

Constancy and the Performance of Masculinity
in Lope de Vega's *El perro del hortelano*
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In ten dazzling verses, Diana's secretary, Teodoro, in Lope's *El perro del hortelano*, faults Diana for being--among other things--a fickle sunflower, a weathervane, the mouth of a river that flows in and out with the tides, a moon, an enchantment, a woman and a monster of change (11751-1766). The secretary's tirade would seem to establish an essentialist distinction between the inconstancy of women and the constancy of men. Yet, Teodoro endeavors to cross the gender divide, undergoing, as Tristán explains to Marcela, "una mudancita/que a las mujeres imita / Teodoro" [a little change, since Teodoro is imitating women] (1489-1491). Miming the very behavior that he criticizes, Teodoro changes more than once during the play, vacillating between his professed devotion to Marcela and the temptation to return Diana's romantic overtures.

Renaissance men were expected to exhibit constancy, which, while neither a theological virtue, a heavenly virtue nor a cardinal virtue, was enshrined among these by the Neostoics. The great Stoci philosopher, Seneca, was translated into Spanish as early as 1491, and Humanist Neostoic Justus Lipsius's *De Constantia* of 1583, had already reached Mexico by 1600. It was translated into Spanish by 1616 (Corbett 142-150).

Concurrently, however, inconstancy was being recast in more positive terms: as adaptability. Navigators, confounded by the difference between true and magnetic north, were obliged to disregard faulty sea-charts and steer by on-board measurement; Lope in the *Arte nuevo* abjured the rote parroting of classical precept in favor adapting to the changing tastes of *el vulgo*; advisors to the Crown embraced a Christianized model of Reason of State rather than hewing to rigid Scholastic models of decision-making.

Spanish *Comedia* anatomizes, deconstructs and refigures the stock figure of the constant man. Laurencio's selfishly motivated reversal of loyalty gains him reward in *La dama boba* just as Teodoro's resolve to abandoned resolve eventually pays off in *El perro del hortelano*. Don Juan Tenorio, condemned for repenting too late, nonetheless wins playgoers' hearts with his near-mythic adaptability to changing circumstance, while the Caballero de Olmedo's steadfast determination to trot home on a black night thick with portent comes off as obtuse and imprudent.

Teodoro's squeamish performance of adaptability in *El perro del hortelano* responds not only to Diana's increasingly violent changes of heart, but also to the challenge of remaining manly while relinquishing the masculine monopoly on constancy. The secretary's 'mudancita' represents an attempt to pry inconstancy from the jurisdiction of women and reconsecrate a feminine vice as a virtue for the new man of court. Three decades later, Gracián would grant adaptability a place of honor among the manly virtues exhorting his ideal male reader to follow the example of ships' pilots and: "Vivir a la ocasión. . . el sabio sabe que el norte de la prudencia consiste en portarse a la ocasión" (*Oráculo manual* Aforismo 288).

My talk will conclude by reflecting on the consequences of this analysis for staging the role of Teodoro in *El perro del hortelano*.