

LOPE DE VEGA'S *LA INOCENTE LAURA* AND THE EARLY MODERN  
TRANSNATIONAL WORLD (CINZIO, GREENE, D'OUVILLE AND  
PASCA)

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It is a significant example of the weight of tradition how, in our current global and interconnected world, the dominant tendency in literary studies is still to approach our objects of study within the perspective of so-called national traditions. This is also true when focusing on the early modern period, even though the literary and cultural fields of the time were clearly transnational, especially in relation to theater (Henke): a shared familiarity of influential texts—classic and modern—served as a common pool of motifs and themes for authors; individuals—writers, readers, actors—connected regions through their travels, and there was a constant cultural exchange as a significant number of works circulated in print, manuscript or performance—in the original language or translated—beyond political borders, especially texts generated in Europe's largest centers of cultural production: Italy and Spain. Lope de Vega is a perfect example of the international nature of the literary field of his time: his work was informed by both Spanish and foreign sources, his fame transcended regional boundaries, and his plays were performed and read in Italy, England, France or the Netherlands, among other countries.

This article focuses on *La inocente Laura*, a play written by Lope de Vega between 1604 and 1608 (Morley and Bruerton 343-44), and published in 1621 in his *Decimasexta parte*. This work has received little critical attention in spite of its interest as part of a

transnational network of textual relations that connects Italy, England, Spain and France. I will explore *La inocente Laura*'s relationship to its main source, a *novella* written by Italian author Giambattista Giraldi Cinzio, a fact unknown to *Comedia* scholars until now in spite of the renewed interest in the influence of Cinzio in Lope's theater, as he wrote at least nine other plays based on his *novelle* between 1593 and 1612.<sup>1</sup> More specifically, my objective is to analyze one key aspect of Lope's use of Cinzio's tale when he adapted it to the Spanish stage: how he included an additional political overtone by stressing a negative image of court life through a series of topical motifs and, especially, the creation of a villainous courtier. I will do this with a comparative and contrastive perspective, since the same *novella* that inspired Lope's *La inocente Laura* was also used in England by Robert Greene for his play *The Scottish History of James the Fourth*, probably written in 1590 and published as a quarto in 1598 (Sanders xxv-xix). Scholars have analyzed in quite some detail how Greene dramatized Cinzio's *novella* by expanding its political tone, and how "commentary on national corruption, especially flattery and parasitism, occurs throughout the play" (Crupi 129). By independently making some similar decisions when remaking the same source material, Lope and Greene exemplify not only the "parallel lives"—in the words of Louise and Peter Fothergill-Payne—of the early modern Spanish and English stages, but also some of the ideological preoccupations and themes shared by Western European theater at the time. At the same time, the differences between these two texts will help reveal Lope's own original transformation of Cinzio's *novella*. This approach will be completed by looking at *La inocente Laura*'s own theatrical offspring as it was adapted for the French and Italian stages by Antoine Le Métel d'Ouville and Gianbattista Pasca, and how, in turn, they perceived and reused the political tone developed by Lope in his play.

When the modern editor of *La inocente Laura*, Emilio Cotarelo y Mori, published this play in 1930, he showed very little appreciation towards it: he wrote only a few paragraphs as an introduction and ended it by stating that “esta comedia es un continuo embrollo y sumamente inverosímil” (xix). Cotarelo’s condemnatory remarks did very little to gather scholarly interest towards *La inocente Laura*, and so it has remained largely overlooked and its source has remained unidentified until now. *La inocente Laura* is actually inspired in a *novella* by Giambattista Giraldi Cinzio included in his popular collection *Degli Hecatommithi*, first published in 1565, and which Lope most probably read in its original language.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, the source of Lope’s plays is the first *novella* of the third *deca*—or day—of *Degli Hecatommithi*. The basic plot of this tale is as follows: Astasio, King of Hibernia, marries Arrenopia, daughter of the King of Scotland. However, Astasio falls in love with a lady called Ida and, in order to be able to marry her, orders one of his captains to murder Arrenopia. The Queen finds out about this, disguises herself as a knight and flees. The captain finds her in a forest and stabs her, leaving her for dead. Arrenopia is rescued by a nobleman, who takes her to his house and saves her life without realizing that she is a woman. Meanwhile, the King of Scotland invades Hibernia in order to avenge his daughter’s death. Once recovered, Arrenopia and her savior go help as knights in the war. There she reveals her true identity to her husband, who has repented from his wrongdoings and has renounced Ida’s love, and thus Astasio and Arrenopia live together happily again.

Cinzio’s story borrows from the medieval tradition of Griselda, the patient and obedient wife who endures a series of abuses from her husband but still remains faithful to him. This female model is paired with the motif of the persecuted woman whose life is at risk in spite of her innocence. That the story of Arrenopia had theatrical potential was evident for Cinzio himself. Inspired by his own *novella*, the writer from Ferrara penned a tragedy *di*

*lieto fine* titled *Arrenopia*, which he finished around 1562-1563 and appeared in 1583 as part of his *Tragedie* (Fuochi 857). As the title indicates, the play focuses on the main female character. It dramatizes only the final part of the *novella*, after Arrenopia has been saved from death and during the war between Scotland and Hibernia: previous elements of the story are told retrospectively through the characters' dialogues.

The *novella* of Arrenopia's misfortunes was therefore a perfect candidate to be reimagined within the specific context of the commercial theater that developed in Spain and England in the sixteenth century, and which often relied on Italian texts for the plots of many plays. Greene's *James IV* follows quite closely Cinzio's *novella* as far as the main elements of the plot go.<sup>3</sup> The King of Scots marries Dorothea, daughter of the King of England. However, he quickly falls in love with Ida, a lady in his court. An astrologer called Ateukin tries to benefit from the king's sexual desires by promising that he will help him get Ida, since she resists the King's desires (and will later marry a nobleman whom she truly loves). Ateukin eventually recommends the king to have Dorothea murdered by a French captain in order to be able to marry Ida. The story develops just like in Cinzio: Dorothea finds out about the plan, flees disguised as a man, is stabbed and left for dead, and is rescued by a nobleman. The King of England then invades Scotland to avenge his daughter's death, and tragedy is prevented only when Dorothea presents herself safe and sound, thus leading to a happy ending.

Lope's reworking of Cinzio's tale in *La inocente Laura* also remains faithful to several aspects of the source material, but at the same time he expands it with his own original contributions, something common to his other plays based on *Degli Hecatommithi* (Gasparetti; Weber de Kurlat 32-44; Romera Pintor "De Giraldis"; Resta and Domínguez Martínez). The main characters are now two couples—Laura and Roberto; the Duke and

Duchess of Santángel—and an antagonist—Ricardo—, a relational structure common in Lope (Couderc, *Galanes* 298-302). The action takes place near Naples, in the domains of the Duke of Santángel. The Duke is in love with Laura, who is married to Roberto, whereas Count Ricardo, stepbrother of the King of Naples, desires the Duchess of Santángel. Ricardo acts as the schemer to all the other characters: he convinces the Duchess that the Duke wants to kill her in order to marry Laura, and he also convinces Roberto that Laura is unfaithful to him with the Duke, all of which is a lie. Thus, both Roberto and the Duchess decide to kill their spouses to avenge their supposed infidelities: the Duchess sends a letter to the King of Naples accusing her husband of conspiring against him, which leads to his arrest; Roberto takes his wife Laura to a road to Naples and stabs her, leaving her for dead. She is picked up by shepherds, who carry her to their village and save her life. Laura spends two years recovering from her wounds, after which she dresses up as a minstrel named Fénix and, accompanied by a shepherd, goes to Naples. There she once more has a near-death experience because the King is convinced by Ricardo to have her killed, but she escapes in the last moment. Finally, the lies told by Ricardo start to become evident and order is restored: the Duke is proven to be innocent and returns to the Duchess, whom he promises to be faithful to, whereas Laura reveals her true identity and is reunited with her husband Roberto. The treacherous Ricardo is exiled as punishment for all his machinations.

The influence of Cinzio's story of Arrenopia is evident in key plot elements of both Lope's *La inocente Laura* and Greene's *James IV*. What is more significant is how they both updated Arrenopia's tale in such way that "the romantic story of betrayed love, disguise and forgiveness is given political and social dimensions" (Leggatt 97). By expanding the role played by the court as a space of deceit and, in particular, by incorporating the figure of a bad courtier, Greene and Lope transferred Cinzio's Griselda-

like *novella* to a different cultural and political discourse: that of court intrigues and favorites, a major motif in both the English and the Spanish stage during the period of 1590-1625, as Leicester Bradner has pointed out.<sup>4</sup>

*La inocente Laura* can be categorized as a *drama palatino*—as analyzed by Oleza—due to the social universe of its characters and the tone of the events, with deceits, disguises and attempted murders as highlights of the plot.<sup>5</sup> This is a genre that Lope had not explored too often before writing *La inocente Laura*—he wrote around ten *dramas palatinos* in the 1580s and 1590s, and four more in the first decade of the seventeenth century (Oleza *et alii*)—,<sup>6</sup> so offering a grittier image of the court was still a rather uncommon territory for him. Teresa Ferrer has also examined a number of genealogical plays written by Lope in the first decade of the seventeenth century that deal with life in the court and the figure of the favorite, and has shown how a vast majority of them portray a positive image of this social space: a reflection of how Francisco Gómez de Sandoval, king Philip III's favorite, was in the height of his power at the time. *La inocente Laura* differs from this dominant contemporary image and is therefore an example of how Lope's theatrical portrayal of the court was not consistently positive during the first decade of the seventeenth century. The literary nature of the source used in *La inocente Laura* gave Lope freedom to explore the conflict of the court on stage without any potential particular identification.

Both *La inocente Laura* and *James IV* play with the strategy of locating the action in a time and space different from Cinzio's that is at the same time distant from contemporary Spain and England but close enough to the audiences of the plays. *La inocente Laura* takes place in a vaguely late-medieval Naples, before it became part of the Spanish crown. This Italian location substitutes the original Ireland: it connects *La inocente Laura* with many other Italian-set plays by Lope, but above all it locates the text's action in a setting that was

very recognizable for the Spanish audience, and therefore brings the plot close to home. Greene creates a sense of distance by locating the main plot within a frame story led by a Scot named Bohan and Oberon, King of Fairies. At the same time, he transforms the *novella*'s Irish location to a Scottish one, and he also explicitly links what takes place on stage with his audience's contemporary world when, in the play's induction, the character of Bohan introduces the main plot by stating that "in the year 1520 was in Scotland a king, overruled by parasites, misled by lust, and many circumstances too long to trattle on now, much like our court of Scotland this day" (Ind.106-09).

The motif of the critique of life in court is common to Lope and Greene's larger literary production, and both present it very early in *James IV* and *La inocente Laura*, thus setting the tone that will dominate both plays. In *James IV* we find it since the induction, when Bohan explains that he left the court "because my pride was vanity, my expense loss, my reward fair words and large promises, and my hopes split; for that after many years' service one outran me; and what the deel should I then do there? No, no; flattering knaves that can cog and prate fastest speed best in the court" (Ind.49-54). In *La inocente Laura*, we find an equally explicit critique in the second scene of the play, when Laura tries to prevent her husband from leaving for Naples with a thirty-verse tirade against court life. It is presented as a condemning *cursus honorum*, which begins with optimism, ambition and respect, but then leads to flattery, anxiety, envy, gossip, machinations, and disappointments, only to end in an old age dominated by a lack of hope and regret caused by constant suffering and suspicion: "verás con triste partida / que en la corte cualquier vida / va por la posta a la muerte" (342).

This topical condemnation is associated in *La inocente Laura* to another motif central to the representation of the court in many of Lope's works: envy is a destructive vice that

pervades the court. Envy is mentioned ten times during the play, and it appears in significant moments of the text. For example, in Laura's aforementioned tirade against life in the court, she warns her husband that in Naples "la envidia y murmuración / te harán luego compañía" (342). Afterwards, when the King of Naples requests the Duke of Santángel to travel to the court to speak with him in private, the Duke becomes suspicious and is afraid that envious enemies have predisposed the King against him. According to the Duke, envy is one of the greatest fears that a nobleman can face in the court:

Si al Rey envidias a mi daño inclinan,  
que tema su justicia no te asombres,  
porque puede el morir, que es cosa antigua,  
llegar mientras la culpa se averigua.  
Pues muerto el inocente, ¿quién sospechas  
que tratará de restaurar su daño  
si preso un noble en cárceles estrechas  
se atreve la mentira y el engaño? (362-3)

Envy, of course, requires someone to be envious of others. Cinzio's original *novella* explored two traditional figures located in the space of the court: the married king who lusts for another woman, and the queen who is unjustly persecuted by her husband. Both Lope and Greene expand this roster by including a new main character not present in Cinzio's tale: that of Ateukin, in *James IV*, and Ricardo, in *La inocente Laura*. This is certainly the playwrights' biggest innovation, since both Ateukin and Ricardo play a significant role in



the development of the plots and they embody a new type of character: that of the bad courtier, related to evil favorites and court intriguers.

Greene's Ateukin is a sycophant who sees the King of Scotland's sexual desires for lady Ida as a weakness that he can exploit for his own benefit. Thus, he "functions both as the accomplice to the king's misdeeds and as a symbol of the realm's corruption" (Stein 19). In the first act of *James IV*, Ateukin carefully plans his initial approach to the king by flattering him and presenting himself as an astrologer who can use his knowledge to conquer Ida's heart for the king: "I'll set out charms and spells, naught else shall be left / To tame the wanton if she shall rebel" (1.1.265-66). His manipulative ways are evident for the audience in his first conversation with the king, since Ateukin stresses out loud on several occasions that he does not want to flatter the king nor obtain economic benefit from helping him since he is not a "parasite" (1.1.226): an ironic antiphrasis that only serves to reveal his real intentions. Ateukin is presented as an admirer of Machiavello's works, which he reads and annotates at night, a reference that casts another negative light on Ateukin since the Italian writer was associated to immoral politics. Ateukin is who suggests to the King of Scotland that he murder his wife in order to marry Ida, and he also who finds the person who will carry out this deed. When lady Ida marries another gentleman in order to escape the King's lust, Ateukin will not hesitate to flee in order to save his life, thus demonstrating his cowardice and the need of a punishment for having manipulated the King: "I'll hide myself, expecting for my shame. / Thus God doth work with those that purchase fame / By flattery, and make their prince their gain" (5.2.38-40).

Whereas Greene presents a weak favorite—a parasite—, Lope's court villain in *La inocente Laura* is more complex. The Spanish playwright develops Ricardo as a much stronger character. He is of a much higher social rank than Ateukin, as a he is a nobleman

and bastard half-brother of the King of Naples. He also manages to trick all the other main characters of the play, becoming their antagonist: the Duke and Duchess of Santángel, Roberto and Laura, and the King of Naples himself. Ricardo's central role in the plot structure of *La inocente Laura* is textually underlined in the final verses of the play, when its full title is given: "Y yo, fin a la comedia [doy], / que su autor, noble senado, / llamó *La inocente Laura / y traiciones de Ricardo*" (376).

In fact, Ricardo is presented as a distorted reflection of the two main figures of power in the play, which echoes similar techniques used by Lope in other plays (Aranda). The opening scene presents him as a double of the Duke of Santángel since, like his host, he is also consumed by lust for a married woman—the Duchess of Santángel—, and thus offers to become the Duke's aid as "tercero" (341) in his love affairs with Laura.<sup>7</sup> When the Duke informs Ricardo that he has devised a way to get rid of Laura's husband, Ricardo will replicate this same strategy by tricking the Duchess, Laura and her husband in order to get rid of the Duke by having him sentenced to death for treason. But whereas the Duke will finally repent from his lust and recognize his wrongdoing, Ricardo will remain constant in his treacheries. Ricardo is also the King of Naples' bastard half-brother, although he had been expelled from the court and forbidden to return without the King's permission for some past misconduct whose details are never given. Ricardo is therefore a disgraced double of the King: he is of royal blood but not a member of the legitimate lineage; he is the King's relative but banned from the court for wrongdoings. The moral distance between the King and Ricardo is symbolically made evident during different moments of the play: if Ricardo is treacherous for personal lust, the King acts moved by prudence; if Ricardo does not hesitate to destroy others in order to obtain what he wants, the King is portrayed as just; if Ricardo tries to destroy the Duchess when he knows that she will not marry him, the

King, who also falls in love with her in the third act, gladly has her return to her husband when his innocence is proven.

Ricardo's evil deeds affect two different courtly spaces: the house of the Duke of Santángel and the palace of the King of Naples. In both he presents himself as a loyal advisor who wants to help: he promises the Duke that he will keep the secret of his desire for Laura and that he will help him seduce her, and he later informs his half-brother of a supposed conspiracy against his life. This is all mere appearance, for Ricardo's sincere intentions are guided by his lust. As the title *La inocente Laura y traiciones de Ricardo* points out, Ricardo's actions are full of deceit and are therefore punishable because they go against the aristocratic *ethos* that he should embody. A series of crucial moments of the plot perfectly illustrate how he acts. Once Ricardo has tricked the Duchess into convincing her that her husband wants to murder her, Ricardo falsely accuses the Duke of being a traitor to the King and, in order to make this accusation believable, he has both the Duchess and Laura's husband write letters in which they back his accusations. Later, when the Duchess decides to marry the King of Naples once her husband is executed for treason, Ricardo becomes so infuriated that he decides to take revenge on her. He does so again with lies, as he tells the King that she is having an affair with a handsome minstrel who has recently arrived at the court of Naples, and who is none other than Laura in disguise. It is also Ricardo's actions that indirectly have Laura almost killed. Although she is always loyal to her husband, Ricardo is able to trick her into speaking in such a way that her husband believes that she is really the Duke's lover, and this makes him decide to kill her in revenge. Finally, in the third act the Duchess pretends that she really is in love with Ricardo to reveal his true intentions, and during their conversation Ricardo is not afraid to declare

that, in order to marry the Duchess, he is more than willing to kill his own half-brother and claim his crown.

Following Cinzio's original *novella*, *La innocente Laura* and *James IV* present a figure of power—the Duke of Santángel and the King of Scotland—who is victim of an immoral lust, which in these plays clouds his judgment and leads him to follow ill advisors. Cinzio's *lieto fine* is preserved in both plays and thus the Duke and King's weakness is pardoned by their archetypal forgiving wives, as their sins will be indirectly purged through the evil figures of Ateukin and Ricardo. This fact stresses the role played by the court advisors in Lope and Greene's plays, as they fail to fulfill their duty of preventing the figures of power from becoming weak through sin.

In relation to this, both Lope and Greene explore the larger consequences of the villain's actions, although with different perspectives, which we can identify as public—in Greene—and private—in Lope—. In Cinzio's *novella*, the land of Hibernia is invaded by the troops of the King of Scotland as an act of retribution against Arrenopia's husband. Greene follows Cinzio's text and has an army led by the King of England invade Scotland in order to avenge Dorothea's supposed death. Greene expands this episode of Cinzio's text by showcasing how the consequences of the English invasion go beyond the King of Scotland and greatly affect the Scottish people as a whole. A number of scenes of the fifth act of *James IV* focus on how the English army ransacks the Scottish lands encouraged by its king, who he seeks bloody revenge as a punishment for his daughter's alleged death. When the English army appears for the first time on stage, it is shown trying to take the town of Dunbar, which, as the king of England ferociously declares, "if it yield not to our compromise, / The plough shall furrow where the palace stood / And fury shall enjoy so high a power / That mercy shall be banished from our swords" (5.3.6-9). The lord of the

town appears on the battlements and addresses the English king's threats that his army will "lay this city level with the ground" (5.3.14) by posing a series of questions that raise the issue of the consequence of responsibility, since it is the innocent people of Scotland who are suffering the outcome of their king's lust and Ateukin's evil deeds:

For what offence? For what default of ours?

Art thou incensed so sore against our state?

Can generous hearts in nature be so stern

To prey on those that never did offend? ...

Or is it lawful that the humble die

Because the mighty do gainsay the right? (5.3.15-18, 21-22)

The English king pardons the inhabitants of this town since they surrender to him without a fight, but the questions posed by the lord of the town remain, and Greene insists on the destruction brought to the people of Scotland in later scenes. As one character states, "The English king hath all the borders spoiled, / Hath taken Morton prisoner, and hath slain / Seven thousand Scottish lads not far from Tweed" (5.4.3-5). By expanding the role of the foreign invasion present in Cinzio, Greene is interested in pointing out that the individual actions of the king and his favorite can have serious consequences for the whole nation, thus stressing the political responsibilities they have towards the people of the country (Leggatt 101).

Lope's approach to the episode of the army in Cinzio's *novella* differs quite significantly, since he eliminates the whole episode of the invasion by not having his female protagonist be the daughter of a foreign king. This does not mean that external

danger is erased from *La inocente Laura*. It appears under the shape of a constant threat from France, a looming menace that desires to conquer the kingdom of Naples. For example, when the Duchess of Santángel falsely accuses her husband of plotting against the king, she states that he is gathering the support of the French. These references are based on historical events: the different attempts of France to control the Kingdom of Naples during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They might also be an indirect echo of the tense years after the Treaty of Vervins was signed in 1598, when France tried to confront Spain's European power through proxy conflicts in the Netherlands and, especially, northern Italy (Feros 264-68). However, this constant French menace never materializes in *La inocente Laura*. The real danger is private and it comes exclusively from within the borders of Naples in the form of a treacherous courtier. In contrast to Cinzio's *novella* and Greene's *James IV*, no outside force brings destruction in *La inocente Laura*. This is figuratively announced in the first scene of the play, when Ricardo is harassing the Duchess of Santángel and compares himself to the Trojan prince Paris, to which the Duchess responds the following way:

Como tu deseo es vano,  
así tu ejemplo lo ha sido.  
Que si Grecia a Troya abrasa  
porque Paris huésped fue,  
mira tú cómo podré  
dejar abrasar mi casa. (340).

The Duchess' words foretell the destruction that will befall her and her house during the play and points to the internal nature of the harm she will suffer. Ricardo's lies have the effect of corrupting other characters such as the Duchess of Santángel or Laura's husband, thus spreading evil among others: the Duchess decides to falsely accuse her husband of plotting against the king, knowing that this will mean his death, whereas the loving husband of Laura does not hesitate to try to murder her in order to have revenge because of his jealousy. Ricardo concentrates the guilt that in Cinzio's *novella* is associated to the King of Scots, and that in Greene's *James IV* is shared by the lustful King and Ateukin.

Although forgotten today, *La inocente Laura* must have had a certain degree of success at its time, and it certainly generated interest among other writers. So much, in fact, that it was twice translated and adapted for other early modern European stages. The first adaptation was done by French playwright Antoine Le Métel d'Ouville: it was actually his first play, a tragicomedy titled *Les Trahisons d'Arbiran* and published as a quarto in 1638. The second adaptation represents a trip back home, for *La inocente Laura* was reworked by Italian playwright Gianbattista Pasca into his play *I tradimenti malriusciti*, which was published as a quarto in 1654. D'Ouville and Pasca follow closely Lope's *La inocente Laura* in relation to the main elements of their plots, but both playwrights also introduce their own changes. By looking at these modifications, we can see what aspects of Lope's play caught the imagination of his contemporaries. Not surprisingly, these elements are related to the Spanish playwright's original *amplificatio* of the source material, which stresses the role that the court and Ricardo play in the configuration of *La inocente Laura*.

As the titles of both adaptations clearly indicate, it was Lope's creation of the treacherous Ricardo what interested d'Ouville and Pasca most, and both playwrights stressed the role played by the evil courtier in their own adaptations. In *I tradimenti*

*malriusciti*, the shift to the antagonist as the main focus of the play is made explicit by Pasca in the dedication to the Marchesa di San Giovanni that he included in publication of the play, where he talks about “i tradimenti amorosi dell’appassionato, non meno che dissaventurato Conte d’Aversa—who is the equivalent of Ricardo in Pasca’s play—, ch’è il soggetto principale di questa mia Tragicomedia” (§2v). The story of *I tradimenti malriusciti* follows closely *La innocente Laura*, and the most significant changes are the addition of a couple of comical scenes led by Neapolitan servants, comical *lazzi* in the vein of many other similar scenes in mid-seventeenth century Italian theater, as Carmen Marchante Moralejo (107-28) has studied. It is therefore noteworthy that Pasca saw the treacherous courtier Ricardo as the real protagonist of Lope’s play, thus leaving Laura, the original female lead character, in a secondary position regarding his own presentation of the plot via the title and dedication of *I tradimenti malriusciti*.

As Anne Teulade’s analysis of the tragicomedy *Les Trahisons d’Arbiran* reveals, d’Ouville also follows closely most of Lope’s *La innocente Laura* and reproduces an identical constellation of characters, with the main antagonist being renamed Arbiran. At the same time, d’Ouville proceeds to eliminate and add elements to Lope’s play, and both strategies work in the same direction: to focus on the villainous nature of the antagonist and stress his evil wrongdoings in the court. On the one hand, d’Ouville eliminates a number of scenes present in *La innocente Laura* in order to lighten the development of the plot. These cuts focus on Lope’s third act, as d’Ouville gets rid of most of the story related to Laura’s recovery and return to Naples, and instead basically only uses the scenes related to Ricardo present in the third act of *La innocente Laura*. Therefore, Arbiran becomes the main focus on the action, and who was once the lead female character is actually forgotten for a significant number of scenes after she is left for dead in the final third of the plot.



D'Ouville's original additions go in the same direction, as he expands the atmosphere of Lope's play of the court as a space affected by the transgressions of a nobleman. These additions are mostly brief—some significant words during important dialogues, a few lines here and there—and reinforce the critical tone of the court that we find in Lope's play. For example, the invective against life in the court present in the first act of *La inocente Laura* is slightly cut in d'Ouville's play. However, he compensates this by including a second, much longer critique of life in the court at the beginning of the fourth act, in the form of a sixty-eight line monologue said by a servant. This new tirade—which develops the image of the court as a space dominated by appearances and where trickery is the way to acquire honor—is situated by d'Ouville right before the scene where the female protagonist is stabbed. Its inclusion right before this critical moment of the plot serves to underline how the lies that pervade the court have disastrous consequences for innocent individuals.

Finally, the deceitful nature of Arbiran—d'Ouville's name for Lope's character Ricardo—is stressed slightly more in this adaption through some minor modifications. For example, the king is a lot more suspicious of his half-brother's true intentions the first time that they meet, and when he is told that the Duke is conspiring against him, the King of Naples considers this a malicious calumny that Arbiran has made up in order either to return to the court or to damage the Duke. D'Ouville also adds a number of brief monologues in different parts of the play, and a vast majority of them are given to the character of Arbiran. The objective of these monologues is, once more, to focus the audience's attention on this character and underline his role in the conflict, as we are offered several glances into his schemes and wicked thoughts. The play ends precisely with a monologue by Arbiran, in which he laments that his lust has led him to disaster.

In conclusion, Lope de Vega's *La inocente Laura*, far from being a play that is just a "continuo embrollo", as Cotarelo (xix) put it, is a text located within a transnational network of early modern European literary works. By analyzing some key decision made by Lope when adapting Cinzio's *novella* for the stage with a comparative and contrastive perspective, we can better understand the Spanish playwright's used of his source material and how it circulated through a cross-cultural exchange. This intertextual movement is not merely linear, but transformative: Lope re-read Cinzio's *novella* within the specific political domain of his time, just like Robert Greene had done in England a few years earlier, and therefore expanded the theme of the court as a space of deceit, where a bad courtier causes havoc. This sets *La inocente Laura* apart from other contemporary plays by Lope that openly celebrate the court and its favorite, and showcases how the Spanish playwright also explored the darker side of court life on the stage during the 1600s. This perspective was continued and expanded by d'Ouville and Pasca's later adaptations, which illustrate the way Lope's play was read by his contemporaries. *La inocente Laura* emerges as a text that connects Lope de Vega with Giraldi Cinzio, Robert Greene, Antoine Le Métel d'Ouville and Gianbattista Pasca: a perfect example of the early modern transnational world.

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<sup>1</sup> For some of the most recent scholarship on this matter, see Romera Pintor (“Lope”; “De Giraldis”), Muñoz (113-19) and Resta and Domínguez Martínez.

<sup>2</sup> I give further details on the connections between Cinzio’s *novella* and *La inocente Laura* in the prologue to the critical edition of this play that I am working on.

<sup>3</sup> Like Lope, Greene also expands his source by incorporating his own original theatrical elements, such as the framed structure with the Scot gentleman Bohan and Oberon, King of the Fairies; a more complex love story surrounding Ida; the characters of the clown Slipper and the dwarf Nano, or scenes related to the Scottish nobility and symbolic characters such as of the Lawyer, the Merchant, and the Divine. All of these are elements that I will not focus on here: see Sanders, Leggatt, and Braunmuiler.

<sup>4</sup> Cinzio’s own *Arrenopia* delves into topics not present in the original *novella*, but in a completely different direction, since “*Arrenopia* is primarily a discussion play dealing with the topical subjects of dueling and military procedure” (Horne 141).

<sup>5</sup> I therefore differ from the classification of *La inocente Laura* as a *comedia palatina* as it currently appears in the database Artelope (Oleza *et alii*). Scholars such as Fausta Antonucci (148-49) and Christoph Couderc (“L’adaptation”) have associated *La inocente Laura* to the genre of the tragedy or tragicomedy, and both the source material and Lope’s treatment of it, as I present in this article, only reinforce the characterization of *La inocente Laura* as a *drama palatino*—although with a *lieto fine*.

<sup>6</sup> *La inocente Laura* is also the first time that Lope used one of Cinzio’s *novelle* to write a full-fledged *drama palatino*, as earlier plays based on *Degli Hecatommithi* are either

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urban comedies or *comedias palatinas*. Lope's *La discordia en los casados*, written in 1611, is his only other Cinzio-inspired play that clearly develops as a *drama palatino*.

<sup>7</sup> In this sense, Lope amplifies the role that lust plays in Cinzio's *novella* by also using it as a motive for Ricardo's actions, whereas Greene's Ateukin acts for material gains.