his court *dream*, Calderón's Segismundo *apparently* recognizes the 'to do good' religious precept and the vanity of human things. In contrast, Orsames primarily learns to trust his bodily perceptions ('every thing I see instructs my Reason') and is eager to test them: for instance, he amusingly asks Geron to clarify 'by what strange devices' nature creates human beings (IV.iii.93 and 73).

Thanks to Cleomena's command, Geron can tell Orsames the truth about his rank. As the third scene of the final act begins, the young king discloses his incredulity ('am I indeed a King? / And is there such a thing as fair Olympia?') and for a moment touches on the epistemological problem of distinguishing waking from sleeping:

ORSAMES: But Geron, art thou sure we do not dream?  
GERON: Then life it self's a Dream (V.iii.1-2 and 21-22)

Unlike Segismundo, however, Orsames does not equate his life to a brief dream within which he may perform well or less well before God's eyes. His oneiric incidents (Olympia's sight in particular) correct his reprehensible social conduct; still, they mainly champion a materialistic philosophy of the senses, rather than a (ostensibly) sceptical perspective. When Vallentio and a rabble of citizens break into the castle, Orsames enjoys watching their worship and hearing their acclaim. For example, a citizen says: 'let me see a little, I never saw a King all days of my life'; at the scene's closure all shout: 'Vive le Roy, Vive le Roy' (V.iii.33-34 and 73).<sup>88</sup> Importantly, Vallentio gives Orsames a sword, an actual and

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<sup>88</sup> As Todd remarks, in this scene Behn 'may have recalled her own experience on first seeing King Charles after the Restoration' (Todd 1996a:430). Vallentio offers Orsames the crown 'that long has

symbolic weapon that perfects his untrained maleness. The Colonel explains that eventual stains on Orsames' sword are the ornaments 'dy'd in the blood of those that were [his] *Enemies*': probably, the young king will use it to 'injure' both male and female antagonists (V.iii.60, emphasis added). Notwithstanding their celebratory tone, the last moments of *The Young King* continue to accentuate Orsames' ambivalent characterisation.<sup>89</sup> He meets Cleomena for the first time and praises her as a (gendered) object of optical pleasure ('this is the kindest woman I e're saw') (V.iv.188). He doubts Olympia's realness ('sure 'tis an airy vision') and ambiguously promises her a sword ('a Sword I'll give thee, [...] / whence thou shalt shoot a thousand gilded Arrows') (V.iv.191 and 203-204). He 'femininely' weeps when his mother asks for forgiveness and once more fears that everything may be but a dream ('Oh Geron, still if this should prove a Dream!') (V.iv.231).<sup>90</sup> He is happy to receive 'Laws' from the Scythian King (his previous opponent) and impulsively rewards Vallentio with a wife (Cleomena's maid, Semiris) (V.iv.259).<sup>91</sup>

To conclude, in *The Young King* dreams assist the reflection on issues of both private and public nature. Cleomena's dreams assemble an alternative space in which class and race boundaries can be disregarded in favour of love, at least temporarily. In particular, the princess' last dream visually merges Clemanthis (the 'feminine' lover) with Thersander (the 'masculine' warrior) and amends her previously wrong *viewpoint*. Cleomena's dream is a site of (visual) comprehension and vitally aids the development of the princess' awareness of herself and of others. Clearly Cleomena's oneiric visions also have a public dimension (above all, with regard to her wedding to the heir of a hostile nation). However, Orsames' (pretended) dreams openly address the political problem of the royal succession and own a more palpable communal aspect than Cleomena's. Surely the *dreams* Orsames has gone through have altered his attitude: he fears to lose what the *dreams* enclose and

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waited for this great support': yet he also warns the young king that 'it is not safe / depending on a fickle multitude / whom Interest and not Reason renders just' (V.iii.41-48). As in the prologue, Behn implies that the citizens' seemingly sensible concerns about the monarch (about James II, for instance) are actually motivated by personal interests. For Owen, Behn's 'anti-Exclusion message' depicts Orsames' political incompetence mainly as the result of his long exile (Owen 1996a:167).

<sup>89</sup> Urania ('maskt'), Amintas, shepherds and shepherdesses 'with pipes or wind-musick' join the other characters in the final scene and perform a dance. The dreamlike atmosphere is enhanced by the discovery that Amintas is still alive, whereas Thersander thought Artabazes' men had killed him.

<sup>90</sup> The Queen finally admits her own fault: she describes herself as a 'wretched Mother' and repents 'her superstitious error' (V.iv.193 and 224).

<sup>91</sup> As Hughes points out, Behn stages 'rituals of victory involving the exchange of women' and stresses the fact that sexual hierarchies spring from 'violence and physical power' (Hughes 2001:17).

gradually learns the etiquette.<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, the two dreams Orsames experiences put on public view his political incompetence and sexual voracity. Orsames' dream visions display his *actual* learning by the senses in a humorous way; yet they also raise major questions about the arbitrariness of gender hierarchies and the ferociousness of male sexual desire. Cleomena's final return to a standard 'femininity' does not erase the memory of her political and martial prowess; her extra-ordinariness possibly suggests that she would make a better monarch than her brother. Likewise, Orsames' formal refinement and his (inescapable) restoration to the throne do not remove the reservations about his fittingness for kingship. *The Young King's* epilogue conveniently wishes that wit, mirth, music and love may for ever 'keep the Golden Age within our Woods and Plains'; Behn is careful to avoid possible censorships and proposes 'a message of quietism' (Epilogue:40-42 and Owen 1996a:75). Nevertheless, the *tangible* dreams have intensely exposed the defectiveness of the young king's reinstatement into power and may still be flashing before the audience's eyes.

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<sup>92</sup> For instance, at the play's close he refrains from physical contact and prays Olympia to 'instruct' him; she advises him to kneel to the Queen.

## Conclusion

Recent studies of early modern English and Spanish oneiric culture - for instance, Julián Acebrón Ruiz's *Sueño y Ensueños* (2004), the essays collected in *Reading the Early Modern Dream* (2008) and Carole Levin's *Dreaming the English Renaissance* (2008) - have analysed the dreams of various sources (poems, plays, diaries, letters, chronicle histories, political and religious pamphlets) and have importantly acknowledged that dreams 'inform us in new ways about a historical period' (Levin 2008:7). In a similar way, this study has thought about the socio-political, ethical and religious preoccupations the selected theatrical dreams act out on stage. On the other hand, it has also built on such previous works in three crucial ways: 1) by proposing phenomenology as a new and valuable instrument for the investigation of on-stage dreams; 2) by bringing to life the phenomenal attributes that make dreams tangible in performance; and, 3) by proving that the selected plays, through the enactment of dreams, fluctuate between casting doubt on and complying with their society's dominant ideology. My comparative approach (seldom adopted in other studies of the subject) has shown that, via the performance of dreams, analogous disputes concerning status and gender hierarchies are debated within the English and Spanish playhouses. The focus on the historical dimension and on the sensory *realness* of theatrical dreams has also demonstrated that dreams are not merely narrative tools. In contrast, it has verified that on-stage dreams forcefully personify controversies regarding power acquisition and preservation in front of their (socially-mixed) spectators.

The first part of chapter 1 has described the historical and theatrical milieus of Tudor and Stuart London and Habsburg Madrid and has called attention to the similar circumstances within which the case studies function: among others, the gradual transition from feudalism to capitalism, (imperfect) absolutism and imperialism; the commercial nature of the public theatres; the socially mixed audiences; the existence of anti-theatrical polemics; and, the discussions in relation to the presence of transvestite boys in England and female actors in Spain. These conditions possibly justify the socio-cultural polyphony the two dramas often voice (through the presence, for instance, of low-status characters or foreigners) and their common interest in questions of nationality, social position and honour. The common ground shared by English and Spanish early modern theatre confirms that a historical and cultural comparative method can disclose fresh perspectives on the better-known element

(the two Shakespearean comedies in this case) and bring alive the less familiar counterpart (Calderón's plays and Behn's tragicomedy).

In its second half, the first chapter has reflected on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century dream theories and has thus contextualized the subject matter of my thesis. In early modern times, dreams can be credited to 'divine inspiration, demonic mockery, or melancholy induced by poor diet': consequently, their interpretation is often thorny and their value debatable (Wiseman 2008:2). Similarly, my case studies oscillate subtly between regarding dreams as 'a bubbling scum or froth of the fancy' or stressing that 'we are somewhat more than our selves in our sleepes, and the slumber of the body seemes to bee but the waking of the soule' (Nashe 1594:153 and Browne 1643:84). The historicizing of dreams has proved that they instigate cultural interest and disagreement in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For that reason, I have argued that the selected plays take advantage of the equivocal status of dreams: the dreams make possible the convincing dramatization of troubling issues, but they can also opportunely vanish towards the end of the performance. In other words, in performance the dreams *seem* to be reality and put on view, for instance, the abuse of power by socially powerful characters. The plays' resolutions, however, erase the dreams and their disturbing content and underscore a supposedly natural socio-political harmony.<sup>1</sup>

The thesis has analysed two romantic/farcical comedies (*The Taming of the Shrew*, 1592-94 and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1595-96), a philosophical play (*Life Is a Dream*, 1636), a religious play (*Sometimes Dreams Come True*, 1670) and a tragicomedy (*The Young King*, 1679). In the end, each of these works reaches the ideological premises of its own dramatic genre: overall, the two Shakespearean comedies close by showing a patriarchal society which *appears* to preside over the nuptial agreements legally. Calderón's *Life Is a Dream* concludes with the (Catholic) celebration of the *obrar bien* ('to do good') principle and the affirmation of the vanity of human things; his *auto sacramental* culminates with the spectacular authentication of the Eucharistic mystery. Behn's *The Young King* fittingly terminates with the restoration of an 'appropriate' monarchy and the return to its age's conventional gender roles. Nevertheless, the (*real* and fabricated) dreams within the different plots have questioned the absolute validation of the established

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<sup>1</sup> In contrast to what happens in the other case studies, the conclusion of *Sometimes Dreams Come True* (studied in chapter 5) amplifies the on-stage presence of dreams and embodies the Eucharistic mystery through them. Yet, paradoxically, the nature of these dreams as mere dreams has to be refuted: the final dreams Dream stages have become true, or, better, they *are* the (religious) truth.

contemporary ideology(ies). The closures of the plays at issue 'represent a return to order, but a restoration with loose ends': whether the dreams have been put out of sight or are still perceptible, the conclusions may not fully succeed in offering utopian hope or defending the existing socio-political order (Hart 1996b:91).

The second chapter has elucidated my phenomenological methodology, looked at ideas about the senses in early modern England and Spain and articulated the generic (i.e. ideological) requirements of my case studies. Unlike previous formalist or psychoanalytic analyses of literary dreams, my thesis has concentrated on the bodily qualities of the on-stage dreams and on the ways they (plausibly) take place in the theatres of early modern London and Madrid. Through phenomenology, I have regarded the on-stage dream (and the performance) as *actual experience* that resembles reality; accordingly, reality itself may be a dream: i.e., a sensory, fictional construction within which established status and gender hierarchies *look* natural and legitimate, but are not. The seemingly ephemeral duration and effectiveness of (dramatic) dreams might moderate their thought-provoking potential: the oneiric episodes at issue could be seen as inconsequential 'airy nothing'. Indeed, the endings of my case studies hide from view the dreams' more worrying aspects (for example, their intense exposition of misogynistic practices, power misuse and ideological indoctrination) and satisfy their genre commitments. Nonetheless, my phenomenological reading has disclosed the theatrical dreams under discussion as tangible happenings that the on-stage characters (and possibly the off-stage spectators) live perceptibly. As such, dreams cannot be easily dismissed at the end of the performance; their manufacture of the period's 'cultural anxieties' cannot be entirely covered up by the final return to the norm (Levin 2008:160).

In the third chapter, the scrutiny of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has demonstrated the ambiguity of their deceptively joyful and unilateral finales. Presumably, the spectator of the former is throughout unsure whether the Katherina plot is Sly's dream or not; he/she may also be perplexed by the characters' continuing adoption of dissimilar perspectives. Within the dream frame, I have suggested, it is not easy to decide whether Petruchio is a greedy opportunist or a sort of moralistic philosopher and whether Katherina finally pretends or not to have been tamed by him. Thanks to the Induction and the dreamlike experiences of Katherina in Petruchio's house, the muscularly misogynistic conclusion could be much more undecided than it looks. The oneiric frame and features hence complicate a trustworthy reading of the performance: if the performance is Sly's dream, it may not be taken for *real*. If it is not Sly's dream, the

spectators might anyway mistrust the rather surreal transformation of Katherina from a shrew into a 'model' wife. Through the dream context, the action portrays extra-ordinary characters and situations (among others, a woman and a man who seem extremely ill-tempered and nonconforming) and puts on view the (unsettling) methods the prevailing ideology employs to preserve its power. Inside the supposed dream, Petruchio can be unashamedly patriarchal: his (and his society's) disturbing habits of repression of female defiance vividly come to light. The assumed dream, however, has shown that truth is a (male) creation: (Petruchio's) male authority translates what *seems* true (Katherina's rage) into its opposite (her apparent desirability); as a result, in the last scene Katherina could be fashioning a *reality* (her very touchable submission) that, like a dream, is an extremely convincing illusion.

In *The Taming of the Shrew* as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the characters holding authority (mainly the Lord, Petruchio and Oberon) literally shape the sight of socially inferior characters. The dream experience is the threatening instrument the prevailing ideology employs to satisfy its own socio-political needs. The exposure via dreams of male authoritarianism could make the audience aware of other mystifying strategies used by the leading social class: by gradually compelling the subordinate characters to acquire a new (literal and metaphorical) viewpoint on themselves and their society, the dreamlike circumstances also allude to the coercive nature of the spectators' own community.<sup>2</sup> For the most part, Oberon utilizes a (made-up) dream experience to direct the behaviour of the lovers (socially lower than him and Theseus) and of Titania. Supposedly, Oberon wants the love juice to re-arrange the couples 'correctly' (Helena must have Demetrius' love); his intervention, however, openly shows the two women's (far from unrealistic) suffering because of male infidelity. When the dream experience is over, the four lovers appear to be matched properly: yet Egeus' patriarchal right over his daughter is overcome by a greater male power (Theseus'), and Demetrius' love for Helena depends on Oberon's will. Furthermore, Oberon has punished Titania's defiant conduct by disabling her sight to see the degradation of her love affair with Bottom; he finally re-obtains her submission and the changeling boy. In spite of the blissful closure, Hermia's and Helena's silence during the artisans' (tragicomic) performance, together with Hippolyta's presence, point to the cruel manipulation endured in the woods and to the potentially tragic reality (for women) of love

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<sup>2</sup> As Hall remarks in *Anxious Pleasures*, within the comic jokes and laughter 'the ideology stands revealed, even if momentarily, as unnecessary, burdensome, and sometimes at least, simply false' (Hall 1995:21).

and marriage. Far from being innocuous, the forest dream has plainly displayed what the theatregoers' society usually hides from full view.

Though Shakespeare himself and a few of his contemporaries dramatize the dream act and motif in other plays, I believe the examination of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has proved particularly beneficial for my subsequent analysis of two of Calderón's works. Notwithstanding the different historical and religious contexts, the two Shakespearean comedies (with their focus on predominantly domestic issues of gender relationships) and the Calderonian ones (with their consideration of more overtly public questions of political and religious authority) exploit dreams and dreamlike episodes to illustrate devices of rule maintenance and strategies of resistance to that rule. Apart from validating my comparative approach, the reading of these case studies in parallel has underscored that the two theatrical cultures voice both patriarchal and rival discourses: the two Shakespearean comedies and *Life Is a Dream*, for instance, similarly cast doubt on the legitimacy of what husbands, fathers and kings do; though only temporarily, they make public the social plight of women and commoners.

The focus on dreams has also allowed the further exploration of the two dramas' interest in 'the communal experience of the carnival tradition' (Cañadas 2005:39). Like carnival, dramatic dreams have allowed the characters to live a temporary period of *seeming* invalidation of habitual norms; crucially, they have briefly but vividly unveiled the falseness of the allegedly 'natural' dominant ideology. In *Life Is a Dream*, the palace dream reveals to on- and off-stage spectators that King Basilio has secretly tyrannised over his son for years; hence, the dream suggests that Segismundo's own despotism is an ordinary rather than a deviant behaviour. The dream is a tool Basilio uses in order to alter his son's moral perspective: though certainly functional (and perhaps laudable), Segismundo's ethical conversion (like Katherina's) may look more enforced than spontaneous. It surely is politically convenient for him, as through it (and despite the civil war) it seems that the prince gains the crown only after his father's consent. Paradoxically, the dream palace and its consequences at once endorse and contradict the life/dream belief: life might be a transient dream, yet its oneiric shape has let the audience see that safeguarding or securing power is fundamental for King Basilio and Prince Segismundo. Within the palace *dream*, moreover, Segismundo has visibly manifested his violent sexual longing for both Estrella and Rosaura. At the closure, he opportunely resolves to marry the former and to save the latter's honour: the return to order conceals, but does not totally erase, the falsity of the prince's supposedly inborn nobility (previously uncovered by the dream).

The importance of religious drama in Spain throughout the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, and its opposite disappearance in early modern England, has offered an interesting element of contrast between the two theatrical milieus and has encouraged me to investigate a little-known dramatic genre, the Spanish *auto sacramental*. Calderón's *auto* about the story of Joseph and his brothers functions, in Franco Moretti's words, 'as the perennial re-enactment of roles prescribed for all eternity': this means that its audience already knows how the performance will end, but not in what ways it will unfold (Moretti 1988:57). The modalities *Sometimes Dreams Come True* uses are the spectacular manufacturing of *actual* dreams and the presence of a character named Dream on stage. Like Sly, Bottom and Segismundo, Joseph is a deprived man who ascends the social hierarchy thanks to his dreams. However, God Himself has shown the oneiric visions to Joseph and the Jew's political and spiritual elevation will be eternal. Regardless of his comic disposition, Shakespeare's Bottom lives an unworldly experience which to some extent resembles that of Joseph within the *auto sacramental*. When he awakens from the dream, Bottom borrows (and amends) the words of St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. His words (like Joseph's and Dream's words and actions in *Sometimes Dreams Come True*) evoke the wisdom of God present in a 'mystery'. The 'mystery' – Shakespeare's dreamlike comedy and Calderón's dream-laden religious play – distinguishes the despicable behaviours and values of secular communities (as represented by Theseus, Joseph's brothers and, possibly, off-stage monarchs and subjects) from the spiritual acumen of those who 'humble themselves before a transcendent source of power and love' (Bottom and Joseph) (Montrose 1998:233). Certainly Calderón's *auto* serves as an impressive vehicle of Catholic propaganda, but its own hyper-theatrical quality also points to a concrete interrogation of common political and religious conducts. On the one hand, the repeated recourse to eye- and ear-catching dreams presents faith more as material entertainment than as mystical, inner conviction: it appears that the contemporary Counter-Reformation audience needs to see and hear the truth of the dogma to confirm its own devotion. On the other hand, Joseph's central importance throughout the performance recommends the primacy of spiritual insight and virtue over the temporal force of wealth and power.

Moving back to the English context, the last chapter of this thesis has further defamiliarised the contextual framework within which I have analysed the rather canonical dramatic works of Shakespeare and (to a lesser degree) Calderón. In chapter 6, indeed, I have examined a little-studied tragicomedy by a female dramatist (whose writing

profession caused controversy in Restoration England) and I have provided a further example of the ability of dramatic dreams to unmask (if only momentarily) their time's ideological distortions. Furthermore, the last chapter has argued that the significance of the seventeenth-century (theatrical) dream especially lies in the dream's capability to talk about the self, to be 'an inward eye' and 'a route to self-understanding' (Wiseman 2008:3). Issues of gender hierarchy and appropriateness - probably central also to Behn's own private and professional life - powerfully feature within the dreamscape of *The Young King*: a woman like Cleomena can challenge male political superiority, expose the violent foundation of that superiority, and attempt to break away from it. Her dreams of Clemanthis/Thersander, however, mainly address her inability to know her lover/enemy correctly. In fact, her oneiric visions of him put on display what she does not see in waking life and thus adjust her lack of self-knowledge. Ironically, also the young king's dream experiences (like Segismundo's) bring to light his inadequacy on both a private and a public level. Thanks to the dreams in the tower and at court, on- and off-stage audiences repeatedly observe Orsames' discomfiting lust and daunting naivety; they may realise that his allegedly innate superiority is simply a (politically opportune) misrepresentation. As in the case studies of chapters 3, 4 and 5, *The Young King's* generic and ideological requirements succeed at the performance's closure. Recalling Shakespeare's *Hippolyta* and Calderón's *Rosaura*, Cleomena renounces her socio-political ambitions and quietly marries the man who (albeit unintentionally) has nearly killed her on the battleground. In spite of his cultural and political incompetence, Orsames becomes the new ruler and welcomes the long-awaited return to the 'natural' order. All the same, the final restoration of tidiness and the repression of socio-political anxieties may have not wholly wiped out the carnivalesque anarchy previously operated by the lifelike dreams.

In conclusion, the individual, detailed analysis of my case studies has corroborated the premises I have presented in the Introduction and in the second, methodological chapter. Putting the English and Spanish theatrical contexts and works side by side has allowed me to demonstrate that both dramas deal with comparable preoccupations about rank and gender and, in my case studies, give vent to those concerns through dream enactment. The already vigorous tradition of political criticism of the Shakespearean corpus has prompted me to ask similar research questions about two Calderonian plays and has uncovered the (often neglected) competing voices also present in early modern Spanish drama. On the other hand, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* have been placed inside an unusual theoretical structure, in that their association with

Calderón's and Behn's works has, I hope, made my reading less customary. In fact, I have proposed that the enactment of dreams within *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* vibrantly discloses (seemingly negligible) systems for inflicting and sanctioning patriarchal and monarchical power. The phenomenological investigation of on-stage dreams and their historicizing have profitably assisted my two key research tasks: 1) bringing to life the sensory properties of theatrical dreams, phenomenology has verified that the on-stage oneiric episodes *feel like* life and are not, therefore, marginal incidents; and, 2) the contextualisation of the dreams has confirmed that their staging joins in contemporary debates about the position of women in society, the use and exploitation of authority by fathers, husbands and sovereigns, and the (often improper) production and reception of political and religious propaganda.<sup>3</sup>

My thesis has attested that on-stage dreams matter very much to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century audiences and that, consequently, they give one a deeper insight into the private and communal apprehensions of those vanished communities. Through my phenomenological and historical analysis, I have proved that dreams, far from being a mere 'froth of the fancy', attain a significant cultural weight within the playhouses of early modern London and Madrid. Theatrical dreams, in fact, intensely embody existent issues of (personal and public) command and effectively interrogate accepted practices of power enforcement and endorsement.

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<sup>3</sup> Rather than focusing, as I have done, on dramatic dreams which (broadly speaking) dramatize the sudden rise to power of a male figure, future work may look at other kinds of oneiric visions. For instance, one may consider the specific gender implications of dreams lived by female characters only (whether actually experienced on stage or verbally reported), or the socio-political and sexual desires of (male, female and androgynous) dreamers who do not achieve a greater authority during or subsequent to their own dream experiences.

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