Luis Vélez de Guevara and Court Life

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At the very outset of his literary career Luis Vélez had aspired to becoming a poetic celebrant of the Hapsburg dynasty. At the age of twenty he published in Seville (1599) a poem marking the occasion of the marriage of King Philip III and Margarita of Austria. His position at this time in the household of Cardinal Rodrigo de Castro, Archbishop of Seville, "que tuvo la más ilustre casa de criados qu[e] ha habido en España," indicates that he was well-placed for an attack on the walls of the royal court itself.[1] As at other moments in the poet's life, however, death acted inopportunely, with the result that only after some years of foreign military service did his chance come again.

Various clues point to Luis Vélez having been at the new court at Valladolid in 1603, but it is only in 1608 that evidence emerges of his connexion with the powerful family of the Sandovales, one of whom, the Duke of Lerma, was the king's favourite. At this time Vélez was a member of the household of Lerma's second son, the Count of Saldaña. We do not know when he began to serve Saldaña, but he may have joined not long after the Count married into another powerful family at court, that of the Infantado, in 1603.[2] Whatever the facts in this regard, we know that he was in good literary company, for Saldaña was a solid patron of the arts, if only a mediocre practiser of poetry, and to such a honey pot other poets gathered: Lope de Vega, Cervantes, Soto de Rojas, Salas Barbadillo, and Coronel y Salcedo (possibly identifiable with the future commentator on Góngora). However, if we single out among these literati the name of Antonio de Mendoza, scion of a relatively obscure branch of the great Infantado family, it is because his friendship and rivalry with Luis Vélez entwine careers which for the next thirty years or so would be tied to the court.

For such a career, the year 1608 seemed crucial, since it saw the publication by Luis Vélez of a more ambitious piece of dynastic celebration, combined with a flattering picture of his master, Saldaña. The *Elogio del Juramento del Serenissimo Principe Don Phelipe Domingo, Quarto deste*

nombre described the occasion and ceremony of the administration of the oath to the young prince Philip. In a complimentary poem to this volume Lope suggested (as indeed did Antonio de Mendoza in *his* contribution) that the royal road now lay open before the author; but it was Soto de Rojas who stated most unequivocally what that chance could offer Luis Vélez, here already known as Lauro:

> De un poderoso Rey tienes ayuda
> Lauro, sube a las salas de la vida
> Sin temor de fortuna, tiempo, o muerte.

Soto also added a reference to the suspicions and envy from which Vélez had hitherto suffered.[3] It would not be an improbable inference that these were the result of Luis's *cristiano nuevo* background.

The *Elogio* is not a great artistic success, indeed parts of it are dull; however, its ponderous lyricism already signifies a belief that a court occasion required a court style. Fortunately, despite the gilded language, the author cannot eschew the occasional sardonic touch. How marvellously, too, does he describe the royal progress up to the Church of San Jerónimo, with the noblemen's carriages awash in a sea of faces:

> Cuyo repecho de carroças lleno
> Vna armada de naues parecia
> En el Santelmo lleno de reflexos,
> Y espuma de la mar desde lexos.[4]

It is impossible to avoid contrasting this work with the ponderous prose *Elogio* to be written by Antonio de Mendoza for another prince in 1632.[5] There the author proves the slave of propriety, whereas Luis Vélez already reveals in 1608 that same liveliness as would mark his historical plays. Accurate reportage mingles with a love for colourful *costumbrismo* and a poet's fascination with the world of the court. He records with loving care the clothes of a nobility whose spiritedness is matched and symbolized by that of their horses. Indeed, the nobles' power as a class becomes manifest even in the very act of doing obeisance to their future monarch. Such an occasion could not but attract Luis Vélez: we sense his love for the trappings of aristocracy and his pursuit from afar of lineages that would establish him in their respect.

In one other way, too, the *Elogio* was important, for through it the court might begin to understand its participation in history. This Luis Vélez achieved in part by conveying the atmosphere of the *juramento* and its sense of a kingship that derived its authority from God Himself. Above all the poem was to convey, almost physically, the presence of Empire and of dynasty—for example, the "Español colérico y bizarro," the "Flamenco flemático," even the "Indio desbarbado" with his carpets dyed in "bárbaras matices," all bring their

offerings to the Prince.[6] Through the poet's observant eye the scattered minutiae, indeed the scattered realms of Empire, are drawn together into a meaningful pattern. The poet's function was nothing less than to make the body politic visible.

The *Elogio*'s success may be judged from a spiteful remark by the Duke of Sessa, suggesting that Vélez had become quite an expert as a composer of *relaciones* on public occasions.[7] Certainly in retrospect it would appear to the poet that he had at one literary stroke become the future king's "first creditor." Vélez even reminded Philip IV that as a young prince he had taken his first step in reading by perusing the *Elogio* and possibly other poems celebrating his "heroicas mercedes."[8] Luis Vélez's position in 1608 seemed promising for other reasons, too, since he had found himself a place on the Lerma political bandwagon and would rise in Saldaña's service from *criado* to *gentilhombre.* As in the case of Lope in the Duke of Sessa's household, Vélez's duties were as myriad as they were uncertain. They are laughingly recounted in *El Caballero del Sol* (1617), where the author in the guise of Merlín lists his functions:

> Vn camarero,
> mayordomo, maestresala,
> tesorero, secretario,
> que le responde a sus cartas,
> contador, cavallerizo,
> paje, lacayo, nonada,
> de Don Roque mi señor,
> un Cavallero de España.[9]

To this the poet in real life might have added that his small pension was also an inducement to write and thereby help give life and vigour to the literary coterie of which his master Saldaña was the centre.

Inevitably he was now also a *pretendiente* at the royal court, a role he introduces into his plays as a comic, acquiescent projection of himself. What documentation we have reveals the extent to which he depended on the successful petitioning for jobs. In a *memorial* of 1622, with reference to a post in the household of the Infante-Cardenal, Vélez cast himself jocularly in the role of a sort of wandering (but hopeful) Jew: "en mi fe constante / soy Luis de Espera-en-Infante, / como Juan de Espera en Dios." Nevertheless, even where his hopes were rewarded there was uncertainty about obtaining his financial dues. In a *memorial* of 1626 he would refer sarcastically to his masters, saying that they were "tan fanfarrones de bolsas, / . . . / que aunque con plagas les pidan, / no darán un alfiler."[10] Meanwhile, at this earlier stage, he seemed at least in the right place, poised for advancement under the banner of the Sandovales when the appropriate moment came.

His role in the somewhat tumultuous academy of Saldaña, of which we first get wind in 1605 and which continued (perhaps only at intervals) until

1612, enables us to understand the kind of audience, composed of fellow poets and nobles of the court, to whom he and others sought to make themselves known. That group of *ingenios de la corte,* as shadowy and changing as its patrons and its name, would last into the twenties and the reign of a new *privado.*[11] Two commissions in the 1610s gave Vélez access to a wider, yet still potentially influential, audience. The first was in 1616 for a play to celebrate the beatification of Isabel, Queen of Portugal.[12] The second commission, for a *fiesta* celebrated on the occasion of a royal visit to the palace of the King's favourite at Lerma in 1617, produced *El Caballero del Sol,* a play more in keeping with Vélez's characteristic "rumbo, el tropel, boato, la grandeza" to which Cervantes had alluded in the prologue to his own collected plays. Two features of this splendid occasion need mention. First, the *fiesta* (later given further publicity by Pedro de Herrera's account of it) witnessed the coming together of Luis Vélez's talent and that of another dramatic author, whose anonymity may have hidden the identity of Lerma's son-in-law, the Count of Lemos, who modestly presented a second play to the audience: for Vélez such an event must have been at the very least an accolade by association.[13] Second, the *ecijano* poet demonstrated at Lerma his readiness to bare a private emotion. *El Caballero del Sol* tells of the arrival in Spain of a ship rigged in black, and bearing the grieving English nobleman Febo, whose wife has recently been snatched from him by death's discourtesy. Among the several lyrical expressions of grief we find one in which Febo in the heat of the chase associates the animal's vain attempt to escape the hunter with the grim love affair between death and its beautiful victim:

> Aunque imites, animal,
> al viento, no ha de valerte
> para escapar de la muerte
> la espesura, ni el cristal,
> que al bolverse esse raudal
> arroyuelo, el Tanais frio
> fuera corto, humilde rio
> para el desseo que llevo
> de alcançar bruto tan nuevo
> con tan nuevo desvario.

Yet ultimately the play's central development reveals how mourning gives way to joy: Febo finds a new and radiant partner in marriage. It is not an improbability that this dramatic turn of events, much as the expressions of mourning that preceded it, were an echo of recent vicissitudes in the author's life, since his second wife died in 1615/16, and he was to remarry in 1618.[14] Here as elsewhere Vélez liked to take an audience into his confidence.

Other events in Luis Vélez's life at about this period reveal to what extent his court career was still subject to the whims of that *Fortuna* from whom Soto

de Rojas had in 1608 sought him immunity. It was certainly high time to make a move, since with the end of Philip III's reign almost in sight, new men were moving in to ensure that they would be in power when the new king ascended the throne. Perhaps as early as 1617 Antonio de Mendoza had begun to cultivate the new man, Olivares, with the result that he was to enter the new regime in 1621 not only with a court appointment, but as a close associate of the future Count-Duke. In contrast, although Luis Vélez detached himself from Saldaña's service at an earlier date (1618?) by entering the service of the Marquis of Peñafiel, he had not by so doing broken with the Sandoval faction; a fact that may have contributed to his being less well placed in 1619, when nemesis overtook the Sandovales and their allies.[15] It may well be, of course, that other influences were at work, for example, that Luis Vélez's known *linaje* made advancement less easy. Again, in contrast, Antonio de Mendoza could count on the help of the old Duke of the Infantado: it definitely was an advantage to have the better connexions. Whatever the reasons, Vélez certainly had occasion later on, despite his continuing admiration for Mendoza's poetic gifts, to feel resentment at the fact that his friend had so soon become a king's secretary, a favourite's favourite, and the darling of the court. He, in contrast, who had been with his friend in Saldaña's service and perhaps taught him the rudiments of the poetic art, was destined even after entry into palace employment to remain very much a minor constellation alongside the brilliant star of Antandro. It was not that the latter neglected Luis Vélez or that he remained beyond the reach of his friend's begging hand; the strain at times was simply too much, and certainly on one occasion exploded into a savage retort. Mendoza had made fun apparently of the poor reception given a play by Vélez, to which the latter had replied with a parody of some of his own verses, well known to the audience:

> Escollo armado de hiedra,
> Yo te conocí servicio;
> Ejemplo de lo que vale
> La mierda de los valídos.

On other occasions Vélez had been content to abase himself before his friend, or to overdo the flattery. Yet even then the resentment shows—for example, when in the *Diablo Cojuelo* he pays Antandro a very handsome compliment as "the supreme genius of La Montaña," he cannot resist taking a side-swipe at the "agasajos de su fortuna."[16]

It was a fact, nevertheless, that at the court of Philip IV someone of Vélez's *linaje* stood a better chance: Olivares and his associates were quite favourable to Jews as well as to those of a *cristiano nuevo* background. The *privado*'s own *converso* connexions were a factor here, but we must reckon also with the ethnic pragmatism which a depleted treasury enjoined.[17] It was a policy

that brought on him the wrath of critics and satirists, among them Quevedo in the savage *Isla de los Monopantos.* But did that policy help Luis Vélez on his way? The evidence hardly suggests that it did. More probably he was affected by what he saw of others who, though of doubtful *linaje* like himself, obtained advancement or favours, or even gained entry into the Military Orders, supposedly closed to those not strictly *limpios de sangre.* This is the context in which best to interpret Vélez's well-known attack in *El Diablo Cojuelo* on the "ropería de los agüelos." On this clothier's stall you may swap ancestors when the one you have does not suit you, or is rather worn. Furthermore, by spending some money, Vélez adds, you can choose the ancestor most suitable to you. Vélez's objections were those of someone passionately convinced of his own noble lineage (however distorted by fantasy or prudence), who had failed for lack of money and connexions to gain the *hábito* that others had acquired by stealth and money.[18]

What is interesting, and perhaps surprising, in Luis Vélez's case is the openness with which the *cristiano nuevo* connexion is admitted and exploited, in the little we know of his private dealings as well as on the stage. Reference was made earlier to a *petición* of 1622 in which he cast himself, at least by inference, in the role of the Wandering Jew. In another *memorial* to the King, Vélez asked for financial assistance to attend the royal *jornada* to Zaragoza in 1626. His intermediary on this occasion was the Count-Duke's nephew, Diego de Guzmán, Patriarch and future cardinal. In the poem Vélez refers to him thus: "el Patriarca, segundo / Abrahán, mi amparo fiel, / Don Tobías de Guzmán, / segundo Melchisedec."[19] But the poet was more circumspect in another *memorial* directed to the Count-Duke himself. Indeed the tone is devoutly, if irreverently, Catholic. The saints of the court, including "San Mendoza de las Musas," can intercede on Vélez's behalf. However, his petition for aid ends with an indirect reference to the imprecatory tones of the Psalmist, prudently disguised in the words of the Litany, "Te rogamos audi nos."[20]

In his plays Vélez sometimes casts his *gracioso* in a *converso* guise. The purpose was humorous, but the humour can only have obtained a full response from that portion of the audience which was aware of Vélez's social origins. For example, Abril in *A lo que obliga el ser rey* admits: "Que vengo / de Noe por linea recta / y es el arca mi solar, / y mi lunar la despensa." This *caballero* then presents his petition in terms that would invite identification with the author himself: he asks for the *merced* of:

> la plaça muerta
> de Contador de figuras,
> que en la Corte salen y entran,
> trayendolas por escrito;
> con tal, que cada vna dellas
> me pague un marauedi.[21]

Vilhán, in *El amor en vizcaíno,* is likewise a *converso.* He recognizes the elm tree at Guernica as the very place where Adam sinned, and when he hears himself condemned to prison or death, he exclaims: "Sea conmigo el laud / en que tocò Ieremias, / y la harpa de David."[22] Costanilla in *Más pesa el rey que la sangre* is openly of Jewish descent, even to the detail of having adopted a surname: "y este apellido tomé / De haber nacido en la plaza / de la Costanilla misma."[23]

Martín in *El Conde don Pero Vélez* is a more subtle case. The author, rather than present this figure openly as a *converso,* uses him as a vantage point from which to attack a court that condones the hypocrisy, the "false surnames," the way in which the *hábito* of a Military Order is granted on the basis of trumped-up genealogies. Given such a situation Martín can hardly be blamed for justifying his own line of prevarication: "Porque la razón de estado / del mundo es el «sí» y el «no», / y entre el «no» y el «sí» fundó / todo quanto á fabricado."[24] Vélez exploits a similar dramatic technique in *La Luna de la Sierra.* Here the critical *persona* is the villager Mengo, who claims that in the *sierra* they can find a suitable *cristiano viejo* match: "Sin andar escudriñando / Si es ancho, alto ó pequeño, / Si es derecho ó corcovado." If this was of any importance, he adds, there would be farriers for husbands as well as for horses![25]

But Vélez's greatest *gracioso* is not to be found in a *comedia,* but in *El Diablo Cojuelo.* This *persona* likewise is a man of many surnames, whose lineage on all sides is as insubstantial as the wind: he is "Don Cleofás Leandro Pérez Zambullo, hidalgo a cuatro vientos, caballero huracán y encrucijada de apellidos." That this disciple of the devil may be a *cristiano nuevo* is further suggested by the information that he is an "hombre con el previlegio del bautismo."[26] If in this case the *gracioso* is not exactly a moralising judge of the folly he sees, he is at least the means of revealing it to the reader in all its confusion, hypocrisy, and lack of values.

Vélez's works, apart from their aesthetic values, may be seen as an expression of court life. In this aspect they manifest a double vision: one portrays in some detail the everyday life of the royal court, its customs, duties, entertainments, and preoccupations; the other portrays court ideals and values, bolsters its dynastic and political aims, and serves both as flattering interpreter and mordant critic.

As a court poet Luis Vélez does not appear to have been prolific. Nevertheless, what remains of his occasional verse gives us a clear idea of its social function. Like Antonio de Mendoza and certain other contemporaries whose literary life was spent in or around the court, he seems to have enjoyed producing a pleasant yet insubstantial lyricism. Vélez participated gamely, too, and with occasional distinction, in the pastoral idyll that thrived along the banks of the Manzanares after the court's return to Madrid from its brief exile in Valladolid. Here is a sample:

Asi el abril de tus años
dure primaberas muchas,
y no trueque en blanca plata
el sol de tus trenças rrubias.

What at times lifts these pieces above the trite are the metaphors that suddenly infuse their delicate make-believe world:

El disanto fuiste al vaile,
y tendió sobre tu aldea
el sol pabellones de oro
abrill tapetes de felpa.[27]

Such ballads of village life are found in Antonio de Mendoza and Lope de Vega also. Vélez's compositions on the theme of the sad shepherdess represent another contribution to poetic fashion. We find an example in *El Conde don Pero Vélez,* where in the appropriate setting of a royal court Elvira sings:

Melancólica çagala,
si están en años tan verdes
tus ermosos ojos tristes,
¿cómo estará el sol alegre?[28]

In a more traditional elegiac form a courtly shepherd in *El Caballero del Sol* laments the death of his beloved:

A su difunta esposa
llorava estas endechas,
loco un Pastor de amores,
lastimando à las piedras.[29]

If Vélez sought a more direct response from his court audience by means of the autobiographical reference, he may also thereby have infused more depth of feeling into a conventional song.

Vélez's exercises in fashionable lyrical genres provide one kind of evidence for his contribution to court poetry. We may glean much, too, from a study of his potential audience and the social settings in which his poetry was enjoyed. On the one hand, he wrote for people who loved to hear poetry recited, or preferred to read it for themselves in the numerous manuscript *cancioneros* in circulation—one such typical collection of "Poesías diversas" contained pieces not only by Vélez, Mendoza, Lope, and others, but by the Count of Saldaña, a fact that suggests the manuscript's origin in the Count's literary court during the first two decades of the century. On the other hand, Vélez's lyrics helped supply material for the enjoyment of those who liked hearing poems sung to instrumental accompaniment, especially the guitar.

A number of sources suggest this; for example, the inclusion of poems attributed to Vélez (or of others composed in the name of Lauro) in the 1621, or 1623, editions of Arias Pérez's popular *Primavera y flor de los mejores romances,* a collection arguably intended to provide *letras* for songs.[30] Or again, there is the songbook belonging to Joseph del Corral, a court official who began keeping a commonplace book in 1625 in which he copied out, apparently for singing purposes, the words of songs that took his fancy. He included Vélez's "Soueruia esta Galatea," in a text whose considerable number of variants in relation to another known version would suggest the popularity of this song.[31]

The study by E. M. Wilson and Jack Sage of Calderón's use in his own plays of snatches or of complete poems from other poets demonstrates how popular at least one of Vélez's *letras* was. The *romance* "Escollo armado de hiedra"—"tan aplaudido," López de Galarza tells us—was not only used by Calderón in two plays but drawn on by other contemporaries in parodic forms that could only be properly appreciated if the original text were known.[32] Indeed, attention has already been drawn to Vélez's own use of it in this way.

The poet's familiarity with those occasions when his own poems and those of others were sung is made clear in several places. In *El Diablo Cojuelo* some stage musicians are on their way to another engagement, "con las guitarras en cajas delante de los arzones." *Reinar después de morir* opens with a concert proper as several songs—including a variant of one that also occurs in Antonio de Mendoza's *Cada loco con su tema,* "Pastores de Manzanares / yo me muero por Inés"—are sung for the Prince whilst he is dressing. The musicians afterwards praise him as a model of generosity and then, in a new and metaphoric setting, the birds perform in concert when "a un tiempo hicieron salva / los músicos de cámara del alba."[33] It is the text of *El Diablo Cojuelo,* however, which best and most fully re-creates how the court and its nobles celebrated and entertained in song. The occasion is a meeting of a Sevillian academy that probably really existed. As a result we can enjoy at more than three centuries' remove the atmosphere in which a *romance,* not Vélez's, but his friend Antandro's, was performed: "Y sacando una guitarra una dama de las tapadas, templada sin sentillo, con otras dos cantaron a tres voces, un romance excelentísimo de don Antonio de Mendoza."[34]

At this academy meeting Don Cleofás gives a dramatic recitation of a sonnet which Vélez had originally written for a royal masque in Madrid in February 1637. It was also read a few days later at the splendid *Academia Burlesca,* in which Luis Vélez acted as president.[35] At a much earlier date he had included an academy meeting scene in *El Caballero del Sol,* a recollection perhaps of Saldaña's academy or of one of the others which followed it at the royal court. In this we hear how the subjects are distributed and listen to some of the subsequent compositions: Paris is given the task of painting the house

of Jealousy; Florisel writes about the bird which Jacinta carries in her cage; Píramo, to whom falls a "copla castellana," represents memory as a canvas on which love's favours are painted.[36] Opinions may vary about the quality of the poetry produced for such academies, but not of their importance as a stage for a poet such as Luis Vélez. Here, as on more informal private occasions, it was his duty to entertain, to exercise wit and humour as in the satirical *vejámenes,* and in general to contribute to that life of flirtation and gallantry that helped while away the tedium of the court. A characteristic moment is represented in *Reinar después de morir,* when Doña Inés recites for her servant the poetic gloss sent her on some lines by Lope de Sosa, "Mi vida, aunque sea pasión / no querría yo perdella."[37] She has been so impressed by it as to have committed it to memory. Thus a stage character enacts for us how poetry was written, recorded, preserved, and ultimately communicated anew. In this process the court poet often gave the initial impetus.

This brief scene from *Reinar* also instances Vélez's use of the stage boards to record both the intimate and the public moments in court life. What Moreto achieved for the *bourgeois* interior Vélez did for the *palacio.* Although the scope of the present article precludes a comprehensive account, the following examples will give an idea of the variety of topics. In *Del capitán prodigioso,* the court of a Transylvanian prince enacts what must have been a familiar ritual in Madrid: the Prince listens to, and heeds, the requests of some subjects who come before him.[38] In *El amor en vizcaíno,* the signatories at the court of Navarre put their names to the *capitulaciones* for a royal marriage. Afterwards the Infanta Estrella, who has acted only out of obedience, expresses her sadness by means of a metaphor from court diplomacy:

> Id pluma sangriento harpo[n],
> ya por mi mano cruel,
> desde el arco del papel,
> a passarme el coraçon.[39]

Indeed, of Luis Vélez's plays, this one most completely portrays a royal setting, a fact probably accounted for by its having been composed for a court occasion in 1637, with deliberate echoes of his palace success, *El Caballero del Sol,* twenty years earlier. In particular, Vélez reestablished his reputation for *rumbo* and *tropel* on the stage, since in addition to some colourful Basque court scenes he introduced a live tourney, with the added attraction of a "Spanish" revenge on the King of France—as popular a feature with an audience of the late 1630s as would have been the prospect of an English match in the late 1610s when *El Caballero del Sol* was performed.

More typically, however, it was the small print of palace life that attracted Vélez: in *A lo que obliga el ser rey,* Abril, dressed up in new livery, is off to the "archivo de Simancas" to play *cañas*; in *El Rey don Sebastián,* the courtiers comment that the King has been given his shirt, a sign that he will soon be

ready to meet them, and to be met ultimately with his secretary's remark: "Aquestos memoriales se quedaron / sin consultar anoche"; in *El Conde don Pero Vélez,* Don Pero and Doña Blanca, in an ambiguous exchange of sentiments, make love speak the language of diplomacy, with talk of commissions, ciphers, and chancelleries, of "seeking favour" and "speaking on someone's behalf," of "having recourse to" pen as well as tongue.[40]

But Vélez did not neglect the graver aspects of court life. *Privanza* was a recurring theme, natural during the reigns of Lerma and of Olivares. At times he was rather crudely propagandistic on its behalf. In *A lo que obliga el ser rey,* kings should have, we are told, "co[n] quien . . . / descansen, con quien repartan / el graue peso que tienen / en los ombros," a statement echoed in *El Conde don Pero Vélez,* with a plainer reminder that it is a good king who sees the need for such help.[41] But at other moments Luis Vélez viewed *privanza* in its real human context—Pero Vélez suffers the envy and hatred of others because of his position; his fellow courtiers, too, recognize the continuing need for circumspection and caution, lest they fall victim to a king's unreflecting wrath.[42] In this play *privanza* is looked at, too, from the point of view of the wife or beloved who jealously sees it as a mistress who demands complete submission from her man.[43] In quite a different vein Hipólita in *A lo que obliga el ser rey* tenderly implores her husband to lay down the burden of office. What might have been another tired exercise on the subject of *tranquilla quies* emerges as truthful and poignant:

> Gozaremos de las cosas,
> como son, no como agenas,
> con la pressa, y la ambicion
> del cuydado.[44]

They will be free also from the palace's "puntualidad inmensa, / y estas paredes que abortan / humanas sierpes, y fieras."

Vélez considered kingship as the natural and best form of government. It should not escape attention that his choice of medieval Spanish kingdoms or of obscure and remote principalities as the locales for his plays does not spring simply from a love of the unusual or exotic. Such monarchic or princely forms of government may be regarded as prefigurations as well as partial replicas of the monarchy of Vélez's own day. They are similar, too, in being placed in testing situations, often where contending religious loyalties are involved. *El Rey don Sebastián* is particularly interesting, since in portraying a recent disastrous Christian venture in North Africa in which a potentially outstanding Portuguese king lost his life, Vélez recreates a military and religious conflict similar to the Europe of the 1620s, when the Hapsburg Empire was struggling to maintain a political and religious hegemony not only against the Moslem in the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe, but against

the Protestant infidels of the North. Furthermore, Sebastián, like Philip IV of Spain, a grandson of Charles V, is portrayed as a typically spirited member of the Hapsburg family: indeed the poetic portrait of Sebastián might easily have been taken by the audience as one of Philip himself.[45] But the lesson would not be lost on them, nor on the present King, that Sebastián's tragedy stemmed from inexperience, bad advice, and certain basic weaknesses of character.

Vélez's treatment of kings was never totally uncritical. In *Virtudes vencen señales,* written perhaps not long after the death of Philip III, Filipo not only tells an assembled court of a king's high office and its attendant cares, but makes clear the view that his own success can only depend on the cooperation of his people, on their good advice and help. He must also keep in direct touch with them and listen to their complaints.[46] A king may therefore fail, a theme which recurs in Vélez's *comedias.* In *A lo que obliga el ser rey,* we see a young Alfonso (whom we recognize as the future Alphonse the Wise) subject to human frailities and temptations. Indeed, Hipólita, whom he attempts to seduce, upbraids him:

> quien se enfrena es valeroso,
> solo es sabio quie[n] se ve[n]ce.
> No es ser Rey ser dueño de ho[m]bres,
> saber ser Rey es ponerse
> entre aquellos que gloriosos
> nombre de Dioses merecen.[47]

Vélez's plays breathe dynastic expansionism and, within its restricted meaning at this time, Spanish chauvinism. The Admiral, in response to Filipo's inaugural speech in *Virtudes vencen señales,* declares a hope that they may now "hazernos dueños del mundo."[48] Although the association between kingship and war is not as blatant in Luis Vélez as in Antonio de Mendoza, it does appear. In *La nueva ira de Dios* Aurelia declares: "Las armas son la sangre de los Reyes, / por ella teme el que la Ley no guarda, / temiendo y conquistando nueuas greyes."[49] Sometimes the point is conveyed in a more indirect way. In *La Luna de la Sierra* the evocation of a warlike and ruthless Queen Isabel, ready now after her conquest of Granada to move forward to Africa, could as easily express the belligerent spirit of a Spain involved in the Thirty Years War. Sometimes the message comes through in the portrayal of heroic action or of character: the Marqués del Basto in the play of that name is a brave officer in Charles V's army; *El Hércules de Ocaña* was actually a popular soldier hero, Alonso de Céspedes, who had likewise fought for the Emperor. This "honor de España," known in the two worlds for his exploits, must have represented the epitome of the Spanish warrior, brave, impetuous, and strong.[50]

In the present context we shall consider only in very general terms the criticism which Luis Vélez directed explicitly at palace society. We have already seen in passing his express disapproval of its deceptions and envies, its worries as well as its sheer grind. Likewise, as a *converso* he noted with macabre satisfaction how a society which treasured a nobility of the blood was forced in practice to use false genealogies and the blandishments of money. The frankness with which even extreme criticism might sometimes be expressed is plain from Roque's speech about Spain in *El Caballero del Sol*, delivered, it will be recalled, before King, *privado*, and assembled court:

> Muchos vsos,
> poco amor, mucha ignorancia,
> la nobleza desvalida,
> y la fortuna muy falsa
> con los que mas merecemos,
> querer la gente ordinaria
> igualarse con nosotros;
> muy acabadas las casas,
> muy presumidos los necios,
> los discretos sin sustancia,
> los que nos sirven quexosos,
> ninguno verdad nos dize,
> todos lisonjas nos tratan
> quien nos busca, nos respeta,
> quien nos pide, nos engaña.[51]

Perhaps one could take more risks on what was after all a private occasion than in the public *corral*. For whatever reason, this play is more outspoken than most of Vélez's.

Martín at the end of *El Conde don Pero Vélez* realizes that although everyone else has been receiving *mercedes*, he himself has received nothing. His words not only express the author's own experience but indicate that exclusion is a formidable producer of critical opinions and attitudes, "pues llego / a ser mirón este rato."[52] The vision enjoyed by the excluded *voyeur* likewise permeates the social criticism in *El Diablo Cojuelo*. Nevertheless, failure to give due reward, that "ingratitud de la obligación" to which Pero Vélez refers, may drive a man thus treated to depend on an inner *valor*, on the practice of "la acción de la virtud" which seems to the Count Don Pero the only recompense.[53] It is difficult to say to what extent such attitudes came to Vélez as a direct and inevitable reaction to life's experience and to what extent they were an inherited feature of the *converso* social tradition—certainly they were characteristic of the latter. We are concerned here with these attitudes only to the extent that they impinged on Vélez as court entertainer.

In the first place, he gave his audience an alternative to a nobility based simply on lineage. Indeed his analysis on occasion is radical. We may quote Filipo's remarks in *Virtudes vencen señales* (a title in itself significant):

que no está en el testamento
de Adán cláusula que pueda
llamarme por heredero
más que a mí, pues las herencias
vinieron por tiranías
primero.

As M. G. Profeti has demonstrated in her edition of that play, the author put forward elsewhere, too, the argument that armed rebellion is justified because originally all property was theft and "El que tubo mas valor / de esotros se yço señor."[54] More characteristically, Vélez gave emphasis to the positive human quality derived from a dependence on inward resources. Tamburlaine in *La nueva ira de Dios* begins an autobiographical account with an answer to the rhetorical question "Whose child are you?" It runs: "Cuyo? hijo de mi mismo, / y mis obras, que mas quieres?" Later he remarks:

Este que digo he sido,
sin herencia ni hazienda,
ni conocida prenda,
casa, heredad ni egido,
por mi valor y brio,
quanto era ageno
conocia por mio.[55]

This inward dignity, this ethical autonomy, gives to some of Vélez's characters a particular human quality. On the one hand, they are often products of that interesting palace theatre epitomized in Antonio de Mendoza's *Más merece quien más ama* or his *Querer por sólo querer,* in which chivalry, pastoral, and Ethiopic novel combined to provide larger-than-life exemplars for the court to admire and emulate. In Vélez's characters, on the other hand, such elements are compounded with a different ingredient that may only be described as Cornelian.[56] Resolutely unbending towards themselves, they yet accord to one another the right to his or her own judgement and moral worth. Conflict may ensue, but on a basis of mutual respect and shared perspicacity. Thus in *Virtudes vencen señales,* in the fine exchange between Filipo and Leda at the end, the latter recognizes the reasons for Filipo's attempt to arrange a marriage in which she had no voice, but points out the consequences:

¿es razón que, por razones
de estado tuyas, me hagas
tan gran sinrazón a mí
que hasta en el gusto me agravias?

She complains that her moral freedom has been violated. Filipo in reply invokes those higher demands of kingship that impelled him, an argument

which Leda is obliged to accept.[57] In *El embuste acreditado,* Ludovico is caught between a public and a private duty. The former impels him to obey the needs of statecraft, a call made more seductive by the fact that it coincides with his loyalty to the lady he loves. The second impels him to the aid of a friend, although he knows that the latter is guilty of a moral delinquency. Notwithstanding, the conflict is resolved in favour of friendship, an inward and less easily defensible duty, whose only witness is God and whose only effect in this case is to alienate others.[58] Such moral isolation is a feature of other palace characters: the favourite isolated by a *privanza* that tests his moral fibre to the utmost, or a typical Vélez creation, the man come up from nothing, whose only claim is that which he can establish through his actions.

By giving the courtier something to aspire to, Vélez did offer the palace something positive. Like Quevedo or Cervantes, he charged the *villa y corte* with having become namby-pamby, with seeking the "cama blanda," the religion of courtesy and gallantry, while forgetting that true virtue is that practised by the "bravo soldado."[59] The front line in battle indeed enables a man to exercise true nobility:

> Son nobles padres aquí
> los brazos de cada cual
> .....
> aquí es título el valor,
> y el grande el que más pelea.[60]

However, his charges against the aristocracy are not to be construed as a desire to overthrow it, but simply to remind it of its duties and its departures from the path of virtue. Likewise, kings' excesses deserve censure, but kingship itself possesses "No sé qué secreta causa / de deidad."[61] If Luis Vélez's own position as an outsider enabled him to perceive the faults of the court more clearly, he remained ultimately its willing slave.

Notes

1 Emilio Cotarelo, "Luis Vélez de Guevara y sus obras dramáticas," *BRAE,* 3 (1916), 627-29. The quotation is from Juan Vélez de Guevara (p. 627). Cotarelo's article, from which other biographical details are taken, is found on pp. 621-52 of Vol. 3 and pp. 137-71, 296-308, and 414-44 of Vol. 4 (1917).

2 For details of Saldaña and his court, see Joaquín de Entrambasaguas, "Un olvidado poema de Vélez de Guevara," *Revista de Bibliografía Nacional,* 2 (1941), 91-176; and my *A Poet at Court: Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza (1586-1644)* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 19-20.

[3] For the text of the *Elogio* and accompanying poems as well as other details, see Entrambasaguas, "Un olvidado poema." The quotation from Soto de Rojas' poem is on p. 121.

[4] Entrambasaguas, "Un olvidado poema," p. 129.

[5] Antonio Hurtado de Mendoça, *Convocación de las Cortes de Castilla, y Iuramento del Príncipe nuestro señor, Don Baltasar Carlos . . .* (Madrid, 1632). See Davies, *A Poet at Court*, pp. 34-35.

[6] Entrambasaguas, "Un olvidado poema," p. 163.

[7] Entrambasaguas, "Un olvidado poema," p. 109, n. 30.

[8] Francisco Rodríguez Marín, "Cinco poesías autobiográficas de Luis Vélez de Guevara," *RABM*, 19 (1908), 62-78; *memorial* of February 1625, pp. 69-72.

[9] Luis Vélez, *El cavallero del sol. Comedia famosa* (Seville: Francisco de Leefdael, n.d.) (British Museum copy, press-mark 11728 f. 86: the catalogue suggests 1700?). Davies, *A Poet at Court*, p. 23, following Norman D. Shergold, *A History of the Spanish Stage from Medieval Times until the End of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1967), p. 255, erroneously described this play as being no longer extant.

[10] Rodríguez Marín, "Cinco poesías," pp. 66-67 and 73-76.

[11] See, e.g., Davies, *A Poet at Court*, pp. 19-25; José Sánchez, *Academias literarias del Siglo de Oro español* (Madrid, 1961); and Willard F. King, *Prosa novelística y academias literarias en el siglo XVII* (Madrid, 1963), passim. For the 1605 reference, see King, p. 43.

[12] Cotarelo, 3:648, who also gives the Cervantes reference quoted below (p. 647).

[13] A full account of the *fiesta* is given by Shergold. Pedro de Herrera wrote his *Translación del Santissimo Sacramento a la Iglesia Colegial de San Pedro de la villa de Lerma; con la Solenidad, y Fiestas, que tuuo para celebrarla el Excellentissimo Señor don Francisco Gomez de Sandoual y Roxas* (Madrid, 1618).

[14] *El cavallero*, p. 30. Cf. Cotarelo, 3:651 and 4:137.

[15] For these events and the comparison with Antonio de Mendoza, see Davies, *A Poet at Court*, pp. 24-29. Cf. Cotarelo, 4:138-41.

[16] For this relationship, see Davies, *A Poet at Court*, pp. 56-57. The stanza appears in Emilio Cotarelo, *El Conde de Villamediana: Estudio biográfico-crítico* (Madrid, 1886), p. 116n. I quote here (and later) from *El Diablo Cojuelo*, ed. Francisco Rodríguez Marín, Clásicos Castellanos (Madrid, 1918), pp. 249-50.

[17] See, e.g., Julio Caro Baroja, *Los judíos en la España moderna y contemporánea* (Madrid, 1962), II, 16 and 355-57.

[18] *El Diablo Cojuelo*, p. 84; and cf. Luis Vélez de Guevara, *El Conde don Pero Vélez y don Sancho el Deseado*, ed. Richard Hubbel Olmsted (Minneapolis, 1944), p. 95, the

conditional or doubtful affirmative, "«sí», responde el cauallero / quando [e]l hábito le dan." He made scathing reference to his own failure to obtain a habit despite noble descent in a *memorial* of 1626 (Rodríguez Marín, "Cinco poesías," p. 74). Cotarelo, *BRAE*, 4:154n., dates this to 1629, probably incorrectly.

19 Rodríguez Marín, "Cinco poesías," p. 75. Cotarelo (*BRAE*, 4:154n.) wrongly gives the Patriarch's name as Alonso Pérez de Guzmán. For Diego de Guzmán, see Gregorio Marañón, *El Conde-Duque de Olivares (La pasión de mandar)*, revised ed. (Madrid, 1945), p. 289. See also Patrick Gauchat, O.F.M. Conv., *Hierarchia Catholica* (Munich, 1935), IV, 204. He died 21 January 1631–see *Diccionario de Historia Eclesiástica de España* (Madrid, 1975), IV, 2458. The Olivares family is similarly treated by Vélez in *Más pesa el rey que la sangre y blasón de los Guzmanes*, in which it is said of Alonso Pérez de Guzmán *el Bueno*: "Imitaste a Abrahán / Con más invencible esfuerzo" (BAE, Vol. 45, p. 108).

20 Rodríguez Marín, "Cinco poesías," pp. 76-77.

21 *A lo que obliga el ser rey*, a *suelta* attributed to Lope de Vega, numbered 5 in a bound collection in the British Museum, *Colección de comedias sueltas . . .*, ed. J. R. Chorley, Vol. VIII, press-mark 11728 h. 14, 1-22. The *suelta* copy is defective, and its final folio, recto and verso, is supplied in handwriting. 8°, paginated 1-40, n.d., but BM catalogue suggests 1650? Refs. here by signature, hence E2.

22 Luis Vélez de Guevara, *El Amor en Vizcaino, Los zelos en Frances, y Torneos de Nauarra*, in *Parte diez y ocho, de comedias nuevas, escogidas de los mejores ingenios de España* (Madrid: Gregorio Rodríguez, 1662). British Museum copy, press-mark 11725 b. 18. The volume lacks continuous pagination. The *comedia*, 8°, is foliated 1-20 (A-C4^{v}). The quotation here is on fol. 5.

23 *Más pesa*, p. 96. On La Costanilla, see, e.g., Don Francesillo de Zúñiga, *Crónica*, the Count of Aguilar's words: "Tengo las narices de los de la Costanilla de Valladolid," in *Curiosidades bibliográficas*, ed. Adolfo de Castro, BAE, Vol. 36, p. 11.

24 *Pero Vélez*, pp. 77 and 94.

25 *La Luna de la Sierra*, in BAE, Vol. 45, p. 183.

26 *El Diablo Cojuelo*, pp. 15 and 30.

27 Angel Lacalle Fernández, "Algunas poesías en parte inéditas de Luis Vélez de Guevara sacadas de un manuscrito de la Biblioteca Nacional Matritense," *Revista Crítica Hispano-Americana*, 5 (1919), 5-6.

28 *Pero Vélez*, p. 59.

29 *El cavallero*, p. 28.

30 Pedro Arias Pérez, ed., *Primavera y flor de los mejores romances*, ed. J. F. Montesinos (Valencia, 1954), passim. The *cancionero* "Poesías diversas" is MS. 3700 in the Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid.

31 *Cancionero de Don Joseph del Corral*, ed. E. M. Wilson (Exeter, 1973), pp. 12-13. Luis Astrana Marín included this poem in his Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas, *Obras completas, verso* (Madrid, 1932), p. 35.

32 Edward M. Wilson and Jack Sage, *Poesías líricas en las obras dramáticas de Calderón: Citas y glosas* (London, 1964), pp. 60-61.

33 *El Diablo Cojuelo*, p. 131; *Reinar después de morir / El Diablo está en Cantillana*, ed. Manuel Muñoz Cortés, Clásicos Castellanos (Madrid, 1948), pp. 2 and 6. That Vélez, rather than Antonio de Mendoza, wrote "Pastores de Manzanares" is supported by the fact that the name of the lady in *Reinar* is Inés, but we have only one stanza in both cases, of which only the first couplets correspond. It is impossible to deduce whether the *músicos* actually performed a complete poem, let alone whether it was basically the same composition. For the text in *Cada loco*, see BAE, Vol. 45, p. 469. Cf. also the King's musicians *rondando* Esperanza in *El Diablo está en Cantillana*, p. 161.

34 *El Diablo Cojuelo*, pp. 249-50.

35 See *El Diablo Cojuelo*, p. 247 and note. Also Davies, *A Poet at Court*, pp. 62-63; and "Academia burlesca que se hizo en Buen Retiro a la Magestad de Philipo Quarto el Grande, Año de 1637," in Alfred Morel-Fatio, *L'Espagne au XVI^e^ et au XVII^e^ siècle: Documents historiques et littéraires* (Bonn, 1878), pp. 603-76.

36 *El cavallero*, pp. 14-16.

37 *Reinar después de morir*, pp. 51-52.

38 *Del capitán prodigioso, príncipe de Transilvania*, in *Ocho comedias desconocidas de Don Guillem de Castro, del Licenciado Damian Salustio del Poyo, de Luis Vélez de Guevara etc. tomadas de un libro antiguo de comedias, nuevamente hallado*, ed. Adolf Schaeffer (Leipzig, 1887), I, 174.

39 *El Amor en Vizcaino*, fol. 8^r-v^. For date and occasion, see Shergold, p. 288. Subsequent references, fols. 4^v^-5, 19.

40 *A lo que obliga*, E2; Luis Vélez de Guevara, *Comedia famosa del Rey don Sebastián*, ed. Werner Herzog (Madrid, 1972), p. 91; *Pero Vélez*, p. 69.

41 *A lo que obliga*, D5^v^; *Pero Vélez*, p. 63. There is specific praise for the *privado*, in this case Lerma, in *El cavallero del sol* (p. 1).

42 *Pero Vélez*, p. 108. Cf. courtiers' suspicions of someone's *privanza* in *El Diablo está en Cantillana*, p. 114; and *A lo que obliga*: "que la embidia siempre alcança / como sombra a la priuança" (E4).

43 *Pero Vélez*, p. 113.

44 *A lo que obliga*, D8^v^. The burdens of *privanza* are thus expressed also: "sin poder apenas / descansar entre tus braços, / ni aun la noche" (D5^v^). Cf. Sofonisba's appeal in *De Juliano apóstata* for the release of her husband: "haz que me entregue a mi esposo /

y que yo con êl me vaya, / aunque se queden perdidas, / renta, hazienda oficio, casas, / que en la mas remota sierra, / que a las nubes se leuanta, / viuirê con êl mudando, / vida, estado, padres, patria" (*suelta*, No. 6, in Vol. VIII of Chorley's *Colección de comedias sueltas*, 4°, no pagination or foliation, refs. by signature, hence $B3^{v}$-4).

45 *Don Sebastián*, pp. 75-77.

46 Luis Vélez de Guevara, *Virtudes vencen señales*, ed. M. G. Profeti (Pisa, 1965), pp. 147-51. The date of first performance is discussed on p. 39.

47 *A lo que obliga*, D4.

48 *Virtudes vencen*, p. 151.

49 *La nueva ira de Dios, y gran Tamorlan de Persia*, a *suelta* attributed to Lope de Vega, No. 9, in Vol. VIII of Chorley's *Colección de comedias sueltas*, actually fols. 91-113 of *Parte treynta y tres de doze comedias famosas de varios autores* (Valencia, 1642), fol. 96^{v}.

50 *El Marqués del Basto*, a *suelta* attributed to Luis Vélez, No. 8, in Vol. VIII of Chorley's *Colección de comedias sueltas*, 4°, no pagination or foliation; *El Hércules de Ocaña*, in Schaeffer, II, 284. The editor discusses the historical background on p. 178.

51 *El cavallero*, p. 18.

52 *Pero Vélez*, p. 130.

53 *Pero Vélez*, p. 127.

54 *Virtudes vencen*, p. 134. The second quotation (see p. 234 here) is from *Los novios de Hornachuelos*.

55 *La nueva ira de Dios*, fol. 99^{r+v}.

56 Cf. Octave Nadal, *Le Sentiment de l'amour dans l'œuvre de Pierre Corneille* (Paris, 1948), passim.

57 *Virtudes vencen*, pp. 156 and 162.

58 Luis Vélez de Guevara, *El embuste acreditado*, ed. Arnold G. Reichenberger (Granada, 1956).

59 *Del capitán prodigioso*, in Schaeffer, I, 257.

60 *El Hércules de Ocaña*, in Schaeffer, II, 255-56.

61 *Virtudes vencen*, p. 165.