

La francesa Laura. The Discovery of a New Comedy from the Later Lope de Vega

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This is a translation of the article "La francesa Laura. El hallazgo de una nueva comedia del Lope de Vega último".

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Abstract

This article proposes the inclusion in Lope's repertoire of *La francesa Laura*, a comedia preserved in an anonymous manuscript of the BNE, never before related to the playwright. The investigation started thanks to the results of the process in the Transkribus and ETSO platforms, which pointed out the close relationship of the lexicon with the authentic plays of the Fénix. To these initial data, also significant to place it in the last phase of Lope's long career, we have added the results of the different analyzes that philology has proposed over time for the investigation of authorship in the theatre of the Golden Age, so in need of these clarifications: material bibliography, historical context, onomatology, versification, orthology, intertextuality. There will be no serious inconvenience in any of the examined aspects for not accepting the starting hypothesis as valid, and there will be strong support for elevating it to a thesis. We would be, then, in view of another demonstration of the important support that computer resources can provide to the studies of the aurisecular theatre.

Keywords: Lope de Vega; *La francesa Laura*; Attribution problems; Computer tools; Philological tools.

1. A case opened by digital means

Digital¹ resources prove to be powerful allies for the researcher of the Golden Age theater. Without them, it would have been much more difficult—perhaps impossible—for 'La francesa Laura' to have come to our attention as a piece to attribute to the repertoire of Lope de Vega, without any prior hint pointing towards his connection to it.

This discovery highlights the immense potential that modern technologies offer in assisting the study of the aurisecular theater by facilitating access and processing of vast amounts of data. Specifically, the secret that an overlooked anonymous manuscript has kept for centuries has been revealed thanks to the ability to utilize these new tools on a corpus as rich and intricate as the collection of ancient theatrical manuscripts at the National Library of Spain (Biblioteca Nacional de España). This collection consists of hundreds upon hundreds of copies, many with intricate handwriting and deteriorated materials, but in many cases, they are unique records of plays whose authorship often remains unattributed. In a way, this discovery, and others that may follow, is a result of the BNE's own policy to support research groups, including PROLOPE and PRHLT (Pattern Recognition and Human Language Technology Center, based at the Polytechnic University of Valencia). As a result—and thanks also to the momentum and merit of Ramón Valdés, the coordinator of the Lope project—came the decision to digitize all Golden Age theater manuscripts². From this partnership also emerged an exhibition held at the BNE titled 'Lope de Vega y el teatro del Siglo de Oro' (from November 2018 to March 2019), where the final section aimed to demonstrate the power of modern technologies in staging and studying this theater. Notably, two of the Digital Humanities projects that concluded the exhibition, the PRHLT (Spanish section of the European READ project under which Transkribus was developed) and ETSO: Estilometría applied to the Teatro del Siglo de Oro <https://etso.es/> (Cuéllar and Vega García-Luengos 2017-2022), have been the main catalysts in uncovering the new Lope work.

The work came to our attention through the standard procedures of the ETSO project, which aims to gather as many dramatic texts from the aurisecular period as possible for the purpose of applying stylometric authorship analyses. Among the BNE's manuscript collection was the digital document of the comedy 'La francesa Laura', which, as can be seen in the reproduction of the first page, does

¹This work has benefited from participation in the funded projects mentioned below, in the same order as their authors are listed: 1) *Sound and Meaning in Spanish Golden Age Literature* (FWF Austrian Science Fund 32563); 2) *Impresos sueltos del teatro antiguo español: base de datos integrada del teatro clásico español* (ISTAE), ref. PID2019-104045GA-C55 (MCIU/FEDER). We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for the assistance provided by Laura Fernández, Guillermo Gómez Sánchez-Ferrer, Mauricio Herrero, Simon Kroll, Enrico Di Pastena, Fernando Rodríguez-Gallego, and Ramón Valdés, as well as the anonymous evaluators.

²A query in the online catalog of the Biblioteca Digital Hispánica with the filters for "Teatro" as the subject, "Manuscrito" as the material type, and setting a time frame "1500-1750", resulted in 3012 texts (as of August 18, 2022).

not bear the playwright's name, and we found no clear clues to its authorship elsewhere in the work.

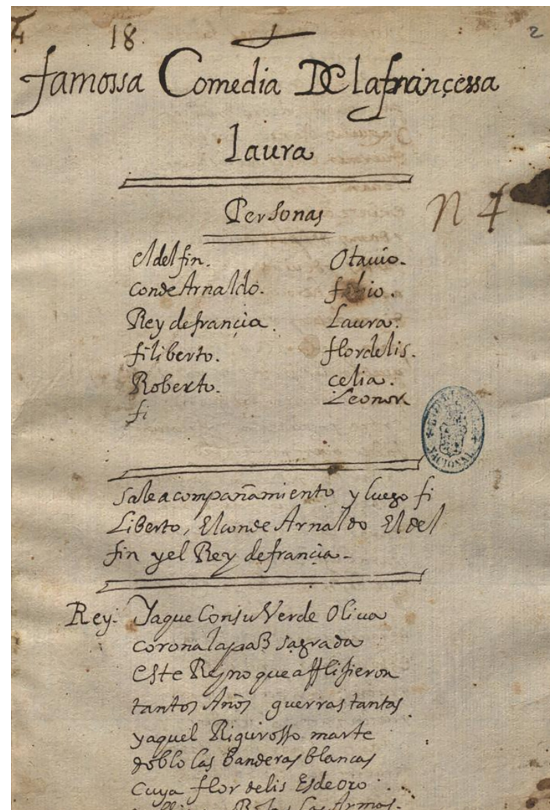


Figura 1. Portada del manuscrito de La francesa Laura. BNE, MSS/16946.

Like the rest of the manuscript series, we applied our standard automated transcription and modernization process. In recent years, thanks to the Transkribus tool, which uses Artificial Intelligence processes, and the models developed by Álvaro Cuéllar, now public for the community, it has become possible to transcribe and modernize Golden Age theater prints and manuscripts automatically. For our current work, the model used is called 'Spanish Golden Age Manuscripts (Spelling modernization) 1.0', trained on about three million words from the aurisecular theater, aiming to autonomously handle transcription and modernization. This model achieves accuracy rates around 90% per character, though this greatly depends on the scribe's handwriting and the document's condition. It's worth noting that these automatic transcription processes, for now, do not surpass the discerning eye of the philologist-paleographer in terms of the final result's quality. However, they are much faster in several respects: we can transcribe and modernize hundreds of documents in minutes, a task that would take months or years for a group of researchers. The resulting transcriptions will contain many

errors and issues, but they can still serve various purposes³, such as forming the base text for a subsequent careful edition, conducting searches, or processing with stylometric authorship analyses, as in our current situation. Studies like Eder's [2013] and our experience with computer tests suggest that an error rate in transcriptions doesn't greatly impact stylometric analyses, mainly because these typically rely on the most frequent words, which tend to be transcribed correctly. Let's look at an example of how the transcription and modernization of 'La francesa Laura' appeared on its third page:

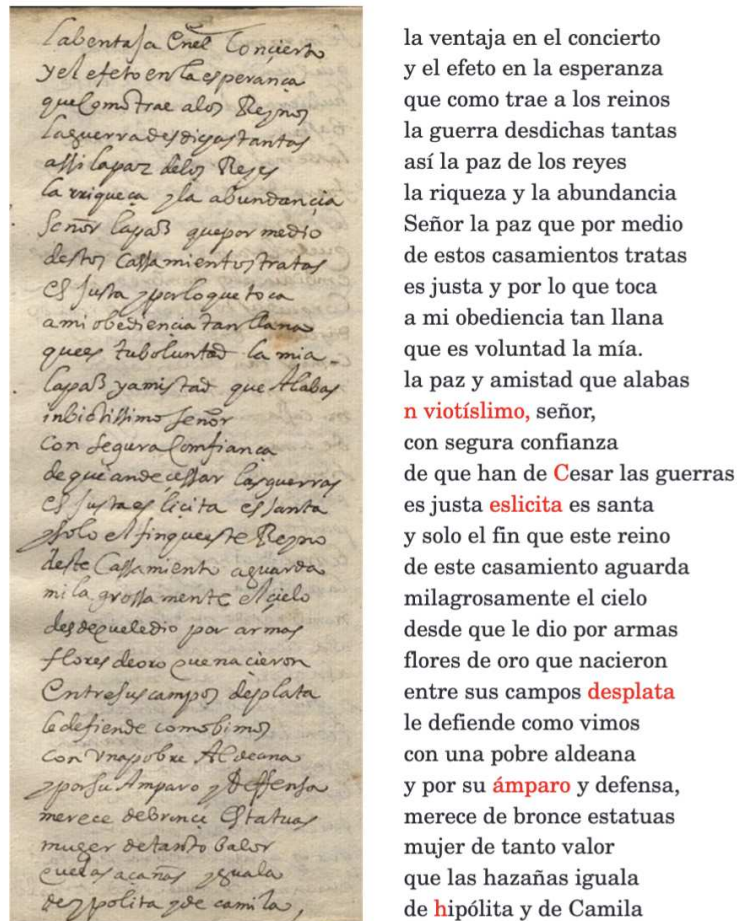


Figura 2. La francesa Laura (MSS/16946). Fol. 3r.

We verified that most of the verses have been transcribed correctly. Additionally, as the model has been trained to also modernize the text automatically, in

³We make available automatic transcriptions of prints and manuscripts for those who need them for their research; please email the authors.

the final result double letters like -ss- in "cassamiento" disappear, becoming "casamiento", and tildes are included where they should appear, as in "hipolita", which becomes "hipólita". Of course, we find errors when the scribe's handwriting is especially confusing or the word is very uncommon, as in "n viotísimo", which should have been "invictísimo". We also find issues with word separation, such as "eslicita" instead of "es lícita", "desplata" instead of "de plata"; various spelling errors, such as "ámparo" instead of "amparo", and even the addition of commas where they shouldn't be, like in ", señor,", likely in this case because the model thought it was addressing a vocative requiring them.

The text from this automatic transcription process then followed the usual course for the works we managed to gather in the project and was analyzed with stylometric tests. These tests, which will be explained in more detail below, can relate texts by their lexical usages. The results with the text from the automatic transcription, of which we've just seen an example for page three, were unexpected and astonishing: they related the work with Lope's repertoire with great clarity. Stylometry, therefore, acted as a detector pointing us to a potential work by Lope de Vega among the hundreds of manuscripts and printed texts we had managed to assemble. Given such a clear and unusual clue, we proceeded, as one would expect, to correct and prepare the work for a more rigorous analysis.

In recent years, stylometry has been used for the study of Golden Age theatre and to solidify Lope's production (García-Reidy 2019, Madroñal 2021, Vega García-Luengos 2021 and 2023). Through the comparison of lexical usages, we can relate works, which informs us about authorship and also seems to shed light on other aspects such as dating (Cuéllar 2023). The analyses carried out with the Stylo library (Eder, Rybicki, and Kestemont 2016) link the text of "La francesa Laura" with Lope de Vega. The choice of parameters in the tests for authorial detection does not seem especially relevant (Cuéllar in press). Those we typically use in ETSO (500 MFW, Classic Delta, 0% Culling), excluding some problematic words for automatic transcriptions, yield these results when asking, in a corpus of 2800 theatrical texts from about 350 playwrights, about the works with lexical usages closest to the already corrected and refined version of "La francesa Laura".

Position	Title	Author	Year	Distance
1 ^a	Castigo sin venganza, El	Lope de Vega	1631	0,6519
2 ^a	Más pueden celos que amor	Lope de Vega	1627	0,6750
3 ^a	Tellos de Meneses (Primera parte), Los	Lope de Vega	1620-28	0,6826
4 ^a	Gala del nadar es saber guardar la ropa	Lope de Vega	—	0,6871

Position	Title	Author	Year	Distance
5 ^a	Si no vieran las mujeres	Lope de Vega	1631-32	0,6897
6 ^a	Porfiando vence amor	Lope de Vega	1624-26	0,6977
7 ^a	Poder en el discreto, El	Lope de Vega	1623	0,7007
8 ^a	Obras son amores	Lope de Vega	1613-18	0,7011
9 ^a	Poder vencido y amor premiado, El	Lope de Vega	1614	0,7022
10 ^a	Llave de la honra, La	Lope de Vega	1614-19	0,7046
11 ^a	Servir a buenos, El	Lope de Vega	1620-25	0,7049
12 ^a	Del monte sale quien el monte quema	Lope de Vega	1627	0,7063
13 ^a	Porfiar hasta morir	Lope de Vega	1624-28	0,7097
14 ^a	Más valéis vos, Antona, que la corte toda	Lope de Vega	1620-23	0,7128
15 ^a	Locura por la honra, La	Lope de Vega	1610-12	0,7161
16 ^a	Desprecio agradecido, El	Lope de Vega	Hacia 1633	0,7186
17 ^a	Amar como se ha de amar	Lope de Vega	Prob. 1620-25	0,7221
18 ^a	Guardar y guardarse	Lope de Vega	1620-25	0,7239
19 ^a	Mayor virtud de un rey, La	Lope de Vega	1625-35	0,7244
20 ^a	Nunca mucho costó poco	Lope de Vega	Hacia 1625	0,7250
21 ^a	Hidalgos del aldea, Los	Lope de Vega	Prob. 1608-11	0,7253
22 ^a	Bizarrías de Belisa, Las	Lope de Vega	1634	0,7260
23 ^a	Cortesía de España, La	Lope de Vega	1608-12	0,7267
24 ^a	Saber puede dañar, El	Lope de Vega	1620-25	0,7330
25 ^a	Amor con vista	Lope de Vega	1626	0,7358

Position	Title	Author	Year	Distance
26 ^a	Sin secreto no hay amor	Lope de Vega	1626	0,7377
27 ^a	Lo cierto por lo dudoso	Lope de Vega	Prob. 1620-24	0,7378
28 ^a	Siempre ayuda la verdad	Lope de Vega ⁴	—	0,7407
29 ^a	Amor, pleito y desafío	Lope de Vega	1621	0,7412
30 ^a	Moza de cántaro, La	Lope de Vega	Prob. anterior a 1618	0,7414
31 ^a	Bella Aurora, La	Lope de Vega	Prob. 1620-25	0,7417
32 ^a	Quien más no puede	Lope de Vega	1616	0,7425
33 ^a	Estefanía la desdichada	Lope de Vega	1604	0,7447
34 ^a	Discordia en los casados, La	Lope de Vega	1611	0,7451
35 ^a	Yerros por amor, Los	Lope de Vega	1623-27	0,7456
36 ^a	Amar, servir y esperar	Lope de Vega	1624-35	0,7459
37 ^a	Lo que ha de ser	Lope de Vega	1624	0,7480
38 ^a	Portuguesa y dicha del forastero, La	Lope de Vega	1615-16	0,7487
39 ^a	Niña de plata, La	Lope de Vega	Prob. 1610-12	0,7492
40 ^a	Noche de San Juan, La	Lope de Vega	1631	0,7500
41 ^a	Galán de la Membrilla, El	Lope de Vega	1615	0,7503
42 ^a	Ventura sin buscalla, La	Lope de Vega	Prob. 1606-12	0,7514
43 ^a	Hombre de bien, El	Lope de Vega	1604-06	0,7525
44 ^a	Primera información, La	Lope de Vega	1620-25	0,7527
45 ^a	Palmerín de Oliva	Lope de Vega ⁵	—	0,7527

⁴For the attribution to Lope de Vega of *Siempre ayuda la verdad*, see García-Reidy [2019].

⁵In Vega García-Luengos [2023], a preview of the arguments supporting the collaborative writing between Lope de Vega and Pérez de Montalbán for *Palmerín de Oliva* is provided.

Position	Title	Author	Year	Distance
46 ^a	Por la puente, Juana	Lope de Vega	1624-25	0,7528
47 ^a	Laberinto de Creta, El	Lope de Vega	Prob. 1612-1615	0,7529
48 ^a	Tellos de Meneses (Segunda parte)	Lope de Vega	1625-30	0,7532
49 ^a	Prueba de los ingenios, La	Lope de Vega	Prob. 1612-13	0,7533
50 ^a	Esclava de su galán, La	Lope de Vega	Prob. 1626	0,7533

The 50 works with the closest lexical usages and, in fact, the first 150 —with some interference starting from rank 78—, correspond to Lope de Vega. This clear stylometric behavior is only found in confirmed works of the Phoenix (Vega García-Luengos 2021 and 2023). Although there's more of his production in the corpus than that of other playwrights, in no case can it influence the analyses in such a way. These relationships can also help us try to date the work, placing it in a late period of Lope de Vega's production.

On the other hand, machine learning tests developed by Álvaro Cuéllar for his thesis *Propuestas de autoría y datación en el teatro de Lope de Vega a la luz de la Inteligencia Artificial*, where he starts from a control experiment to classify works as written or not by Lope de Vega, and which achieves success rates above 99% with the SVM system and $\text{MFW} = 2500^6$, classifies the work as written by Lope de Vega, both in its entirety and by acts, and also assigns it to the playwright's final stage.

2. The Manuscript

Indeed, the information we had on *La francesa Laura* was scarce, and it was never linked to Lope de Vega. The title does not appear in the lists of Peregrino nor in the Fajardo Index [1716], but it does in that of Medel del Castillo [1735:46], as anonymous. It is listed under the same condition in the Catalog of La Barrera [1969:550], which refers to the manuscript of the Library of the Duke of Osuna e Infantado. Indeed, it was part of their vast collections (Rocamora 1882: n^o 597) and was acquired by the Spanish Ministry of Development in August 1884, as part of a set of 2,770 manuscripts from the ducal library, destined for the BNE, where it carries the signature MSS/16946.

It is listed in the Catalog of Paz y Mélia [1934:n^o 1460], which considers its handwriting from the 18th century. Today, the BNE's online registry suggests

⁶Commenting in detail on the experiment based on 1030 works (280 written by Lope and 750 not written by Lope) would take up too much space in this article. For a detailed explanation, refer to Cuéllar [2022].

its writing between 1601 and 1700?. It consists of 56 sheets, measuring 22 x 16 cm. In 2018 it was digitized and became part of the Hispanic Digital Library: <http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000216882>.

Three different hands are discernible in it, which we will call A, B, and C, each responsible for an act in the order we have named them: A (f. 2r-19v), B (f. 20r-37v), and C (f. 40r-56r). According to the expert opinion of Mauricio Herrero⁷, the three scripts are Spanish humanist bastards. Hand A is quite deliberate, with right-leaning letters, smoothly drawn, not overusing ligatures or nexuses, and tends to respect word separation. Hands B and C have faster scripts, with plenty of ligatures (in the case of C, they not only connect letters within a word but also words themselves). Both connect the descenders of letters like y, h, p, or q with the next letter using a parallel stroke that curves to the right and rises to join the following letter, which is typical of the Spanish bastard.

Regarding composition dates, Herrero believes that hand C places the writing in the last quarter of the 17th century, a chronology that can also fit hands A and B.

Even though what has reached us is a copy from several decades after the lost original, and there might be other intermediate texts between the two, the fact is that there are not many obvious errors, some of which cannot be ruled out as being from the author himself⁸.

Most of them are detected by the metric. The most striking are the three verses that are missing: two in adjacent quatrains (vv. 2230-2235) and another at the end of an octave (after v. 2347 or v. 2348). The meaning barely suffers from these omissions⁹. The copyist was distracted in this part of the job, since verse 2347 has problems with its meter, twelve syllables, and rhyme: "Los agravios claman y la sangre es honra". The error can be easily fixed by changing the order of the two clauses: "La sangre es honra y los agravios claman". A little above, in reference to the lady whom the interlocutor pines for, it reads: "aquí vive, aquí reina y aquí mata. / Cruel vive, injusta reina, y aquí mata" (vv. 2324-2325). Something has happened in this second verse making it doubly inappropriate to think that Lope wrote it: due to its hypermetric nature, since **the** playwright always uses "cruel" as a two-syllable word (as seen in v. 808)¹⁰; and because it falls into self-rhyme. Other verses with too many or too few syllables require relatively simple fixes that would also improve their meaning. Consider one with an excess of syllables a few verses before the aforementioned: "Ni fueron sombras

⁷We sincerely thank you for your advice on this section.

⁸As Morley says about Lope [1927:526]: "In the autographs, there are certain false verses and stanzas, undoubtedly. For this reason, it's essential not to pay too much attention to isolated phenomena, but to consider, through quantitative experiments, the overall results."

⁹We cannot know what that verse would say. Nor what would come at the end of a truncated verse: "Laura ¡Jesús, qué soledad, no me parece / que hay gente en todo el mundo! / Celia Hasta que vuelva [¿?] / te lo ha de parecer. / Laura Así enmudece...". It's a passage of *silvas*. Verse 727 is missing something that rhymes with -undo and completes the eleven-syllable meter.

¹⁰Poesse only records a monosyllabic case [1949:40].

ni recelo ni antojos" (v. 2321). It seems evident that the problem lies in the addition of "ni" before "recelo", treating it as an additional noun attracted by the other two in the verse preceded by the negative particle when it was actually a verb in the first person singular inserted as a parenthetical comment: "Ni fueron sombras —recelo— ni antojos". Moreover, had it been a noun in the original, it would logically have been pluralized. A case of lacking syllables is this: "Pues así, cuando en Francia" (v. 2045). It is hard to assume that Lope would make a dieresis in "cuando", or a hiatus in "cuando en". The explanation is that there was a copying error, detectable not just by metrics and orthology but also by meaning: the sentence would be more complete if instead of saying "quando" it said "quedando". Another case of lacking syllables: "que una noche inquietaba" (v. 1992). Lope does not typically make a dieresis in "inquietaba" since it involves the stressed syllable. It's most likely that there was an author's error, or rather a copying one, and the original intended to say: "que una noche le inquietaba", which also makes more sense. Another easy fix: "Y así es quien nunca es más" (v. 349). Rather than suggesting hiatuses which are not found in Lope's works, perhaps we should think a "más" is missing between "es" and "quien": this not only improves the meaning, but it appears it was written originally and then crossed out, seemingly without reason. Verses with too many or too few syllables can appear side by side and become correct when you transfer what one verse has in excess to the one that lacks: "delfín [...] / que no quiero en mi tristeza / más premio que veros. / laura Yo lo agradezco, pero no / si pasase vuestra alteza..." (vv. 1099-1102). The central verses of this quatrain do not rhyme, and besides, the first is lacking syllables and the second has too many. It seems clear that the solution is for the pronoun "yo" to be at the end of the first verse and not at the beginning of the second.

In conclusion, as can be deduced from the above list, which highlights the most significant, it's evident that the text, as we've received it, does not show severe problems that can be attributed to its transmission or, worse yet, to doubts about its authorship when considering other factors.

3. The plot of "La francesa Laura"

Act I

Scene I (vv. 1-192). The King of France addresses his courtiers expressing his joy over the peace established with England, ending many years of conflict. To seal this peace, he has arranged through letters with the English king the marriage of their children, the Dauphin and Princess Claudia. He now wishes for a qualified ambassador to travel to London to confirm the agreement. The Dauphin suggests Count Arnaldo, who has just married Laura, the daughter of the Duke of Brittany. When the king and the count leave to prepare the letters, Filiberto, a confidant of the Dauphin, reproaches him for not suggesting him as the ambassador. The Dauphin replies that his intent is to distance Arnaldo from his home so he can court his wife Laura, with whom he's infatuated. Filiberto

discourages him, citing the loyalty the newlywed has for her husband, but they decide to try to win her affection anyway.

Scene II (vv. 193-720). Laura and her cousin Flordelís talk about their romances. Flordelís describes her feelings for the Dauphin and how foolish her aspirations are, given the difference in their statuses. Laura recounts the happiness she's found in her marriage to the count. They are interrupted by Roberto, Arnaldo's servant, who informs them that his master must travel to England to finalize the wedding plans between Claudia and the Dauphin. The news shatters Flordelís's hopes. The count arrives expressing his sorrow at leaving and hears Laura's equally pained response. After the count departs, Laura asks Roberto to keep her updated on her husband's activities. The maid Celia announces the arrival of the Dauphin in a carriage, and Laura leaves so that Flordelís can be alone with him. He disillusiones her by admitting that his interest in her was only a cover for his feelings for Laura and asks her for help to pursue his desires. She retorts that she won't assist him. Otavio arrives, a servant of the count, but who was previously a soldier under Filiberto, the Dauphin's advisor. He is waiting for assistance to gain the king's favor. The prince gives him hope and asks to be shown his room in the count's house.

Scene III (vv. 721-962). Laura is conversing with her maid Celia about the pain of absence while she undresses to go to bed. Suddenly, Otavio, Filiberto, and the Dauphin appear, watching her. The Dauphin expresses his desire for her. Laura spots them, and the son of the King of France declares his passion for her, which she immediately rejects.

The visitors must hide as they hear the unexpected arrival of Count Arnaldo, who has decided to return that night with Roberto to spend it with his wife. Celia and Roberto exchange witty remarks once their masters have left the room. However, Laura returns, wanting to discuss with her maid what happened with the Dauphin. The Count enters with a sword and candle, surprised that his wife hasn't gone to bed. She deflects by expressing her jealousy of Flordelís and suggests that perhaps he returned for her.

Act II

Scene I (vv. 963-1305). The Dauphin and Filiberto discuss Laura's decision to lock herself away from her impassioned suitor during Count Arnaldo's absence. Her situation is even worse than when he was home. Filiberto proposes a plan to make the lady fall out of love with her husband and departs to carry it out. Despite Otavio's warning that his mistress won't receive him, the Dauphin decides to enter Laura's home. As he tries to force his way in, Flordelís confronts him. Laura also appears, deciding to admit him but only as far as courtesy allows. They exchange restrained yet purposeful phrases until Laura requests he leave. Once the Dauphin departs, Laura scolds her servant Otavio for allowing him inside, both this time and previously. Celia arrives with a supposed letter from Roberto, delivered by an Englishman who claims to have befriended the

count's servant in London. Laura reads about her husband's success with women at the English court and how he's fallen for a noble lady, even confessing to his servant his willingness to kill his wife to marry her. Outraged, Laura decides to head to Brittany to seek her family's protection, dismissing the Dauphin's advances as a means to revenge her husband, arguing that noble women's vices aren't excused by their husbands' mistakes.

Scene II (vv. 1306-1490). At the London court, the king praises Count Arnaldo for his demeanor and tournament successes, then inquires about the suitor for his daughter. The ambassador sings the Dauphin's praises. Once the king departs, the count speaks to Roberto about Laura's virtues, eventually admitting his jealousy after the situation he witnessed on the unexpected night of his return. Roberto consoles him, highlighting his wife's honesty and loyalty.

Scene III (vv. 1491-1568). Laura has arrived in London, accompanied by Celia and Albano. They discuss their ruse of heading to Brittany, when in fact their destination was the English capital to investigate the letter's claims. They plan to attend the frequent court parties in disguise.

Scene IV (vv. 1569-1644). In Paris, the Dauphin, with Filiberto, visits Laura's home. Flordelís informs him she's gone to Brittany after reading a letter. Distracted, the Dauphin blames Filiberto for writing that the count wished to kill Laura, as this has driven her away.

Scene V (vv. 1645-1922). In London, the count misses Laura, and Roberto reprimands his somber mood during the festivities held in his honor. The king, his daughter, and others arrive, and the party begins. Laura and Celia also attend in disguise, engaging in separate conversations with Arnaldo and Roberto. Posing as an English lady, Laura professes her love to him. He responds that he's married to Laura in France, whom he loves and vowed to return to as he left. She challenges him with rumors of his plans to kill his wife, to which he passionately counters that he'd rather die. Laura wants to test him further, but the king summons the count to relay Paris's agreement to the Dauphin and Claudia's marriage. Laura confides in Celia that she's confirmed her husband's faithfulness, the letter was a lie, and she wants to return to Paris.

Act III

Scene I (vv. 1923-2317). Flordelís is surprised to see Laura back, who explains her parents advised her to return. Roberto arrives, announcing Count Arnaldo's return and plans to spend the night with her, promising to see the king about his embassy in the morning. After initial pleasantries, Laura asks about his interactions with the women in London. However, she has to leave due to an announced visit. Otavio informs Arnaldo that Laura had supposedly gone to Brittany. When Celia returns, she plays along with the Brittany ruse. Laura also returns, upset about her husband's distant demeanor. He confesses his turmoil upon learning of her unauthorized trip to Brittany, which she denies. Once alone

with Roberto, the count expresses his anxiety and how he now understands his wife's strange behavior the night after he left.

Scene II (vv. 2318-2528). Filiberto informs the Dauphin that Laura has returned. They're outside her home when Arnaldo and Roberto arrive, spotting each other. The Dauphin accuses the count of prioritizing a visit to his home over seeing the king, hinting at an affair with Flordelís. Arnaldo responds, expecting the Dauphin to uphold his honor. The Dauphin is moved by the revelation and abandons his pursuit of Laura.

Scene III (vv. 2529-2854). Laura asks Roberto about the count's change from a loving suitor to a melancholic husband. Flordelís believes the reason lies in England, while Roberto promises to find out. When the count arrives, Roberto asks about his distance from Laura. Arnaldo sharply states she's dishonored him, and she must die. He entrusts Roberto to poison her water. Once Roberto leaves, Flordelís asks for Laura to see Arnaldo. When she begs for an explanation, he instructs her to drink her usual water to calm his anger, but she's already done so. He then recounts his anger due to her two-month absence while he was on his embassy. She confesses her trip to London and their conversation at the party.

He didn't believe her at first, but he has no choice but to accept it when she gives him irrefutable clues. Pain and astonishment take hold of him upon realizing that his innocent wife's death is inevitable. The Dauphin arrives with good news: the king wishes to honor them and has appointed them dukes of Amiens. Faced with their unexpected reaction, he asks for an explanation for their sadness. Count Arnaldo confesses that he has poisoned Laura. Just then, Roberto arrives, reporting that he couldn't do it because there were people around (in truth, he admits to himself that he couldn't kill an angel). The play ends amidst general rejoicing.

4. The title, historical references, and a timely moment for its writing

The new comedy draws our attention starting with its very title. A play with such a lively plot, with sensationalist elements at play, striking moments, and a background of relevant political matters, like peace between two powers, it's curious that it's named after the protagonist, preceded by her adjective.

Indeed, in Lope's vast repertoire is where the best justification for it could be found. If it belonged to him, it would be the third comedy with a similar title proposal, with the name of the lady as the nucleus and a single adjective either before or after: "Laura perseguida" (1594) and "La inocente Laura" (1604-1608)¹¹. In the group traditionally considered of doubtful origin is "El paraíso de Laura" (circa 1625), preserved in a manuscript from the Ilchester collection, dated 1680. Morley and Bruerton question its authorship by Lope, and stylometry

¹¹The dates accompanying the titles related to Lope come from Morley and Bruerton [1968].

does not support this attribution (Vega García-Luengos 2023). Antonio Restori introduced a work titled "La Laura", found in a manuscript from the Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli, which hasn't been echoed in the catalogs; in the opinion of the Italian Hispanist, it would belong to an author from "la scuola anteriore a Lope" [1899:426]. Other titles featuring the personal name corresponding to unlocated or unidentified works include "Los palacios de Laura", already listed in Medel as anonymous [1735:84], as in Barrera [1969:571] and Urzáiz, with reference to a handwritten catalog from the Biblioteca Menéndez Pelayo in Santander [2002:110]; and "Los enredos de Laura", performed by Pedro de Valdés in June 1614, which — according to Francisco San Román — "could be one of these three by Lope: 'Laura perseguida', 'El paraíso de Laura', and 'Florestas de amor or La inocente Laura'" [1935:lxvii].

The title might be explained as a nod to these other preserved Lauras. The highlighting of the "French" condition does not seem innocent, and it might have been the commercial hook of the name, even if today it seems insignificant. If the play is from the period suggested, relations with the neighboring country couldn't be more delicate. This specific mention must be trying to convey something. That Laura is French is also a rarity in Lope's repertoire. Of the 23 characters named this way in the distributions of the plays controlled by S. G. Morley and R. W. Tyler [1961], none of the characters who appear on stage are from that nation: the majority are Italian, seven to be exact, which is logical; but there are also those from Hungary, Greece, Germany, Egypt, or Bohemia. Only in "Los tres diamantes" is a French woman with that name mentioned.

What "La francesa Laura" tells us is an invented story, but like on many occasions in the New Comedy, it does not lack references to real history. From the French monarch's words that open the comedy, we can understand that "so many years of so many wars" are being left behind at that moment when peace with England has just been agreed upon. Those "many years" have been quantified to about a hundred when naming the conflict that pitted the two kingdoms against each other, the Hundred Years' War, although in reality, it was more than 116: from May 1337, when the French king Philip VI confiscates Gascony, to October 1453, when the victory of Charles VII's troops at the Battle of Castillon results in the recovery of Aquitaine, leaving only Calais under English control. The comedy would then have that year as a starting point, so the king speaking to us at that time would be Charles VII, although he is not identified as such, only being referred to as King. The crown prince, fundamental to the dramatic conflict, is also not identified and is only referred to as the Dauphin. In real history, this character is Louis of France, who will succeed his father as monarch in 1461 as Louis XI. The King of England, in his brief participation in the second act, will also not be called by the name of his counterpart in real history, Henry VI. Regarding the long Anglo-French conflict in that first speech of the comedy, one of its most relevant characters is mentioned, Joan of Arc, the Maid of Orleans, "that heroic Maid / worthy of everlasting fame" (vv. 19-20), whose intervention against the English was crucial for the coronation of Charles VII and for the direction the war was to take.

What "La francesa Laura" tells could have been perfectly set in another time and territory. Choosing France (and secondarily England) and highlighting it so conspicuously from the title, we believe, should not be considered the result of chance or whim, but rather something premeditated in connection with the situation that the Spanish crown was experiencing at that moment. Relations between the two monarchies during the Thirty Years' War had to be handled very carefully. Known are some cases that show how this situation could also impact theatrical life (Vega García-Luengos 2012).

The stylometric analysis, already discussed, and the metrical analysis, to be addressed later, not only support the candidacy of Lope as the author of the play but also suggest that it was written during a specific time frame. This conclusion is supported when considering the appropriate moment to mention France, England, and the interest in consolidating peace in the manner described. The truth is that the extended period of tensions and open hostilities known today as the Thirty Years' War makes this challenging. During one of its phases, France and Spain are particularly at odds over the dominion of Veltelina in Italy, a critical point in communication. However, the conflict eases, and Richelieu and Olivares sign the Treaty of Monzón (1626). France must focus on its battle against the Huguenots. Given England's support for them, Richelieu requests Spain to have its ships attack the coasts of both England and Holland. After the capture of La Rochelle, France can return to the Italian front and break the peace with Spain. The cause was the succession war of Mantua and Montferrat (1628-1632), initiated upon the death of Duke Vicencio Gonzaga without an heir. When the Duke of Nevers, an ally of the French, took command, the acting governor of Milan, Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, intent on occupying the duchy, besieged the town of Casale. The French monarch himself came to its aid, successfully lifting the siege in March 1629 and signing the Peace Treaty of Susa to his advantage. These events led to Don Gonzalo's fall from grace and subsequent trial. According to Abraham Madroñal [2021], Lope de Vega, in an attempt to vindicate the reputation of this brother of his lord, the Duke of Sessa, would write "Yo he hecho lo que he podido, Fortuna lo que ha querido," which is precisely the last play added to Lope's repertoire, and one that no one had previously heard of.

We believe that the brief period of 1627-1628, when France and Spain joined forces against the Protestants, is conducive to the writing of "La francesa Laura." In it, there's talk of signing peace with England, but the French king early on declares that this and the marriage between the Dauphin and the Infanta is possible because "me asegura / dura la amistad de España" (vv. 27-28). This doesn't align with the historical reality of the Hundred Years' War but does resonate with that phase of the Thirty Years' War. This wouldn't be the only play of Lope written at a time when it's possible to reflect a favorable view of France. According to Morley and Bruerton [1968:355-356], this would be the case for "Más pueden celos que amor," for which they suggest a date around 1627. Also, as per the same scholars [1968:470-471], it could have been the case with "La gala de nadar es saber guardar la ropa," which Ruth L. Kennedy believes

might be from el Fénix, and places its writing at a time of good Franco-Spanish relations. Although Morley and Bruerton see some issues with the attribution from a metrical standpoint, the stylometric analysis conducted in ETSO supports the play being from el Fénix (Vega García-Luengos 2023).

5. The names of the characters

None of the fourteen characters in "La francesa Laura" bear names foreign to Lope's casts. Some appear more frequently than others in his other plays¹²:

- Laura (in 23 plays): she is a noble lady in ten of them. Her nationalities vary (mostly Italian, but also Hungarian, Greek, German, Egyptian, Bohemian); interestingly, as mentioned earlier, none are French (only one is named in "Los tres diamantes").
- Arnaldo (in 24 plays): he's a count in nine of them. His nationalities vary, but there are indeed French ones. A Count Arnaldo of that nation appears in three of Lope's plays: "La batalla del honor," "La ocasión perdida," and "Los palacios de Galiana."
- Flordelís (in 3 plays): in all three cases, she is French and noble.
- Delfín (in 10 plays): obviously, all three are princes and French; but there are many other princes of different nationalities in Lope's theater.
- Filiberto (in 4 plays): of various ranks and nationalities. A French knight by this name is in "La francesilla."
- Roberto (in 28 plays): he holds the role of a servant in ten of them; in two, he is French. There's a French servant named Roberto in "Del monte sale."
- Octavio (in 52 plays): four of them are servants. One is French.
- Fabio (in 77 plays): In thirty-five instances, he's a servant. There's a French page named Fabio in "La locura por la honra."
- Celia (in 46 plays): she is a servant twelve times.
- Leonor (in 36 plays): in eight of them, she is a servant.
- Albano (in 22 plays): six of them are named as servants.

Also referenced are the three remaining characters with very limited roles, who are not called by their proper names but by their titles: the King of France, the King of England, and his daughter, the Infanta.

Considering both the stylometric and metrical analyses, and even the political situation, all point to this play being from the final phase of el Fénix's career, we've paid special attention to those written in his last fifteen years, from 1620

¹²The development of this section was primarily based on the work of Morley and Tyler [1961].

to his death in 1635: sixty in total are considered and analyzed by Morley and Bruerton [1968], and for forty-four of them, we have the character name information provided by Morley and Tyler [1961].

"La francesa Laura" aligns with Lope's naming practices during those years, even regarding the number of characters involved: fourteen is precisely the most recurring number, appearing in up to seven plays. Half of the analyzed plays have between thirteen and sixteen characters. In some of them, there are two or more characters with names from "La francesa Laura." "La corona de Hungría" (1623) takes the lead, with up to five matches: Arnaldo, Laura, Roberto, Fabio, and Leonor. While there's no room now to delve into the characterizations and behaviors of the characters, they too find echoes in Lope's plays. A case in point is one of the decisive plot twists. As we outlined in the summary, Count Arnaldo seeks to clear his honor from the infidelity he presumes in his wife Laura and orders her death by poisoning through his servant Roberto. However, in the end, Roberto is unable to end the life of an innocent and doesn't carry it out. Something very similar happens in "El abanillo" (circa 1615). The servant of Count Celio is also named Roberto, whom the count orders to poison the water his wife Estefanía drinks, while he intends to end the life of Don Félix, whom he believes to be her lover. But just as he's about to execute his plan, the misunderstanding that made Celio believe in his wife's infidelity is cleared up. When Estefanía appears, he asks if she drank the water given by Roberto, and her affirmative answer plunges him into despair, until the servant confesses he didn't put the poison in the drink, much to his master's relief.

6. The versification

Act	Stanzas	Sets	No. of verses
I	Romance á-a	1-118	118
	Silva	119-192	74
	Endecha hept.	193-308	116
	Redondillas	309-352	44
	Décimas	353-502	150
	Soneto	503-516	14
	Romance é-a	517-720	204
	Silva	721-771	51
	Redondillas	772-827	56
	Romance é-a	828-848	21
	Octavas	849-881	33
	Romance é-a	882-962	81
	Redondillas	963-1181	219
	Romance í-o	1182-1305	124
Silva	1306-1490	185	
II	Romance é-e	1491-1568	78
	Redondillas	1569-1644	76

Act	Stanzas	Sets	No. of verses
III	Romance é-o	1645-1698	54
	Redondillas	1699-1782	84
	Romance á-a	1783-1922	140
	Redondillas	1923-1994	72
	Romance é-a	1995-2088	94
	Romance á-a	2089-2134	46
	Silva	2135-2157	23
	Redondillas	2158-2259	102
	Romance á-o	2260-2317	58
	Octavas	2318-2348	31
	Décimas	2349-2528	180
	Romance é-o	2529-2592	64
	Octavas	2593-2632	40
	Soneto	2633-2646	14
	Romance é-e	2647-2664	18
	Décimas	2665-2704	40
Romance é-e	2705-2854	150	

The following table shows the absolute figures and percentages of the various stanzas, as well as the temporal ranges that Morley and Bruerton [1968:102-215] propose for the theater of Lope de Vega:

Stanzas	Sets	No. of verses	Percentages	Time frame
Romance	14	1250	43,80	1620-1635
Redondillas	7	653	22,88	1630-1635
Décimas	3	370	12,96	1620-1635
Silva	4	333	11,68	1627?-1635
Endecha	1	116	4,06	—
hept.				
Octavas	3	104	3,64	1588-1635
Sonetos	2	28	0,98	—
	34	2854	100,00	1630-1635

The metrics, therefore, substantially concur with what other analyzed factors suggest. It does so in relation to authorship, as the strophic structure fits within the practices of el Fénix in the last five years of his life. The only minor inconvenience is the low percentage of redondillas, suggesting a writing period after 1630, which does not fully align with the date we proposed based on historical opportunity criteria. If instead of 22.88%, it had reached 26%, it would correspond to a range between 1623-1630.

The dialogued sonnet of the first act deserves particular comment. The leading couple says goodbye, alternating their interventions:

practices is that the first two lines are distinctly parallel. That is, the second expresses almost the same as the previous one with a change in order. In "La fortuna merecida," the first four are parallel.

The dialogued sonnet from "La francesa Laura" thus adheres to the patterns of el Fénix. What fits less are the dates, since the latest comedy that presents it is "Al pasar el arroyo" (1616). However, Morley and Bruerton caution that from this "no conclusion can be drawn that is valid for the chronology", as this type of sonnets continues to be common in later non-dramatic works [1968:158].

7. Issues of Orthology

It should be noted as a significant orthological feature for deciding on authorship issues that the text does not present any Andalusianisms, neither in rhyming words, where their relevance for detecting the authorial mark is clearer, nor at any other point in its nearly three thousand verses¹³.

The treatment that *La francesa Laura* gives to diphthongs, diaeresis, synalephas, hiatus, etc., aligns with the practices identified in the *Fénix* by Morley [1927] and Poesse [1949]. As already pointed out, there are hypometric or hypermetric verses whose adjustment does not involve proposing hiatuses or diphthongs that Lope never or very rarely used; it suffices to consider that a particle is missing or in excess by mistake, or that the order has been changed. The same can be said for the single recorded instance of self-rhyme.

A detailed mention of cases will be left for the edition, where the reader can verify the text directly. For now, it's enough to say that there are around forty verses that present a syllabic structure which, according to current practices, would be considered hypometric or hypermetric. In other words, the treatment of vowel groups within words or of synalephas between words differs from current standards. Almost all of these instances have backing in Lope's recognized practices. We follow the scheme proposed by Morley, and supplemented by Poesse, for Lope's choices.

Regarding the combination of vowels within a word, in combinations of unstressed weak and strong vowels, of strong and unstressed weak vowels or of two strong vowels, there is always a diphthong in the stressed syllable. In tonic syllables, there's a wider range of responses. In the combination of an unstressed weak vowel with a strong vowel, there is a diphthong in "enviar" (v. 31) and "enviarle" (v. 598), although Lope also offers cases of diaeresis. According to Morley, it would be the only one of the verbs ending in "-iar" where there's hesitation [1927:529]. In *La francesa Laura*, there's a diaeresis with words that also behave this way in Lope's works, such as "afectuosa" (v. 258), "confiado" (vv. 2275 and 2642), "confianza" (v. 52), and others. There's always a diphthong in cases of a tonic strong vowel and unstressed weak vowel. And in combinations of two

¹³The Andalusianisms have cast doubt on some of the texts traditionally attributed to Lope. See Arjona [1956].

weak vowels, there's a diphthong in "descuido" (v. 2628), "fui" (v. 2732), "fuiste" (various verses); but diaeresis in "destruido" (v. 1263) and "juicio" (v. 1214). In the post-tonic syllable, we find synaeresis in words like "escribeos" (v. 1120) and "purpúrea" (v. 1369).

As for combinations of two strong vowels, or a strong unstressed and a weak stressed vowel, or a weak stressed and strong unstressed vowel, in a stressed syllable, there's synaeresis in "Cleopatra" (v. 68) and "poesía" (v. 190) (although there are also cases in Lope of "po-e-sí-a"). In a tonic syllable, with two strong vowels, and the first one accented, there's synaeresis in "tocaos" (v. 2210); with two strong vowels, and the second accented, it's bisyllabic in "reprehende" (v. 789). In the case of a stressed weak and unstressed strong vowel, it's bisyllabic in "etíope" (v. 1411).

Regarding the relationships between words, it's usual that the conjunction of the final vowel of one word with the beginning of the next merge in synalepha. However, sometimes a hiatus occurs, as in "ausente la que ama" (v. 148), such solution before the final rhythmic accent is documented in various examples by Lope (Poesse 1949:55). This is also the case in "Que este Otavio, con la ira" (v. 2248) (Morley 1927:534; Poesse 1949:58). In the verse "no hago al conde traición" (v. 1098), there's a hiatus before the aspirated "h" and the tonic vowel, as noted by Morley [1927:538] and Poesse [1949:66]. In short, from the point of view of Lope's known orthological practices, there's no reason to think that this text wasn't written by him.

8. Echoes of Lope in the Verses of La francesa Laura

We cannot dedicate the space required for a thorough contribution of ideas, dramatic resources, or expressions of the comedy that can be found in other works with confirmed attribution to the Fénix, so a selection of different points must be made, spread throughout the three acts, which allow for an idea of the dense network of correspondences¹⁴. Some of them also help to date the play, being consistent with the dates derived from other factors.

Let the first ten verses of the play serve as a significant testimony, spoken by the King of France, which he directs to his courtiers to communicate his intention for the Dauphin to marry the daughter of the King of England to confirm the peace reached after so many years of conflict:

¹⁴For this section, we have especially benefited from the full-text databases of TEXORO: Textos del Siglo de Oro (Cuéllar and Vega García-Luengos 2022), which allows searches in the 2800 dramatic works by 350 different authors currently contained in CETSO (as of August 26, 2022); Teatro Español del Siglo de Oro. TESO (Simón Palmer 1998), with 848 plays by sixteen writers; and the Corpus diacrónico del español (CORDE) (Royal Spanish Academy).

Ya que con su verde oliva
corona la paz sagrada
este reino que afligieron
tantos años guerras tantas,
y aquel riguroso Marte
dobló las banderas blancas

cuya[s] flordelises de oro
volvieron rojas las armas;
ya que los bridones fuertes
en verdes campos descansan... (vv. 1-10)

The monarch will still utter a few more subordinate sentences before unveiling his marriage proposal; but the ones transcribed are enough to show what was announced, without aiming to exhaust the connections, sticking only to the most obvious. The phrase "verde oliva" (v. 1) is present in up to 35 of the 2800 works controlled by TEXORO, of which thirteen would correspond to as many works by Lope. In connection with "paz" (v. 2) it is shown in this verse from *La madre de la mejor* (vv. 2608...2613): "Mira el sol de su cabeza, / y la luna de sus pies, / [...] / la paz en la verde oliva". The end of the war expressed through the image of peace crowned with olive is in *El valor de las mujeres* (vv. 355-358): "La guerra nace de la paz y donde / más sangriento furor la guerra enciende / nace la paz también, y coronada / de oliva, envaina la furiosa espada". The "paz sagrada" (v. 2), the cessation of hostilities, the mention of Mars and the flags gather in these verses from *La amistad pagada* (vv. 755-758): "Ea, cese la guerra, cuelga al templo / de Marte las banderas conquistadas, / que ya la espada y el arnés contemplo / entre las armas a la paz sagradas"¹⁵. Kingdoms said to be "afligidos" can be found in *La hermosa Alfreda* (v. 15) and in *La ventura sin buscalla* (v. 2082)¹⁶. The characterization of Mars as "riguroso" can be found in *El blasón de los Chaves de Villalba* (vv. 2267-2268): "¡Mucho a Marte riguroso / afeminan las mujeres!"; in *Felicio, égloga piscatoria* (vv. 394-395): "sin deponer el brío / de Marte riguroso"; or in *La selva sin amor* (p. 756): "de quien no se resiste / ni Marte riguroso / armado de diamante"¹⁷.

The most significant indication is in v. 6, where the action of "doblar banderas" is mentioned as a sign of the end or interruption of a conflict. We've seen it recorded up to five times in as many plays by Lope¹⁸: "estense las banderas /

¹⁵Aside from this testimony of the phrase "paz sagrada", TEXORO only offers another in the comedy by an unknown author, *La venganza en los agravios*.

¹⁶TEXORO also locates them in works by other playwrights, such as Calderón, Matos, Tirso, or Coello.

¹⁷TEXORO identifies the phrase in works by Claramonte and Tárrega. Also in *La manzana de la discordia* by Mira and Castro.

¹⁸TEXORO only records another instance in Tirso.

dobladas en las astas, / sin que las haga el viento / colores de sus alas" (Adonis y Venus, vv. 1652-1655); "Y cuando cuelgue la espada / y doble aquesta bandera..." (La amistad pagada, vv. 583-584); "doblád esas banderas, y volvamos / contentos de haber puesto a España miedo" (Juan de Dios y Antón Martín, vv. 480-481); "¿No consideras / que podrán lágrimas tuyas / detener sus armas fieras / hasta conquistar las tuyas / y hacer doblar sus banderas?" (Lo que hay que fiar del mundo, vv. 101-105). The clearest resonance, because it also has the same god Mars as its subject, is in *La nueva victoria de don Gonzalo de Córdoba* (p. 114): "Y tú, Marte, que enamoras / a Venus, cese el marchar. / Haz alto, y manda doblar / las banderas vencedoras".

These aren't just any flags, but the white ones with golden fleurs-de-lis, which from the Bourbons until the Revolution typically represented France. Flags that are very present in Lope's theater: "y por sus blancas banderas / mil lises de oro sembradas / con mil blasones y letras" (*La resistencia honrada*, vv. 2245-2247); "Algunos nobles de Francia / muestran en blanca bandera / sobre azul las lises de oro / contra la cruz roja nuestra" (*La varona castellana*, vv. 2552-2555). Even closer is this other testimony, in which the flags are joined by the blood, caused by weapons, to stain the golden color of the fleurs-de-lis red in our play (v. 8): "después que en los Pirineos / los lirios de las banderas / blancas pudieran crecer / con la sangre de mis venas" (*Quien más no puede*, vv. 375-378). The central phrases of vv. 9-10 of the fragment also find correspondence in works by Lope: "fuerte(s) bridón(ones)", for which TEXORO only locates three occurrences in as many of his works, and one more in a work by Calderón; "verdes campos" appears in thirteen plays by the writer (out of a total of 32 occurrences).

In the mandatory selection of significant passages we undertake following the sequence of the verses, we land at the moment when the French king praises Joan of Arc, one of the most outstanding figures of the Hundred Years' War, whose end is the chosen moment to start the action of the play:

merece de bronce estatuas
mujer de tanto valor,
que las hazañas iguala
de Hipólita y de Camila,
Semíramis y Cleopatra.
Que, cuando solo excelente
hubiera sido entre tantas,

bastara para que fueran
las demás por ella honradas,
fuera de que a las mujeres
les sobran tantas hazañas,
que en las armas y las letras
envidia a los hombres causan.

[...]

sino el ver tantos ejemplos
de su virtud, como en varias
partes escriben y cuentan
letras divinas y humanas.
La antigua filosofía
nombres de mujeres daba
a la ciencia y a la guerra,
a la gloria y a la fama. (vv. 64-76, 83-90)

The only reference provided by TEXORO regarding the mention in v. 67 of the two Amazons is in "El hombre por su palabra" by Lope (p. 362): "más gallarda que Hipólita y Camila". Camila and Semíramis are named in close proximity in "La fe rompida" (vv. 474-477): "Y sin amor ¿no eran fuertes / Cenobia, Evadnes, Camila, / Semíramis y Drusila / en tantas guerras y muertes?" and in "Contra valor no hay desdicha" (p. 293): "A Semíramis, Camila / y otras, las pintan las caras / como un tamboril". Semíramis and Cleopatra are mentioned together in five plays, of which four are by Lope¹⁹: "Semíramis y Cleopatra / poetas e historiadores / celebran" ("Las bizarrías de Belisa", p. 440); "vos no podéis ser Cleopatra, / ni Semíramis" ("La boba para los otros", p. 479); "quiso con notable amor / a una bellísima dama / llamada Antonia, a quien dieran / Semíramis y Cleopatra, / como en la rara hermosura, / ventaja en letras y en armas" ("Lo que ha de ser", p. 398); "cuya vida guarde el cielo, / con más triunfos que Cleopatra / y Semíramis tuvieron" ("El soldado amante", vv. 449-451).

A praise for women, as hinted at in the fragment, might be considered a new Lopean hallmark. Specifically, the Amazons, invoked by the French monarch, were the subject of the Phoenix's play "Las mujeres sin hombres", where one of them, Antiope, elaborates on this defense, emphasizing the superiority they

¹⁹The fifth is *La perla de Inglaterra*, by an unknown author.

could have in "letras y armas" (p. 39): "Que el ser necios o cobardes / no es defecto del sujeto, / sino que en las letras y armas / no queréis darnos maestros. / Treta es vuestra, viles hombres, / porque no tengáis sujetos / que, estudiando letras y armas, / clara ventaja os hacemos". In "La doncella Teodor" (vv. 2593-2597, 2666-2673) there's a new testimony of this declaration of superiority: "porque en las letras humanas / y divinas hay ejemplos / de mujeres celebradas / por únicas, por insignes / en las letras y las armas. / [...] / que no saber las mujeres / más letras que el hombre es causa / no enviarlas como al hombre / a las escuelas muchachas; / que si en universidades / entrar mujeres se usara / las cátedras fueran suyas, / pero ellos temen su infamia". And in "El alcalde mayor" (vv. 912-914) one can hear: "¿Pluma y espada / no han dado a mujeres nombre?".

The reference to "letras divinas y humanas" (v. 86) — in that order of terms or with the adjectives preceding — appears on 23 occasions in TEXORO, of which ten belong to works by Calderón and eight by Lope. This is the one from "El mejor alcalde el rey" (p. 328): "divinas y humanas letras / dan ejemplo".

Three of the four instances of "antigua filosofía" in TEXORO are in Lope's plays²⁰: "El príncipe perfecto (segunda parte)", "San Segundo" and "Quien más no puede". The one from the latter play has a very similar use to the one of interest (vv. 731-732): "Pues a amor daba este nombre / la antigua filosofía". In Lope's works, there are many cases justifying the gender of some nouns due to the supposed qualities, good or bad, of women: "Con nombre y forma de mujer pintaron / el vicio y la virtud antiguamente; / a firmeza y mudanza juntamente / estatuas de mujeres fabricaron" ("Con su pan se lo coma", vv. 419-422); "Si por ser mujer alcanza / que de firmes nombre os den, / que no es más desemejanza, / la mudanza lo es también, / luego también sois mudanza" ("El desposorio encubierto", vv. 570-574); "Por inconstante, la gracia / tiene nombre de mujer" ("Obras son amores", vv. 215-216); "La mentira, cosa es clara / que nombre de mujer tiene. / — La verdad, es cosa llana, / que también tiene ese mismo" ("Quien ama no haga fieros", vv. 1124-1127).

Later on, the Dauphin expresses his interest in Laura's husband being absent so that the lady's love diminishes and the chances of achieving his intentions increase.

²⁰The fourth instance is in the comedy by Rodrigo de Herrera, *El primer templo de España*.

¿No has visto algunas flores,
 que no sacan las hojas de colores
 de aquella verde cárcel, entre tanto
 que el sol no extiende su dorado manto?
 Pues de esa suerte amor tiembla la llama,
 ausente la que ama,
 que lo que no se mira no se nombra,
 porque si amor es sol, la ausencia sombra. (vv. 143-150)

The flower does not open its bud until it is daylight. The same image to name it — "verde cárcel" (green prison) — and a similar rhetorical approach — "¿No has visto [...] Pues..." (Haven't you seen [...] Well...) — can be found in the "Égloga panegírica al epigrama del serenísimo infante Carlos" (vv. 236-242): "¿No has visto, Tirsi, los rosales cuando / una rosa se muestra medio abierta, / otra la verde cárcel desatando, / y la mayor en tiempo, descubierta / la corona de nácar, que parece / que en ella el alba pura al sol despierta? / Pues no menos hermosa...". The same metaphor can be found in "Amor con vista" (p. 600): "Cual suele salir la rosa / de su verde cárcel presa"; "Las bizarrías de Belisa" (p. 445): "Mira que rosas y lirios, / para salir a la selva, / no rompen la verde cárcel / hasta que les des licencia"; and in "La Dorotea" (p. 483): "abrieron las flores los pimpollos de las hojas, y que se desató el nácar de la verde cárcel de los botones, aromatizando el aire". It's worth noting that these are four late texts in the production of the Fénix²¹.

The selected fragment ends with a concluding verse — "porque si amor es sol, la ausencia sombra" (because if love is sun, absence is shadow) — which has parallels in other works by Lope: "Si amor es sol, claro está / que serán los celos sombra" ("El premio de la hermosura", vv. 1385-1386); or "quiero adorar la sombra de su ausencia" ("El vellocino de oro", v. 1300).

Then Filiberto, the confidant of the Delfín, predicts that he will achieve nothing from the "virtuous" Laura: "Pasos y tiempo perderéis" (v. 177). No one but Lope has used such phrasing: "Si él no sale bien de todo, / pasos y tiempo perdí" ("La boba para los otros", p. 490); "mi hacienda en vano gastara / y tiempo y pasos perdiera" ("Príncipe perfecto, primera parte", vv. 1428-1429); "pasos y tiempo perdí / en ganar la voluntad / de cierta dama que quiero" ("Saber puede dañar", p. 514); "no querría / que perdieses tiempo y pasos" ("Nunca mucho costó poco", vv. 541-542); "Tiempo gasta y pasos pierde / —Así lo dice el refrán" ("Muertos vivos", vv. 264-265). The footnote in the last verse is surprising because I have not found such a saying in any collection from that

²¹The metaphor is used on various occasions by the Count of Villamediana (CORDE records three. Query from August 26, 2022). Within the Golden Age theater, TEXORO locates instances in *Tan largo me lo fiáis*, *Cómo se engañan los celos*, by Juan Delgado, *Cada uno con su igual*, by Blas de Mesa, and *Entre bobos anda el juego*, by Francisco de Rojas.

era or later²². This means that the phrasing in "La francesa Laura" has a strong connection to Lope, reinforcing the arguments in favor of attributing "Nunca mucho costó poco", if it still needed it²³.

The Delfín and Filiberto exchange views on Laura's resistance:

DELFIN	Será de lo que son otras mujeres, a quien venció de amor dulce porfía.
FILIBERTO	Señor, Ovidio dijo, aunque es poesía, que por eso es mentira disculpada, que solo es casta la que no es rogada. (vv. 188-192)

About the power of "dulce porfía" (a phrase that TEXORO registers in three comedies by Lope) in love, a character from the comedy "El premio de la hermosa" (vv. 1253-1255) also speaks in very similar terms: "duélete, madre mía, / de la dulce porfía / con que el tirano amor vencer procura".

The quote from Ovid leads us again to a comedy by Lope, "Virtud, pobreza y mujer" (p. 215): "que Ovidio dice que es casta / aquella a quien nadie ruega²⁴."

In the next scene, Laura and her cousin Flordelís talk about their loves. The protagonist expresses in a long monologue the happiness that her marriage to Count Arnaldo has brought:

Ya, prima Flordelís,
no vine a tanta gloria
por méritos que tuve
o partes que me adornan (vv. 205-208)

²²Outside of Lope, we only found the idea, but with a different verb, in *Las amazonas en las Indias* by Tirso de Molina (Act II): "diligencias exquisitas / hacen, sin topar persona, / tiempo y pasos desperdician"; and, outside the theater, in *Desengaños amorosos. Parte segunda del Sarao y Entretenimiento honesto* by María de Zayas (*Desengaños amorosos*, p. 420): "y desde aquel mismo punto empezó a perder tiempo y gastar pasos tan sin fruto...".

²³For the attribution of this comedy to Lope, see Azcune [2007] and Vega García-Luengos [2023].

²⁴In *Las paredes oyen* by Ruiz de Alarcón (Act I) we find the idea, but not attributed to the author of *Ars amandi*: "Casta es la que no es rogada".

[...]
 La condición fue siempre
 la parte más hermosa,
 no galas sin amores,
 no sin verdad lisonjas; (vv. 229-232)

[...]
 de nuestras almas, prima,
 hicimos una sola.
 Él quiere lo que quiero (vv. 239-241)

[...]
 No dice más amores
 tórtola arrulladora
 al cándido marido
 de un álamo en la copa,
 que yo le digo entonces
 con ansia afectuosa.
 Pues nunca estoy más cuerda
 que cuando estoy más loca. (vv. 253-260)

[...]
 Tu bien solo deseo,
 pues la fortuna en popa
 con el Delfin te lleva
 a la mayor corona,
 que yo segura vivo
 de que jamás se rompa
 el lazo de dos almas,
 si el tiempo no le corta. (vv. 287-284)

Laura talks about how she has achieved the glory of marrying Count Arnaldo. Verse 206 almost repeats the second of the following quote: "Si yo entendiera, mi bien, / que a tanta gloria venía, / no llorara el triste día / que me trujo a Tremecén" (from "La viuda casada y doncella", vv. 1657-1660). Her modest attitude matches that of some characters of Lope. The glory achieved without merits to back it up is also attributed by Count Ascanio to Lucinda in "El amigo por fuerza" (vv. 2804-2805): "¡Que suba a gloria tan alta, / de méritos tan ajeno!". The lack of "merits" and "qualities" to aspire to a love relationship is shown in other works of the Fénix, such as in "Guardar y guardarse" (p. 214): "Estaba mal empleada / —responde— en quien no tenía / méritos para quererla, / ni partes para servirla". Both terms are also combined to reject in other non-romantic areas: "Conde ¿Qué le ha faltado? / Gerardo Las partes a servirte convenientes. / Conde Los méritos le han hecho desdichado" (from "Servir a señor discreto", vv. 2088-2090); "Gracias a Dios, que ya ha llegado tiempo / en

que habéis conocido tantos méritos, / tantas partes..." (from "Del mal lo menos", p. 471).

Verse 230 of the fragment is almost identical to that of "Los locos de Valencia" (vv. 1649-1652): "¡Oh, hierro que has acertado / a ser prisión venturosa / en la parte más hermosa / que el cielo a la tierra ha dado!".

In "El sembrar en buena tierra" (vv. 201-204), Lope also opposes "amores" to "galas": "Antiguamente querían / su marido y hijos; ya / sólo en sus galas está / el amor que los tenían".

And of the opposition between "truth" and "flatteries", there are also several examples from Lope: "ha de tener mi verdad / más fuerza que las lisonjas" ("Las cuentas del Gran Capitán", p. 395); "No estimo lisonjas no; / verdades quiere Selín" ("Lo que hay que fiar del mundo", vv. 3072-3073); "Señor, si las verdades / estimas como dices, y aborreces / lisonjas..." ("Mirad a quién alabáis", vv. 1975-1977).

For verses 239-240 of the fragment we are looking at, the Lope reference is prestigious, found in "El castigo sin venganza" (vv. 1276-1279) and, according to our hypothesis, its formulation is not far apart in time: "Que tanto el trato acribilla / la fe de amor, que de dos / almas que nos puso Dios / hicimos una sola".

The echo of verse 241 is offered by "Los palacios de Galiana" (p. 167): "que en todo al Rey mi voluntad remito; / ley es su gusto; lo que quiere, quiero".

Regarding verse 254, we find: "Non hay casada tórtola que arrulle" ("Las Batuecas del duque de Alba", p. 514); "Su tierno amante por la selva llama / cándida tortolilla arrulladora" ("Las bizarrías de Belisa", p. 457); "Oye gemir la blanca tortolilla / el casto esposo en álamo frondoso" ("Amar, servir, y esperar", p. 215).

Verses 259-260 have their correspondence in "La amistad pagada" (vv. 1533-1534): "porque dicen comúnmente / que es la más cuerda más loca".

Of "la Fortuna en popa" (v. 278), with more or less exact formulation, TEXORO records up to seventeen comedies by Lope in which it appears. The "mayor corona" (v. 280) is a phrase present in ten other plays by the same playwright.

For the conclusion of the selected fragment (vv. 282-284), there are similar expressions in the Fénix: "¿No sabes que a la amistad / «estrecha» el sabio llamó, / porque es de las almas lazo / apretado, de tal suerte / que no le rompe la muerte?" ("Los ramilletes de Madrid", vv. 115-119); "Ya es hecho, ya no es posible / que el fuerte lazo se rompa / si no le corta la muerte" ("La locura por la honra", vv. 871-873).

Moving forward. Flordelís talks about the impossibility of her love with the Delfín, and brings up the myth of Leander and Hero:

pero podré decirles,
en última congoja,
lo que Leandro dijo
hablando con las ondas:
«si agora vuestra furia
pasando me perdona,
matadme cuando vuelva». (vv. 301-307)

This myth is very prevalent in the plays of Lope, who brings it up in relation to various aspects of history: the courage to cross the strait (El asalto de Mástrique); the feeling of being lost at sea (La prueba de los ingenios); the obstacles that stand in the way of realizing love (Pobreza no es vileza, Al pasar del arroyo, Las aventuras de don Juan de Alarcos, El caballero de Olmedo, El galán Castrucho, Servir a señor discreto, La viuda valenciana); the madness to which love leads (La hermosa Alfreda, La mal casada). The only instances that utilize the vision of the myth given by the well-known sonnet XXIX of Garcilaso (which in turn paraphrases an epigram by Marcial, De spectaculis XXV) and which is showcased in La francesa Laura, are found in El valiente Céspedes (p. 223): "«Dejadme allá pasar, y a la tornada», / dijo Leandro al fiero mar de Abido, / «mostrad en mí vuestra soberbia airada»"; and in El abanillo (p. 12): "La respuesta quiero dar / cuando el tiempo se revuelva, / que dijo Leandro, ciego: / «Téplate, mar, mientras llego / y anégame cuando vuelva»".

Let's skip a good number of verses and move to the end of this first day, at the brilliant lyrical moment where Laura expresses her feelings of loneliness—"¡Jesús, qué soledad, no me parece / que hay gente en todo el mundo!" (vv. 725-726)—. When her husband is away, it's nighttime, awaiting dawn:

todo aguarda la aurora,
que argenta nubes y celajes dora,
y hasta que sale en rosas y alhelíes,
purpurando las nubes de rubíes,
ni le alegra ni pudo, que es el día
común de los mortales alegría.
Así esta casa me parece agora
selva de noche hasta volver mi aurora. (vv. 742-749)

It cannot be a coincidence that these verses have a relation to others from one of the last compositions of the Phoenix, "Pira sacra en la muerte del excelentísimo señor don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba" (vv. 25-32), the last poem of "La vega del Parnaso", which can easily be dated if we consider the deaths of don

Gonzalo on February 16, 1635, and that of Lope himself on August 27: "Llorando estaba Fabio la improvisa / desdicha, al tiempo que la rubia aurora, / con serena atención, con dulce risa, / argenta fuentes y campañas dora; / purpuraba de roja manutisa / y nevado jazmín el rostro a Flora, / tomando de sus lágrimas suaves / alterativos números las aves". Both fragments focus on dawn, which "silvers" clouds or fountains, and "gilds" skies or fields, "purpling" or "did purple" the clouds. Likewise, this moment highlights the combination of red and white, and its joy or sweet smile. Again, we would find a hint that brings "La francesa Laura" closer to Lope's final stage.

It's time for Laura to go to bed, and she exchanges these words with her maids Celia and Leonor:

CELIA	Mira que es tarde, acuéstate, señora.
LAURA	¿Sin el Conde ha de ser?
LEONOR	No, sino el alba.
	¿Aguardas que la salva
	nos hagan las campanas del aurora,
	no bastan que ya toquen a maitines?
LAURA	Llega esa salva y estas joyas guarda. (vv. 764-769)

"No, sino el alba" (v. 765) is a phrase that today requires clarification because it has become obsolete. Lope's propensity to use it, well above other playwrights of his time, is pointed out by TEXORO, who attributes it to him in fifteen other plays.

However, we believe that the last verse of the fragment (v. 769) holds even more evidence of its relation to the Phoenix, even though what Laura says in it seems harmless, outside of the main threads of the plot and the central semantics of the play. What this verse intends to convey is a sensation of normal life: the lady asks her maid for the salva to place the jewelry she is removing before going to bed. It's the same order another lady named Laura gives to her maid Julia in "Obras son amores" (vv. 847-848). It's hard to believe that by sheer coincidence another playwright would match such a double order, just to imitate a domestic scene from reality.

As Laura undresses, she is being watched by the Dauphin, who comments to his companions Filiberto and Octavio:

¡Oh, qué celestial belleza!
No supo naturaleza
más que le pintó en la cara;
 pasó del arte los fines.
La tabla de los colores
fueron, Filiberto, flores
y los pinceles jazmines. (vv. 777-783)

After the initial exclamation —"celestial belleza" (v. 777) which appears eleven times in Lope's entries in *TEXORO*—, the prince asserts that nature surpasses the ends of art. This aligns with what Lope says in "La Felisarda" (vv. 14-20): "pues Naturaleza / perfeccionó su belleza, / y rompió la estampa luego, / de tal color esmaltada / que al arte poniendo fin / cesó de ser el jazmín / blanco y la rosa encarnada". Regarding the mention of "tabla" and "pinceles", it's relevant to read these verses from "Los peligros de la ausencia" (p. 179): "porque tratar de su rostro, / fuera tomar sin destreza / claveles para pinceles, / y para tabla, azucenas".

The voyeurs are discovered by Laura, who exclaims "¡Válgame Dios!". The Dauphin tries to hush her:

No te alteres,
que no te vengo a enojar,
ni tú, Laura, has de imitar
a las comunes mujeres. (vv. 800-803)

This is consistent with what a character says in "El halcón de Federico" (vv. 1517-1519): "feliCiano ¿Voces, Clavela? Clavela Tan extrañas voces, / que mujeres comunes parecían, / porque nunca las nobles hablan recio".

We move on to the second act. The Dauphin, along with Filiberto and Fabio, once again circles Laura's house, which she has resolved to remain inside while her husband is on an embassy mission in London.

DELFÍN Nunca tan mal lo he pasado
 como en ausencia del conde.
 Más hace un mes que las rejas
 y balcones de su casa
 no ven luz, ni el aire pasa
 a mis suspiros y quejas
 por cristal ni celosía.
 Mas, como el sol dentro está
 no le ha menester, que allá
 siempre debe de ser día.
 Ya me estaría mejor
 que el conde a Francia volviese,
 porque como a Laura viese
 templase mi loco amor.
 Hacerle fuerza no sé
 que le esté bien a quien soy.
 En mil pensamientos doy.
 FILIBERTO Terrible constancia y fe.
 DELFÍN No me basta el desengaño.
 FILIBERTO Donde el poder ni el amor
 no vencen tanto rigor,
 valerse de algún engaño. (vv. 965-986)

Again, if we scrutinize this beginning of the act in detail, we will find that there's hardly any expression that doesn't have a counterpart in Lope's works. The dyad "rejas y balcones" (v. 967) is repeated five times in five of his plays out of the seven listed in TEXORO: "Del monte sale", "El laberinto de Creta", "La niña de plata", "El secretario de sí mismo", and "La sortija del olvido". The combination of "suspiros" and "quejas" with "balcones" and "puertas" or "rejas" appears in "¡Ay, verdades, que en amor...!" (p. 526): "Hablaemos de aquel tiempo / que yo, don Juan, te cansaba / dando quejas a tus puertas, / suspiros a tus ventanas". Verse 990 is identical in "La malcasada" (vv. 1919-1921): "y, habiéndose ya rendido / a la fuerza de mis ansias, / a mis suspiros y quejas". The two nouns from verse 971 also appear in "La fortuna merecida" (vv. 330-333): "Si cristal, si celosía / tuviera mi entendimiento, / creyera que por él viste / lo mismo que tuve en él".

Verse 978 has its twin in "La noche de San Juan" (p. 158): "No habrá cosa

que no intente / por templar mi loco amor". "Mil pensamientos" (v. 981) is a phrase that appears 28 times in Lope's entries in TEXORO. Verse 982 finds its match in "La campana de Aragón" (vv. 2551-2552): "que tuvo el mundo mujeres / ejemplo de fe y constancia". There are also matches for verse 983 in Lope's works: "Si no basta el desengaño / que con lágrimas te advierto" ("El hidalgo Bencerraje", vv. 2088-2089); "no bastando el desengaño" ("El más galán portugués", v. 2079); "Pues ¿no basta el desengaño?" ("El saber puede dañar", p. 522); "Basta el desengaño de hoy" ("Laura perseguida", v. 1557). For verse 985, several can also be mentioned: "Vencer su rigor intento" ("La inocente Laura", v. 716); "yo venceré su rigor" ("Los prados de León", v. 310); "Basta, señor, que no vences / el rigor de una mujer" ("La primera información", p. 612). For verse 986, there's one in "Laura perseguida" (v. 936): "he pensado valerme de un engaño".

The Dauphin and Filiberto continue discussing how to overcome Laura's resistance:

FILIBERTO	Y si ese amor se volviese en Laura aborrecimiento, ¿tendría lugar tu intento?
DELFIN	Quién duda que le tuviese, mas ¿qué Circe y qué Medea podrá hacer que una mujer pueda, amando, aborrecer?
FILIBERTO	No hay hechizo que lo sea como poner entre amantes discordia. (vv. 995-1004)

The nouns and the verb in verses 995-996 are the same as Lope uses in *El perseguido* (verses 3424-3425): "que ha vuelto aborrecimiento / la fe de mi amor pasado". In *Los tres diamantes* (verses 106-107) we read: "Porque el amor despreciado / se vuelve aborrecimiento"; and in *La fe rompida* (verses 3116-3117): "Antes muy posible ha sido / que amor malagradecido / se vuelve aborrecimiento". From verse 998, there is a counterpart in *La imperial de Otón* (verse 224): "¿Quién duda que le tuviera?".

The mythical sorceresses that the Dauphin mentions in his rhetorical question in verse 999 are the same ones demanded by Carlos in *La locura por la honra* (verses 886-890): "¿Cuál hechicera famosa, / qué Circe, ni qué Medea, / qué hierbas, flores y rosas / de los montes de la luna / son para amor provechosas?". Circe and Medea, and almost always in this order, appear associated up to fifteen times in TEXORO: all but two (from Guillén de Castro and Cañizares) correspond to Lope. For verses 1000-1001 there is an answer in *La pastoral de Jacinto* (verses

659-663): "Que yo conozco un pastor / tan sabio y encantador / que muy presto podrá hacer / que vengas a aborrecer / a quien tuvieres amor". Verses 1002-1004 can be related to those of La burgalesa de Lerma (verses 2059-2062): "¿Pudiera pensarse traza / más a mi gusto en el mundo / para sembrar en las almas / destos amantes discordia?".

Filiberto is very clear that the key is to provoke Laura's jealousy:

**Porque dando a Laura celos,
 la venganza y los desvelos
 templarán junto desdén.
 No crio naturaleza
 animal, en cuanto alcanza
 el sol, que de la venganza
 guste con mayor fiereza.
 Para vengarse ofendida
 y más de amor agraviado
 ¿qué mujer ha reparado
 en el honor ni en la vida?
 Dale celos, y verás
 el efecto en la venganza. (vv. 1020-1032)**

«Celos», «venganza» y «desvelos» (vv. 1020-1021) are the same concepts and terms that Lope handles in *El desprecio agradecido* (p. 14): "«las cenizas de celos y de enojos, / produciendo venganzas y desvelos»". There are twelve registered Lope cases for "«Templar» el «desdén»" (v. 1022).

From what is asserted from v. 1023, there are various correspondences in Lope's works: "«no ha hecho naturaleza / bestia, animal semejante»" (*La cortesía de España*, vv. 459-460); "«¿Sabes tú que haya formado / Naturaleza animal / tan fiero?»" (*Los trabajos de Jacob*, p. 246); "«que de tu nombre habrá, por mil edades, / memoria en cuanto el sol del mundo alcanza»" (*Estefanía la Desdichada*, vv. 805-806); "«ni ha dado, en cuanto alcanza / el sol la confianza buen efeto»" (*Don Lope de Cardona*, vv. 707-708); "«que no hay rincón tan pequeño / adonde no alcance el sol»" (*El villano en su rincón*, vv. 2923-2924); "«¿No sabes que no hay gustos ni placeres / que olviden la venganza en las mujeres?»" (*Quien ama no haga fieros*, vv. 1277-1278); "«No igualan a la furia ni a la lengua / de una mujer para vengarse airada»" (*El bastardo Mudarra*, p. 472); "«que es todo pecho en mujer / para vengarse inhumano»" (*Los prados de León*, vv. 2125-2126); "«que no haya poder en mí / para vengarse, ofendido»" (*Querer la propia desdicha*, p. 467); "«Ha de vengarse, ofendido»" (*Mirad a quién alabáis*, v. 594); "«Amor agraviado»" in *El duque de Viseo, Porfiar hasta morir and Servir a buenos*; "«¡Oh, cuánto puede en una vieja avara / la codicia del oro, que

atrevida / ni en el peligro ni el honor repara» (Filis. Égloga, vv. 263-265); "«Tú eres poderoso, Amor; / por ti ni en vida, ni honor, / ni aun en alma se repara»" (El castigo sin venganza, vv. 1605-1607); "«Que no hay peligro en quien ama / ni en la vida ni en la honra»" (Santiago el verde, vv. 2501-2501); "«pues es disculpado efeto / de mis celos la venganza»" (Lo cierto por lo dudoso, p. 402).

The scheme devised by Filiberto to make Laura jealous and incite her revenge against Count Arnesto is a letter supposedly written by Roberto, her husband's servant, in which he reports her husband's infidelity with an English noblewoman and his intention to kill his wife. Already the preamble warns the protagonist:

¡Válgame Dios, toda estoy
temblando! «... en los regocijos *Lea*
y fiestas que aquí se han hecho,
que a quien le importan remito,
y voy a lo que te toca.
Ha sido el Conde bien visto
de caballeros y damas,
tan gallardo y tan lucido
y bizarro, que le llama
el vulgo el francés Narciso.
Con esto y quererle tantas,
tan presto puso en olvido
tu amor y su obligación,
que su trato honesto y limpio
ha trocado en mil bajezas. (vv. 1989-2013)

In El mayordomo de la duquesa de Amalfi (v. 260), there is a phrase parallel to that of v. 1989: "«No sé, toda estoy temblando»". "«Regocijo(s) y fiesta(s)»" is a pair widely attested in Lope's repertoire. For v. 1203, one can cite this other from La piedad ejecutada (v. 2471): "«Yo voy a lo que me toca»". And for v. 1206, these others: "«Mírale con la belleza / que entra del arnés vestido, / tan gallardo, tan lucido»" (Los trabajos de Jacob, p. 241); "«en su persona repara. / ¡Qué gallardo, qué lucido!»" (La vengadora de las mujeres, p. 633). Likewise, the combination "«gallardo y «bizarro»" is well endorsed in Lope. Just like the statement that the "«vulgo» «llama»" something to someone. V. 1210 has its twin in this other from El molino (vv. 978-979): "«¡Tan presto puso en olvido / lo que me quiso»". The conjunction of "«amor y obligación»", in this order and with or without preceding articles or adjectives, is common in his plays. There are also echoes of the playwright for vv. 1212-1213: "«a no seguir de Diana / limpia vida, y trato honesto»" (El Amor enamorado, p. 268); "«La mujer de honesto trato / viene para ser mujer / a su casa...»" (El castigo sin venganza,

vv. 1064-1066); "«Si no pareciera en mí / este amor honesto y limpio»" (La Arcadia, vv. 1085-1086). The "«trato»" and the "«mil bajezas»" of v. 1213 from the fragment can be seen in El caballero del milagro (vv. 2703-2706): "«Con lo que tú le has dado ha sustentado / infinitas rameras y alcahuetas, / siéndolo él de sus amigas mismas, / sin otras mil bajezas de su trato»".

Laura is overwhelmed by what the letter says about the Count's intention to kill her.

¿Qué es esto, cielos? ¿El Conde
tales palabras ha dicho?
¡Oh, ausencia, fiero enemigo! (vv. 1231-1233)

"«¿Qué es esto, cielos?»" is a phrase that TEXORO locates in up to 28 plays by Lope²⁵. The other two lines of the fragment more decisively point towards Lope: "«no he dicho tales palabras»" (La fe rompida, v. 270); "«No has dicho tales palabras»" (Lo que ha de ser, p. 386); "«Y yo triste de celos muriendo quedo. / ¡Oh, ausencia siempre enemiga!»" (La discreta venganza, p. 306); "«¡Oh, ausencia, fiero enemigo!»" (El vaquero de Moraña, v. 3002). This last line offers a full match.

The daring Laura, after arriving in London, has decided to attend a party in honor of the ambassador of the king of France, her husband Count Arnaldo. She does so masked to speak with him without being recognized. When she begins the conversation, he says aside:

No sé cómo hablar mujer [Aparte]
en tal tristeza me animo.
¡Extraña imaginación,
oh, cuánto engaña a quien ama!
Solo el olor de esta dama
me ha turbado el corazón.
Todo ha de ser Laura en mí.
Está el aire y el donaire.
Mas ¿qué no forma del aire
quien está fuera de [s]í?
Hasta las sutiles auras
del viento retrato son... (vv. 1717-1728)

²⁵But there are 370 works that also contain it among the 2800 in CETSO.

"«En tal tristeza»" (v. 1718) is recorded in *El príncipe perfecto, segunda parte* (v. 2712), and is the only case among the playwrights of the *Comedia Nueva*. "«Extraña imaginación»" appears in seven plays by Lope (out of a total of twelve in *TEXORO*). "«solo el olor»" in four, out of a total of five: *Las famosas asturianas*, *El galán de la Membrilla*, *San Nicolás de Tolentino*, and *La niñez de san Isidro*. In *El desconfiado* (v. 335) we read: "«El corazón me ha turbado»". "«Todo ha de ser»" is a frequent formula in Lope, but also in others. In *Las flores de Don Juan*, and *rico y pobre trocados* (vv. 2482-2483) it says: "«inés ¡No os causa mucho donaire / el ver cuál se anda tras vos? / Condesa ¡Donaire y aire, por Dios, / porque siempre le da el aire»". There are plenty of "«aire»" and "«donaire»" plays in Lope: over forty times in the plays where it occurs. As for "«sutiles auras»" (v. 1727), it can be seen in *La ocasión perdida* (vv. 2428-2429): "«Enciende, convertido en sutil aura, / mi fuego con sus alas un deseo»". With v. 1728 this other line from *¡Ay, verdades, que en amor...!* (p. 513) relates: "«mas porque es su condición / del mismo viento retrato»".

A bit later the conversation leads the Count to tell Laura:

**Señora, no son las almas
hombres ni mujeres... (vv. 1852-1853)**

This idea is not alien to Lope, as evidenced by these two occurrences²⁶: "«Bien sabes tú que las almas / ni son hombres ni mujeres»" (*La Arcadia*, vv. 2328-2329); and "«Que, en efeto, los agravios, / sean, Fénix, de quien fueren, / son, en fin, como las almas: / ni son hombres ni mujeres»" (*Servir a buenos*, p. 596).

In the third act, Laura reprimands servant Roberto for not writing to inform her about her husband. To which he replies:

**A estar cierto
que te sirvieras de mí
en cosa tan desigual
de tu claro entendimiento
mostrara mi rudimento
de mi ignorancia el caudal. (vv. 1973-1978)**

Regarding v. 1973, it is said in *Servir a buenos* (p. 610): "«Ya que he llegado a estar cierto / de que Fénix es tan suya...»". V. 1975, "«en cosa tan desigual»", repeats as is in four plays by Lope: *La mujer por fuerza* (v. 1108)²⁷, *El*

²⁶We have only located one other similar formulation in *Afectos de odio y amor* by Calderón.

²⁷For the attribution of this work traditionally considered by Tirso de Molina to Lope de Vega, see Vega García-Luengos [2023].

mayordomo de la duquesa de Amalfi (v. 205), El hombre por su palabra (p. 357), and El perro del hortelano (v. 2657). The same happens with the following verse, "«de tu claro entendimiento»": it's identical to one from Amor secreto hasta celos (v. 825).

Upon his return to Paris, Roberto is asked about the London ladies, to which he replies that those "«ninfas de marfil»" are for "«gustos alfeñicados»" — reminiscent of the "«gusto de alfeñique»" from La ocasión perdida (v. 1336)²⁸, but he prefers the "morenas", because he has a "«españolado gusto»", which brings to mind "«Tengo españolado el gusto»" — the only case in TEXORO — from Pobreza no es vileza (p. 500).

Roberto rebukes Otavio for confessing that Laura had been in Brittany:

Mira, Otavio, cómo hablas.
Si acaso algunos amigos
han puesto en tanta mudanza
el recato de tu honor
y estilo de tus palabras. (vv. 2122-2126)

The verse 2122 refers to "Mira, Flora, cómo hablas" from Contra valor no hay desdicha (p. 294). From "tanta mudanza", there are about twenty comedies by Lope with this expression. From verse 2125, there's a correspondence in El piadoso veneciano (p. 558): "sin recato de tu honor", and it's the only one in TEXORO. For verse 2124, in Al pasar del arroyo (vv. 2500-2504): "Apenas puede, Benito, / hallar el alma ocupada / lengua dispuesta, la lengua, / palabras, ni las palabras / estilo..."; and in Por la puente Juana (p. 257): "¿Cómo hablaste rudamente, / y agora con discreción, / pues ya tus palabras son / en estilo diferente?"

Laura goes to look for her husband, who has just arrived from England to spend the night at home, but he hasn't gone to bed yet:

¿En conversación estáis
tan despacio? Bien, por Dios.
Quién pensara —aunque el olvido
por hijo a la ausencia dan— (vv. 2180-2183)

²⁸The verb "alfeñicar", derived from "alfeñique", appears in five comedies by Lope: El anzuelo de Fenisa, El ausente del lugar, La burgalesa de Lerma, El mejor mozo de España, and the first act of Palmerín de Oliva (for the attribution to Lope of that act of the comedy, written in collaboration with Pérez de Montalbán, see Vega García-Luengos 2023).2280

"En conversación están" is a verse from *La octava maravilla* (v. 713) and *Los porceles de Murcia* (v. 16). The idea of verses 2182-2183 is reflected in *El poder vencido, y amor premiado* (vv. 2742-2742): "¡Ay de mi loca esperanza! / ¡Ausencia, madre de olvido!"; in *Los prados de León* (vv. 2100-2101): "si engendra olvido el ausencia, / ¿qué ausente vive sin celos?"; in *Roma abrasada* (p. 408): "Siempre ausencia engendra olvido"; and in *El anzuelo de Fenisa* (v. 1157): "y el ausencia cause olvido".

Count Arnaldo is consumed with suspicions about Laura, who denies having been in Brittany with her parents, as her servants claim.

me dicen Celia y Otavio,
y Laura lo niega aquí:
es el argumento claro
de que mienten todos tres,
los dos que estuvo, afirmando,
ausente, y negando el otro:
todos son testigos falsos,
y todos contra mi honor.
No estaba turbada en vano
Laura cuando yo volví.
¡Qué necio y confiado
me acosté! Que si yo entonces
con luz y espada en la mano
mirara mi casa —ah, cielos—,
yo hubiera por dicha hallado
la causa de mi desdicha. (vv. 2265-2280)

From verse 2267, we find a twin in *La noche de San Juan* (p. 144): "Y es el argumento claro"; and close to it is the one from *El favor agradecido* (v. 980): "Antes es claro argumento"; and from *La necedad del discreto* (p. 65): "y es muy claro el argumento". Verse 2271 is reflected in this from *El verdadero amante* (p. 622): "y en pago de que son testigos falsos...". Verse 2272 finds similarity in *Los melindres de Belisa* (vv. 2291-2292): "Todos parece que están / contra mi honor de concierto". Verse 2273 in *Las grandezas de Alejandro* (v. 291): "¿De qué te turbas en vano?". Verse 1175 in *El juez en su causa* (p. 673): "... le rogaron / que se casase muy presto, / y él, muy necio y confiado, / les dijo que ya lo estaba / con Arminda"; and *El robo de Dina* (p. 229): "...necio y confiado / en el poder que a tanto mal inclina"; and there are more cases in Lope with "necio" and "confiado" associated. Regarding verses 2279-2280, there are

many documented instances of plays on "dicha" and "desdicha" in Lope; consider this one close to the fragment in *Las cuentas del Gran Capitán* (p. 402): "¿Sois la desdicha por dicha? / Y está bien dicho; pues viendo / su dicha, desdichas

quieren / borrar sus merecimientos. / Pues desdicha, ¿qué queréis?".

The Dauphin expresses his romantic anguish.

Esta es la Troya que mi pecho abrasa,
dulce error, dulce mal, dulces enojos (vv. 2322-2323)

The first verse refers us to various points in Lope's works: "Si la lengua calla, el pecho / hoy como Troya se abrasa" (La corona merecida, p. 590); "¡Ay, don Martín, martirio de mi alma, / y de la Troya de mi pecho fuego!" (La serrana de Tormes, vv. 1182-1183). And the second verse has its replicas in the eclogue Amarilis (vv. 667-668): "mas, viéndome morir, siempre decía: / "Dulce mal, dulce bien, dulce porfía"; and in the play El remedio en la desdicha (vv. 788-791): "¡Dulce amar, dulce penar, / dulce ver, dulce temer, / dulcísimo padecer, / felicísimo esperar!".

A bit further on, the Dauphin exclaims:

¡Oh, puerta de mi bien! ¡Oh, dulce puerto
de mi mar! (vv. 2338-2339)

In Los ramilletes de Madrid (vv. 978-979), Lope writes: "Es puerto de mis fortunas / y de mi remedio puerta". And there are many more plays on "puerto" - "puerta" in his works.

Count Arnaldo is convinced of Laura's infidelity and orders Roberto to poison her. As he leaves to carry out the order and leaves the Count alone, Arnaldo laments the misfortune his honor drags him into, in one of the two sonnets of the piece:

¿A qué puede llegar mi desventura,
 a qué dolor más riguroso y fuerte
 que a dar a Laura por mi honor la muerte,
 cuando estoy adorando su hermosura?
 Cuán diferente —oh, fiera, oh, ingrata, oh, dura—
 pasé el canal de Ingalaterra a verte.
 Pluguiera a Dios que fuera tal mi suerte
 que me dieran sus ondas sepultura.
 Maldito seas, honor, que a tal desdicha
 reduces al que vive confiado
 que fuese d[e] él tan grave afrenta dicha.
 Oh, qué bien dijo, honor, un agraviado:
 «dichoso el que murió con tanta dicha
 que no supo que era desdichado». (vv. 2633-2646)

In the first verse, we have another strong indication of a connection with Lope: the entire verse, with identical words and order, is only recorded in TEXORO in two works, both by the Phoenix: *El vellocino de oro* (v. 1581) and *Amar como se ha de amar* (p. 194). It's even more surprising that in both cases, it's also the first verse of a sonnet. Everything suggests that this isn't coincidental, but something intentionally sought; and that it was executed by the same writer (it certainly was in the two cases we've known so far). This suggests a different facet in the handling of sonnets included in the plays by the playwright. It's not about including the same poem in two works, as happens with at least three of them²⁹; this time, the only thing that's repeated is the first verse³⁰. Regarding the two tercets, they're an even clearer testament to the play on the terms "dicha" and "desdicha", which we discussed above regarding vv. 2279-2280, which Lope is no stranger to.

We conclude with a comment on verses exchanged between Roberto and the Count at the climax. After the clarifying conversation he had with his wife, he's completely convinced of her innocence; but the order to administer the poison must have been carried out. His relief is immense when the servant appears and claims he couldn't do it.

²⁹They are the ones that begin "No sé quién ama donde no es querido"—shared by *Valor, fortuna y lealtad* and *La obediencia laureada y primer Carlos de Hungría*—, "Una moza del cántaro y del río"—included in *La moza de cántaro* and *La corona trágica*— or "Comparaba un discreto el casamien-to"—present in *La esclava de su hijo* and *El animal profeta y dichoso parricida San Julián*. See García González [2003].

³⁰From Lope's fondness for this formulation, though with variations, we have the testimonies from *Los muertos vivos* (vv. 1401-1402): "¿A qué más puede llegar / mi desventura importuna?"; and *Los Tellos de Meneses* (p. 298): "¿A qué podrá llegar mi desventura? / O ¿qué podrá servirme de remedio?".

ROBERTO Una palabra, señores,
aquí aparte.

CONDE ¿Qué me quieres,
traidor Roberto?

ROBERTO ¿Yo?

CONDE Sí,
para mi mal obediente.

ROBERTO No pude echar el veneno,
que estaba Celia presente.
Mañana será sin falta
con grada para mujeres.

CONDE ¿Qué dices?

ROBERTO ¿Que si era yo
tan bárbaro que pudiese
dar muerte a un ángel?

CONDE Roberto,
abrázame.

ROBERTO No me aprietes.

CONDE ¿Cómo no? Besarte es poco.

ROBERTO Guarte acá, negro.

CONDE ¡Tenedme,
cielos! Si pesares matan
mejor podrán los placeres. (vv. 2817-2832)

In the first exchange of words between servant and master, we find a seemingly irrelevant detail which, due to its ability to go unnoticed, is very telling: the words chosen by Roberto to ask the Count to speak privately, and the Count's reply, form the line «aquí aparte. —¿Qué me quieres» and they are exactly the same words spoken by characters in similar situations in two of Lope's plays (and no other author's): *Los comendadores de Córdoba* (v. 1875) and *La difunta pleiteada* (p. 249)³¹.

The insult thrown by the desperate Count to his servant the first time he sees him after learning of his wife's innocence and believing that the ingested poison is irreversibly affecting her — "traidor Roberto" (v. 2819) — doesn't find an expressive echo but rather in the attitude of the speaker, significant for our purpose. Earlier we mentioned a similar situation in Lope's play *El abanillo*. In it too, a count, Celio, orders his servant, the homonymous Roberto, to poison his wife Estefanía, convinced of her infidelity. Later, but when he believes she has already taken the poison, he learns of her innocence. At that moment in both plays, the protagonists express a wish for their own deaths. And when they meet their respective servants, their despair leads them to address them with reproach, as if they hadn't been the ones to order it. The "traidor Roberto" of our play finds its parallel in "ejecutor infame" of *El abanillo* (p. 32).

³¹Alternatively, in Lope's work, we also find the very close formulation: "Oye aparte. — ¿Qué me quieres?" (*El laberinto de Creta*, *El padrino desposado*, *Los Benavides*, *La villana de Getafe*, *La discordia en los casados*). Both are a kind of automatism in the Phoenix, and TEXORO only records the mentioned instances among the 2800 works it controls.

El criado del conde Arnaldo no ha podido echar la pócima, pero proclama su p Count Arnaldo's servant hasn't been able to administer the potion, but he proclaims his intention to do so the very next day, regardless of who is present. He uses a phrase that might sound strange to today's reader or viewer but must have been a good joke at the time. A joke that Lope is the only one recorded using in a play, titled *La primera información* (p. 624): «enrique Crispín, / hoy aquí mi amor da fin. / Crispín ¿Con grada para mujeres? / Enrique Eso no, que no he de amar / otra mujer en mi vida». The playful reference hasn't been located anywhere else. However, there are other testimonies that help understand its meaning. In the interlude *La melancólica* by Calderón, Luisa reads to Manuela the poster they find upon arriving at the theater: "Aquí Rosa representa / hoy la Puerta con dos casas, / de un ingenio de Vallecas, / con grada para mujeres". There's another interlude, this one by Antonio de Solís, titled *El saltaenbanco* in which a character is posting a sign while talking to another; "Godoy Pues yo leo / el cartel. Cosme Leed con cuidado, / que es mío, y es docto y cuerdo. / Godoy [reads] "El saltaenbanco Bernardo / cura de heridas crueles / con bálsamo y saca muelas. / Con gradas para mujeres"". The key to the joke, then, would be in the tagline that some play advertisements referred to the availability in the theater of a space for women.

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Following the servant's intervention, the Count asks a question, both enthusiastic and incredulous, to which Roberto replies with the real reason he didn't kill Laura: he couldn't bring himself to kill an "angel". The innocent woman who dies without guilt is thus referred to in Lope's works, as it also happens in the end of *El juez en su causa* (p. 685): "Yo estoy tan arrepentido / y siento tanto en el alma / haber dado muerte a un ángel, / que antes que este pleito vaya / a la sentencia debida / por términos y probanzas / quiero sentenciarme yo". Likewise, in *Las pobreza de Reinaldos* (vv. 2056-2059) the protagonist uses

it referring to the "lad" that Galalón orders to hang with a cord: "en vuestro cuello pusiera / la cosa que me mandáis / poner a un ángel que dais / muerte tan injusta y fiera".

The Count's joy and eagerness to hug and kiss lead Roberto to exclaim, "Guarte acá, negro", a phrase, with all three terms, that we once again find registered in a Lope play, *Los ramilletes de Madrid* (v. 904), also spoken by the servant Fabio.

As for "tenedme, cielos", TEXORO only offers records in two plays attributed to Lope: *Los hidalgos del aldea*, of confirmed authorship, and *La pérdida honrosa*, which doesn't seem to be his.

The final verses of the excerpt (2831-2832) also have a counterpart in Lope. We found it in *Los trabajos de Jacob* (p. 262), spoken by Dina, the patriarch's daughter, who, when he is startled upon learning that his son José is alive, warns: «Dejalde, / que tan bien quitan la vida / placeres como pesares».

With this, we conclude our sampling through various points of the three acts, showcasing the harmony of *La francesa Laura* with the theatrical and poetic universe of Lope. The edition of the text will allow its notes to present more exhaustive parallel cases.

9. Conclusion

The end of this research —initiated by digital methods, and supported by the analysis that philology undertakes when addressing attribution problems— will be the publication of the work's text. The existence of a unique critical testimony and the conditions under which it has been preserved have ensured that the establishment of the text hasn't posed many complications. In its introductory study, we will consider other literary and dramaturgical aspects, which, in addition to explaining the work and placing it in its time, will provide further support to the main objective of this essay: proposing the addition of *La francesa Laura* to Lope de Vega's repertoire.

The comedy has remained incognito for centuries, thanks to its "poorly dressed" condition as an anonymous and late manuscript, hardly conducive to arousing the interest of the curious and researchers. It had to be the cold digital eyes, unaffected by mere appearances, that presented to us the evidence that this is not just another orphaned work but possesses more than enough genes to be considered a child of the one who, like no other, had promoted and practiced the new art of making comedies: the old Lope. Everything points to him and to that era, just a few years before concluding the most prolific career among all the greats of universal dramaturgy, a fact that would further reinforce such a discovery. While *La francesa Laura* is not a masterpiece, it possesses enough quality to display the mastery of plots and words he would have achieved at that final stage. Each of its verses carries the echo of hundreds of thousands of

preceding verses, many of which resonate in it.

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