Manly Men and Demonic Women: Constructions of Masculinity in the Spanish Ballads

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines masculinity in the Spanish ballad, specifically ballads that were published on or around 1600 in either broadsides or *romanceros*. Taking as a point of departure Colin Smith's assertion that the ballads "have something to say" to later audiences (5), the aim of this study is to determine how early modern masculinity is represented in the ballads, which, although medieval in origin, were published and widely read in the early modern period. The project first examines masculinity as portrayed in the Bernardo del Carpio ballad cycle in terms of appearances, moderation, and self-control, lineage, and leadership. It demonstrates that the texts reflect a medieval discourse on leadership and masculinity that was of interest to an early modern audience due to political and social changes in Hapsburg Spain. The second chapter investigates how men's honor is earned and lost through their responsibilities to each other as king, vassal, father, and son by examining the relationships among Bernardo, his father Sancho, and his uncle and king, Alfonso. It also draws conclusions about the ballad's popularity in the early modern era and conceptions of honor in early modern Spain. In the last chapter, the dissertation explores questions of masculinity in terms of women who pose a threat to masculine identity in the "La serrana de la Vera" and "La infantina" ballads, especially regarding marriage and anxieties about partaking in marriage as an institution that surfaced in medieval Spain and persisted in early modern Spain.

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT FEISTY WOMEN AND MANLY MEN SAY ABOUT MASCULINITY IN THE SPANISH BALLADS

What struck me the most when reading the *romances* for the first time was all the feisty women that appeared within them.[1] Even as I noted how strong, rebellious, or even demonic these women were, however, I also recognized how problematic it was to interpret their behavior as rebellious within the gender framework of the twenty-first-century United States. When I later studied proto-feminism in Golden Age literature, I was further intrigued by this phenomenon and my complex reaction to the *romances*. My response as a reader had been to want the strong women in texts such as "Rico Franco" and "La serrana de la Vera" to stand up to men and resist the oppressive situation of medieval or early modern women, but I also knew this was based on my own understanding of gender relations. The question that kept arising for me was whether it is possible to apply feminist theory to the study of literature from a period in which the gender system as we understand it did not exist. And if these strong, rebellious women were not intended as examples of the oppression of women or to inspire other women to resist that oppression, what was their function in these texts?

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[1] The *romance*, a traditional form of verse is an important part of the Spanish poetic canon. The traditional *romance* form is a poem of eight-syllable lines with assonant rhyme in the even lines, although this can vary. Many modern anthologies, including the ones cited in this dissertation, however, present the *romances* in sixteen-syllable lines with a caesura dividing the two eight-syllable hemistiches (Díaz-Mas 3).

Thus, my point of departure for studying masculinity in the *romances* was actually the women who appeared within them. Initially, I wanted to understand how the portrayal of strong women came to bear on men and masculinity. In reading the "Infantina" and the "Serrana" ballads, I had a hunch that the feisty women that interested me were meant as comments not on the state of women, although that was perhaps part of it, but rather or also on men's situation. Whether that was actually the case was the question I set out to answer, taking as a point of departure Colin Smith's contention that the ballads "have something to say" (5).[2]

This dissertation thus builds on Smith's contention that the value of the Spanish ballad is in its ethos (5). Before Smith's work, the ballads had a long history of standing in for chronicles in the minds of many Hispanists.[3] In large part because they refer to or draw on actual events for their plot points, many scholars have been led to read the *romances* for their historical content, focusing their research on what can be learned about Spanish history from the ballads or on the origin of events narrated within them. Indeed, although less frequently since Smith's work, most studies of the *romances* have

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[2] Please note that the bibliography is divided between primary and secondary sources for ease of use.

[3] See, for example, Diego Catalán's *Siete siglos de romancero (Historia y poesía)*. Other scholars who did the same include Ramón Menéndez Pidal and J. G. Lockhart. In her 1994 *Romancero,* Paloma Díaz-Mas states: "Algunos de esos romances serían compuestos a raíz de los hechos que narran, para servir de vehículo a las noticias recientes" (143). For an extensive bibliography of criticism on the *romances*, see Díaz-Mas's collection.

focused on what he describes as their "origins, relationships with epic and with history, oral transmission, variants, early printings, structure, style, etc." (5). In 1972, Smith questioned this approach, looking instead at the durable, resilient, and popular qualities in the *romance* that have inspired both artistic reverence and popular enjoyment throughout the centuries. As he argues, "It is clear that the *romancero viejo* must collectively have had something to say, some rational sense to enshrine and convey or at least a set of basic attitudes to life which are broadly shared, and therefore worthy of examination" (5).

If I want to explore the ethos of the ballads, as Smith describes it, the first question I must address becomes what it is about them that appeals to any given audience. When I began my research, I first focused on the Middle Ages when the ballads were actually composed, but as I learned more about their publication history and found that most of the versions I was working with were published in the 1530s or later, I began to wonder why. What was it that early modern readers found attractive about the ballads? Most of the ballads I examined, which have been collected in the Pan-Hispanic Ballad Project headed by Suzanne Peterson,[4] had been printed in the sixteenth century as *pliegos sueltos*, or broadsides,[5] or in *romanceros*, collections of *romances*. The difference

[4] I would like to acknowledge the invaluable work of Suzanne Peterson on the Pan-Hispanic Ballad Project. The project is duly cited in the chapters that follow, but without this comprehensive catalogue of *romances*, this examination and many others would be much more difficult to realize. There are some apparent misspellings, but they reflect the text as represented in original source and repeated in the Pan-Hispanic Ballad Project.

[5] Broadsides or broadsheets, *pliego suelto* in Spanish, are documents printed as single sheets meant for wide distribution. Their content usually consisted of ballads, news, or

between these texts and oral versions of the ballads is marked. Oral ballads are very disjointed and irregular, whereas the printed texts from the sixteenth century are not.

As Samuel Armistead observes, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, "El romance se hace propiedad de todos, desde los de más baja y servil condición hasta la nobleza más alta y los mismos reyes" (xvi). When the *romances* were first documented in the fourteenth century, the elite, learned class did not view the popular form as art, but at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries, their attitude toward the *romances* changed. As Armistead explains, the *pliegos sueltos* were in wide circulation during the first half of the sixteenth century, and by mid-century, large collections of ballads called *romanceros* were also printed, including Martín Nucio's *Cancioneros*, Esteban de Nájera's *Silva*, and Juan de Timoneda's *Rosas*. Later in the sixteenth century, new ballads written by erudite poets were also added to the genre, beginning with the publication in 1580 of the *Flores de romances* and in 1600 of the *Romancero general* (which includes the *romancero nuevo*) (Armistead xvi-xvii). Although interest in the ballads diminished during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it renewed again in the nineteenth century, which was soon followed by serious critical interest by scholars such as Ramón Menéndez Pidal and later by others such as Diego Catalán, Paul Bénichou, and Samuel Armistead.[6]

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proclamations, and their audience was usually common people in the streets. These broadsheets were popular between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries (Volker-Morris).

[6] For an extensive bibliography, see Díaz-Mas.

It is my contention that the Spanish ballads did have something significant to say to early modern readers about masculinity, particularly about their anxiety about masculinity during a period of perceived Spanish decline. We know that the scope of the *romances* selected for print in the sixteenth century was limited compared to the oral versions that were collected beginning in the twentieth century (Armistead xii). Paloma Díaz-Mas concurs with Armistead that compilers of the *romanceros* chose ballads according to the interest of the potential audience, citing Martín Nucio's justification for leaving some ballads out of the collection because they were not as aesthetically perfect or whole as one would like (44). The ballads that were printed and compiled in the sixteenth century differ from the oral corpus in theme and in form, which is why they are a reflection of sixteenth-century culture. These selected ballads appeared in print at the same time as conduct manuals, both circulating during the early modern period. Martín Nucio, for example, printed a version of *El cortesano* in 1544 (Calvo Rigual). The printing of these texts coincided with a shift in elite men's duties. With advances in military technology, men at court were no longer primarily defined by their military achievements, and writings from this time suggest that elite men were searching for new definitions of what it meant to be a man and ways in which to demonstrate this to the outside world. This was a matter of great importance among the upper classes, given a widespread fear of sodomy and effeminacy that some traditionalists considered to be a sign of and to have caused Spanish decline (Cartagena-Calderón 316-22).

I argue in these chapters that the Spanish ballads published in the sixteenth century played an important role in the discourse of gender and masculinity during their time period. As Leah Middlebrook has demonstrated, writers of this time "perceived a

fundamental link between poetry and some of the historical, political and social processes that were transforming Spanish codes of gender, power and privilege" (143). Although the Spanish ballads might not have reflected and been read by all echelons of Spanish culture during the medieval period, during the early modern period, they became part of the contemporary discourse on Spanish men. I thus agree with Gerry Milligan's contention that the art and poetry of the early modern period portray a process of "demonstrating, proving, and acquiring masculinity" (22) and argue that the Spanish ballads also participated in that discourse on early modern masculinity.

At the same time, the ballads do not belong to the early modern period alone. As Smith comments, there is something universal in the themes that the ballads address, and my own research uncovered three important themes that persisted from the medieval to early modern periods. The first, as seen in the Bernardo ballads, is that men should behave a certain way. What that meant does change over time, but the idea that there is an ideal manly man, a hegemonic masculinity, does not.[7] The second is that men have specific responsibilities and duties that they must fulfill to maintain their masculinity. The third, as found in the ballads discussed in the final chapter, is that there also were

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[7] *Hegemonic masculinity* is a complicated term employed by many scholars of masculinity. Although there is not a lot of consensus around its definition, I found those of Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell (later writing under the name Raewyn Connell), and John Lee the most helpful. My understanding from reading their texts is that hegemonic masculinity is an idealized set of standards and behaviors created by any group of men trying to exclude and oppress those who cannot or will not measure up to those standards and behaviors. These standards and behaviors change with culture.

reasons that people did not want to participate in the socially sanctioned gender roles of the time. Although these are very general ideas that could apply to almost any period, even our own, the ballads examined in this study are artifacts of one historical moment, and thus it focuses more precisely on what they would have meant to an early modern reader. In the case of the Bernardo ballads, I argue, their appeal seems based on a nostalgia for a time when, as perceived by those readers, men had more agency in their own life and were manly, courageous Spaniards, like Bernardo.

In the first chapter, "The Measure of a Man: Standards of Masculinity in the Bernardo del Carpio Ballads," I examine what the hegemonic masculinity of the time required of a king and of his vassals. In a survey of more than 100 ballads, I uncover several main elements in the ballads' presentation of Bernardo as the hero of the cycle and as the "ultimate man." As we shall see, these include a strong emphasis on his visual appearance, his lineage and legitimacy, his self-control and ability to act in a measured way, and, finally, his leadership skills and relationship to other men. The ballads make very clear that Bernardo is meant to be seen as the perfect knight and a manly man, which is communicated in part in through tensions between Bernardo's masculine fitness and the king's unmanliness and their respective political positions. This chapter also examines the qualities that Bernardo represented to early modern readers who perceived their country as in crisis due to a group of "weak" men.

Because interactions between men are so important in the ballads and to the construction of masculinity in the ballads, in the next chapter, "Paternity, Chastity, and Familial Honor in the Bernardo del Carpio Ballads," I posit that being a man means fulfilling specific responsibilities, especially when operating within the confines of a

particular honor system. The chapter delineates the relationships between Alfonso, Bernardo, and Sancho (Bernardo's father) and what each man is required to do for others to maintain his own honor and status. It examines the ways in which the characters threaten each other's efforts to maintain their honor and what that means for their masculinity, particularly in the fraught relationship between Alfonso and Bernardo. As we shall see, that tension exists on two levels of Alfonso and Bernardo's relationship, both the political (as king and vassal) and the familial (as uncle and nephew). Because the conflict between Bernardo and Alfonso arises from the imprisonment of Bernardo's father, the chapter also examines how Sancho's status affects Bernardo, including Bernardo's illegitimacy. It also argues that the ballad cycle reflects Alfonso's inability to meet his duties to those around him as a king because he does not father an heir or take care of his family and subordinates.

In the third chapter, "Perversions of Masculinity in 'La infantina' and 'La serrana de la Vera,'" I return to the feisty women who originally sparked my interest in this topic and explore how the two male protagonists in those ballads break from what Gayle Rubin terms the "traffic in women," the use of women as a means to gain status. As the chapter will demonstrate, the female characters in both poems pose challenges to the patriarchy. In the *"*La serrana de la Vera,*"* a woman controls her own sexuality, rejects the control of men, and removes herself from society. This in turn poses a challenge to powerful men, including her father and potential sexual partners, because they cannot control her sexuality, thereby affecting their own status. In "La infantina," the male protagonist removes himself from the patriarchal structure of marriage by refusing to control a woman's sexuality, thereby negating his own potential masculinity. The chapter argues

that marriage and coupling was a fearful enterprise during the period and that bold, demonic, and enchanted women embodied the threat that entrance into the institution of marriage could pose. As it shows, both ballads challenge ways in which patriarchal control is exercised through control of female sexuality. Unlike the Bernardo ballads addressed in the first two chapters, these texts thus highlight the pluralities of masculinity in the early modern world.

In this project I seek to examine how hegemonic masculinity affects men and women within the *romancero viejo* in light of other cultural phenomena. Although the *romances*, a traditional and long-standing poetic form, cannot map an early history of Spain for us, they do communicate a great deal about what mattered to people in the medieval and early modern era. The sheer number of ballads that treat gender as a topic tells us that the themes addressed in these chapters were of considerable interest to the ballad's audience. By tracing masculinity as expressed through an ephemeral ideal and in subordinate and marginal masculinities across many ballads, this study demonstrates that it is a central and vital aspect of the *romances'* ethos.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MEASURE OF A MAN: STANDARDS OF MASCULINITY IN THE BERNARDO DEL CARPIO BALLADS

When considering masculinity in the Spanish oral narrative, epic heroes are the obvious place to begin, because Bernardo del Carpio, along with the Cid, stands among the nation's greatest fictional heroes. Bernardo is a hero, in part, because the oral narratives depict him as the ultimate warrior. A review of the many ballads that constitute the cycle,[8] however, reveals that Bernardo's prowess on the battlefield is only one aspect that secures his status as a consummate hero.[9] Instead, as this study shall demonstrate, the qualities that make Bernardo the ultimate male are physical perfection and appearance, self-control and a measured demeanor, aptitude as a warrior and leader, and lineage.

The ballads illuminate masculinity and create tension by positioning Bernardo, rather than King Alfonso, as the hero. Additional tension stems from the troubled relationship between the hegemonic masculine ideals of the period and Bernardo's illegitimacy. Although Bernardo is the flawless male (besides his illegitimacy), he does

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[8] *Cycle* is the term used to describe a group of ballads recounting the same story. Nevertheless, there is no uniformity to the plot. When I use the word *ballad*, or the Spanish *romance*, I am referring to a poem that recounts one part of the story. When I use the word *version*, I am referring to discreet versions of the same ballad, which might or might not have the same title, but tell the same part of the story. To refer to the entire corpus, that is, all the ballads and versions of ballads about Bernardo del Carpio, I use the word *cycle*. A *romancero* is a printed collection of *romances*.

[9] In fact, the ballads do not really narrate glorious battles or war (Smith 9).

not hold political power. In contrast, Alfonso is a weak, unmanly king who does not exhibit masculine ideals. Thus, much of the tension in these ballads revolves around the juxtaposition of an inherent goodness portrayed in Bernardo with the marked lack of honor and morality that characterize Alfonso.

Although one overarching plot unifies the Bernardo cycle, no single text recounts all of its events, instead, individual *romances* tell different parts of the following story. Sancho Díaz, the Count of Saldaña, and Jimena, King Alfonso's sister, have a love affair resulting in a child, Bernardo. Some ballads or versions portray their relationship as a legitimate but secret marriage, [10] while others portray it as a tryst. Even when the relationship is depicted as a secret marriage, the king refuses to sanction the marriage, thereby throwing Bernardo's legitimacy into question. Upon learning of the affair, the king installs his sister in a monastery and imprisons the count. Bernardo, the beloved nephew of the king, is raised at court and grows up to become the perfect knight. During his childhood and young adulthood, he has no knowledge of his father's identity or whereabouts. Another group of poems recounts Bernardo's "revelation" that although his father lives and is of noble birth, he has been imprisoned. Someone at court tells him that he has noble blood even if he was born a bastard. Some *romances* explicitly clarify that he is not a bastard because his parents were married in secret. This is an important point contested in the ballads, first because Bernardo's illegitimacy is his primary concern, and second, because if he were not illegitimate, he would have a claim to the throne, held by

[10] In a secret marriage, the betrothed took vows privately rather than be wed by a priest in the Church. Such marriages were a common practice until the twelfth century when Canon Law began to challenge them.

an heirless Alfonso. Bernardo then sets out to free his father by being a good vassal to the king and serving him loyally.[11] Time and again, however, Bernardo agrees to go on missions for the king in exchange for his father's freedom, and Alfonso repeatedly refuses to keep his promise. These elements comprise the nominal conflict in the plot. When the king initially imprisons the count and, in effect, Bernardo's mother, the action is depicted in some ballads as appropriate, but by the time Bernardo is an adult, the texts describe their punishment as complete and the count's prolonged imprisonment as unjust.

The conflict between the king, who continues to punish the count for his crime well into Bernardo's adulthood, and Bernardo, who tries to free his father by serving as a loyal vassal and knight, is the subject of many texts. Many ballads recount Bernardo's growing frustration at the king's broken promises to free his father and we are meant to understand that there are many frustrated encounters. In one group of ballads, the climax occurs when the king follows through on his promise and presents Bernardo with his father. Bernardo reacts with joy, only to become forlorn when he realizes that his father is dead or blind, depending on the ballad or version. These are always dramatic scenes in which Bernardo grieves and then becomes angry. Some ballads simply depict Bernardo alone, crying over his father. In most versions, the following scene presents Bernardo dressed in mourning clothing and swearing vengeance; however, there is never a resolution to the story, which is typical of the *romances* as a genre.

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[11] The *prestimonio* system that operated in medieval Spain ensured that vassals were repaid for their services. There was no expectation that they would do the king's bidding for free (Vaquero).

Some ballads narrate a subplot that depicts a conflict between Charlemagne and Alfonso, or Charlemagne and other Spanish nobles, including Bernardo. In some ballads, Charlemagne capitalizes on the kingdom's vulnerability, a vulnerability that results from Alfonso's having no heir, and invades. In others, Alfonso makes a pact with Charlemagne, giving him the kingdom in exchange for help fighting the Moors. In both versions, the nobles of the kingdom band together to convince Bernardo, the only one who can save them, to fight Charlemagne and the Twelve Peers.[12]

The tension in the Bernardo cycle originates from the continual implication that as king, Alfonso should uphold the standards of masculinity, because having been born noble, he is ostensibly a moral leader. This is a common conflict in Spanish medieval literature, such as the *Poema del mio Cid*: a good vassal versus a bad king, *mal señor*. (Mejía González 49). Bernardo, not the king, exemplifies the princely and moral virtues. The presentation of masculine fitness in Bernardo conflicts with his place outside the patriarchy. Bernardo's worthiness is portrayed in the qualities discussed in this chapter. Although Bernardo's behavior casts him as the perfect knight, his illegitimacy negates this perfection. The image of a king who does not measure up to a vassal challenges a system where honor and nobility are conferred by birth.

The *romances* reflect two value systems, both asking the question, "What is a good man?" As Alma Leticia Mejía González observes, chroniclers, singers, poets, and printers have adapted the Bernardo del Carpio story over the years to meet specific rhetorical aims:

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[12] The Twelve Peers, or *doce pares*, are Charlemagne's most important knights, including his nephew Roland.

> A partir de la Edad Media y a través de muchos siglos y épocas literarias, Bernardo del Carpio se constituyó como un personaje importante y recurrente. Su creación, fruto de un afán nacionalista que probablemente no rebasó los límites de la leyenda popular, se renovó y modificó al paso del tiempo, moldeando al personaje para adecuarlo a los fines que tenía cada obra que de él trataba. (43)

Because the *romances* existed in both the late Middle Ages and the early modern period and I am exploring the ethos of the *romancero,* I want to address what the ballads meant to each audience.

The ballad cycle reflects a discourse contemporary with the medieval period about what it meant to be a good man, especially a good king, that continued into the early modern period when conduct manuals and other texts suggested how men, mostly nobles, should live. During the medieval and the early modern periods, texts on leadership were ubiquitous, with nearly all modes of composition dedicating some space to the qualities a good ruler possessed (Nederman, "Opposite" 177). These texts informed political discourse and also influenced popular culture. The *romances*, printed in both broadsides that were circulated and posted in the streets and *romanceros* (printed collections of *romances* and other collections of poetry), reached a wide audience. Their printing was contemporaneous to the printing of conduct manuals meant to serve as a model for men. The ballads portray a virtuous hero and also directly question the actions of an immoral king. In "Al pie de un túmulo negro," Beranrdo asks Alfonso, "--Si el rey falta en su palabra-- (dize), --¿qué hará un villano?" (12).

As I will show below, Bernardo exhibits most, if not all, of the cardinal[13] and Christian virtues that the didactic leadership texts from the medieval period espoused, but this is complicated by his illegitimacy. The cardinal virtues were temperance, courage, justice and wisdom; the Christian virtues were faith, hope, charity, and humility. Bernardo is presented in the ballads as possessing these qualities that describe the best of men, the hegemonic ideal of masculinity, unlike Alfonso, who exhibits none. As Allison Poska notes in her discussion of nobility in relation to masculinity, nobility as conferred by birth was critical to maintaining the hierarchy, leaving some men less "manly" than others simply due to the circumstances of their birth (9). Real men were noblemen of pure Spanish blood. This distinguished them from all foreigners, especially non-Christian foreigners, the lower classes, and even the lower aristocracy, and was seen as a prerequisite for other masculine characteristics, such as bravery (Poska 8). Noble birth conferred honor and the obligation to maintain that honor. Bernardo's illegitimacy poses a threat to his honor, which he constantly fights to regain in the ballad cycle.

Despite Bernardo's elite status as an accomplished king's vassal, this chapter will show that a major tension in the ballads is his inability to maintain his honor and prove his nobility despite his honorable deeds. It argues that this tension reflects shifting ideas of nobility and honor in Spain. Philosophers developed more democratic ideas of nobility and honor during the Italian Renaissance. According to Pico della Mirandola, each man has, at birth, the capacity for unity: "At man's birth, the Father placed in him every sort of seed and sprouts of every kind of life…. If [he cultivates] the seeds of sensation, he

[13] The cardinal virtues first appeared in ancient texts and were later adopted by Christian theologians, primarily St. Augustine.

will grow into a brute. If rational, he will come out a heavenly animal. If intellectual, he will be an angel and a son of God" (qtd. in Holloway 243). Noblemen, those who uphold the traditional patriarchal hierarchy, he argues, are one step closer to this unity, having innate nobility at birth. Those who began to challenge the patriarchy, however, argue that nobles can get caught up with the trappings of earthly nobility and fail to achieve divine nobility. Bernardo seems both a man born into privilege and a poor, disadvantaged orphan who earns renown but not legitimate power. If Bernardo, the bastard nephew and vassal, instead of Alfonso, possesses these virtues, then the texts are questioning the nobility and honor conferred by a high birth in relation to the honor earned through good deeds and moral living. Although the suggestion of social mobility in the Bernardo ballads reflects a reality of feudal Spain, it also reflects a growing interest and increasing reality in early modern Spain, where social mobility was often accepted and achieved and mostly challenged when it was seen as too presumptuous (Harllee 550).

Even as the ballads discussed here reflect a tension between an aristocracy (honor by birth) and a meritocracy (honor earned through deeds), the audience of those published in the sixteenth century was examining what good men should be. In *Poetics of Masculinity in Early Modern Italy and Spain,* numerous critics document the anxiety surrounding Spanish masculinity in relation to economic, health, and foreign affairs issues and the resulting perceived decline of the Spanish state during the early modern period. Harry Vélez Quiñones, for example, notes that the Spanish "crisis" of masculinity is documented in dramas and prose in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain. People were worried about soft men, primarily courtiers, who they perceived to exhibit "flojedad" (246-47). Further, according to José R. Cartagena-Calderón, noblemen, no

longer needed in the military due to technological innovations, developed a court culture, based primarily on fashion, which some perceived to be effeminate (322)[14]. These effeminate men provoked "widely circulated anxiety" in Spaniards (Vélez Quiñones 254), and what is more, "the demise of Spain was placed on the heads of the growing group of young courtiers who replaced the military class" (Cartagena-Calderón 323).

Absent "appropriate" role models at court, "in response to Spain's perceived national crisis of decline, there were calls for a return to what was conceived as the virtuous, active, and heroic manliness of earlier times" (Fox 298). Texts at the time document nostalgia for more manly men. One result of the backlash among some elites of perceived effeminate court culture was the expulsion of the *moriscos* (1609-14). Another was that theatre productions began to include women as actors for fear that men playing women would corrupt themselves or attract other men in inappropriate ways (Fox 298). Leah Middlebrook observes that in *Obras de Garci Lasso de la Vega con anotaciones de Fernando de Herrera*, Herrera invokes Spain's glorious past as he annotates Garcilaso's poetry (156):

> ¿En que región se hallaron reyes tan fuertes, tan guerreros, tan religiosos como los que sucedieron a Pelayo? ¿Quién mereció la gloria, el nombre y opinión, traída de la famosa antigüedad, como Bernardo del Carpio?...Pues ya la felicidad, prudencia y valor del rey católico son tan grandes, y sobran con tanto exceso los hechos de los reyes, que no sufren que se les compare

[14] The authors of conduct manuals were also preoccupied by effeminacy (Cartagena-Calderón 332).

> otro alguno…sabemos que no faltaron a España en algún tiempo varones heroicos. (902-04)

Herrera even specifically names Bernardo del Carpio, and Middlebrook claims that for Herrera, poets too, such as Boscán, "suffered from affectation and a particularly Italian brand of lassitude which led to an insufferable and decidedly un-Spanish effeminacy" (156). Whereas not all those nostalgic for or impressed with Spain's literary and real medieval heroes felt there was a crisis due to effeminacy, among some, there was a perception reflected in the texts of the time that there was a dearth of "good men" to lead Spain during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who could save Spain from foreign threats or uphold the honor of the nation through their own noble deeds

I would argue that the values, or ethos as Colin Smith calls it (5), portrayed in the Bernardo cycle reflect the virtues enumerated in didactic texts of the Middle Ages that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century readers found appealing during what some described as a dark moment for Spain. At the very least, heroes like Bernardo fascinated those who were nostalgic for a glorious past. His character might have even been held up as a model for some young men as an example of how Spanish men should behave. To the sixteenth-century reader, Bernardo was an example of an honorable hero, one whose honor resulted from his bravery and virtue rather than his relationships and birth.

Bernardo's merits are documented clearly in two versions of "Prisión del conde de Saldaña y crianza de Bernardo." They correlate his positive qualities with his inherent nobility, but these qualities are overshadowed by his illegitimacy. The two versions recount the same moment and date to the same era; one circulated as a broadside, while the other was transcribed in a collection. As the title suggests, they narrate the effects of

Jimena and Sancho's affair. When the king sends the count to prison and Jimena to a monastery, Bernardo's upbringing becomes Alfonso's responsibility. The version printed as a broadside begins:

> Después de aver esto fecho, a las Asturias embía
> por Bernaldo su sobrino y en sus palacios lo cría,
> al cual tanto el rey amava y tan gran amor avía,
> como si fuera su hijo, porque ninguno tenía;
> el cual desque fue mancebo muy esforzado salía,
> de gran coraçón y seso e ingenioso a maravill[o],
> de hermoso cuerpo y cara que nada le fallecía;
> dava muy buenos consejos a quien menester lo avía,
> home de buena palabra y de buen donaire y guisa,
> pagávanse mucho dél, amávanle en demasía
> todos los homes del mundo que por caso le veían.
> Sobre estas buenas maneras otras dos gracias tenía:
> que era gran cavalgador, si en todo el reino le avía,
> gran lançador de tablados, ca mucho bien lo fazía;
> tenía muy buenas armas obrava cavallería,
> tan altamente con ellas, que todos temor le avían;
> nunca se falló en batalla que della bien no salía,
> en todo fue muy dichoso, sólo tuvo por desdicha
> la larga prisión del padre, que della nada sabía. (RTLH p.196-97, 50

68)[15]

The second version, first printed in Timoneda's *Rosa española*, makes the same comments on Bernardo's development into the perfect man:

A cabo de mucho tiempo que el conde preso tenía,
ya Ximena en orden sacra, el rey por Bernaldo embía.
De ver tan lindo mancebo, en sus palacios lo cría;
al cual tanto el rey amava, y tan grande amor havía,
como si fuera su hijo, porque ninguno tenía,
el cual desque fue de edad, muy esforçado salía,
de gran coraçón y seso, y de ingenio a maravilla;
de hermoso cuerpo y cara, que nada le fallescía.
Dava muy buenos consejos a quien menester lo havía:
hombre de buena palabra, humilde sin fantasía.
Pagávanse muchos dél, amávanle en demasía;
todos los hombres del mundo le acatavan cortesía.
Sobre estas buenas costumbres otras dos gracias tenía:

[15] The information in parentheses that follow ballad titles distinguishes between versions of ballads that have the same title. It refers to information in the bibliography, here RTLH for *Romancero tradicional de las lenguas hispánicas*. In the case of this poem, since I needed to reference the line numbers too, I use the "p." to distinguish the page number of the ballad in the *Romancero tradicional de las lenguas hispánicas* from the line numbers in the ballad. Hereafter, the references are simpler and I only distinguish between versions with either RTLH or Wolf to refes to the collection's title.

muy buen hombre de a cavallo, si en todo el reino le havía;
gran lançador de tablados con esfuerço y gallardía.
Tenía muy buenas armas, obrava caballería
tan altamente con ellas, que cada cual le temía.
Por jamás se halló en batalla que della bien no salía:
en todo fue muy dichoso, sólo tuvo por desdicha
la larga prisión del padre, que della nada sabía. (RTLH p. 198-200, 51 69)

In both versions, the sheer accumulation of qualities, both internal and external, with which Bernardo is imbued makes it clear that he represents perfection and position him here as an ideal man and leader. What is more, the characteristics used to describe him mirror virtues laid out in the *specula principum* texts. For example, in *De Felici Progresso*, Michele Savonarola draws on Giles of Rome and *Nicomachean Ethics* to catalogue fifteen princely virtues: being just, temperate, strong, liberal, magnificent, magnanimous, honorable, humble, mild, friendly, sincere, cheerful, eloquent, and handsome (Zuccolin 243). These two poems construct similar lists, at times even naming the same qualities that the Italian humanist espouses. Bernardo has a beautiful face and body, "both without defects" (RTLH p.196-97, 56 and RTLH p. 198-200, 57). Among the princely characteristics that Bernardo possesses are his close relationship to the king (he is treated as the king's own since Alfonso has no son [RTLH p.196-97, 51-3, RTLH p. 198-200, 52-4]); not only is he the "lindo mancebo" (RTLH p. 198-200, 52), but smart and brave (RTLH p.196-97, 55 and RTLH p. 198-200, 56) and a true child prodigy, doing well at an early age, (RTLH p.196-97, 54 and RTLH p. 198-200, 55). Additionally, he is

well spoken (RTLH p.196-97, 58 and RTLH p. 198-200, 59), graceful (RTLH p.196-97, 58), and, although a good advisor to all, still humble (RTLH p. 198-200, 59). Although he possesses all of these "soft" leadership skills, he is still a menace on the battlefield as well as at the jousts (RTLH p.196-97, 62-3 and RTLH p. 198-200, 63-4), never losing a battle (RTLH p.196-97, 66 and RTLH p. 198-200, 67) and inspiring awe (RTLH p.196-97, 65 and RTLH p. 198-200, 66) as well as love in all those around him (RTLH p.196-97, 59-60 and RTLH p. 198-200, 60-1). Most importantly, he is brave, a quality that Alfonso lacks. We can posit that these are among the skills, qualities, and virtues that comprise an idealized masculinity and leadership as seen at the time. But this portrait of perfection is marred by Bernardo's illegitimacy (RTLH p. 198-200, 69 and RTLH p. 196-97, 68). As discussed above, I contend that these contradictory qualities—a perfect man who cannot defend his honor due to the circumstances of his birth—question the power and value of the aristocracy. What is more, I believe that both the values Bernardo represents and the idea of more authentic nobility earned through deeds were attractive to the sixteenth-century audience for whom they were printed.

Keeping up Appearances: Physical Perfection

As noted above, Bernardo's characterization as an honorable vassal does not include much narration of actual battles or military defeats, of which there are very few in the cycle. Instead, the *romances* portray his prowess as a warrior and status as an elite male by other means, such as we see above in both versions of "Prisión del conde de Saldaña y crianza de Bernardo." One of the primary ways that the ballads render Bernardo perfect is through a description of his physical appearance. Bernardo is *lindo*, his face *hermosa*, his armor is always brilliant, and most importantly, others witness all

of these traits. In "Prisión del conde de Saldaña y crianza de Bernardo," for example, he is "tan lindo mancebo," is "de hermoso cuerpo y cara," and, what is more, "que nada le fallescía (RTLH 198-200, 53, 57). The *romances* portray him as beautiful or handsome as often as they depict him as brave or strong.

As the ballads' emphasis on Bernardo's physical appearance indicates, in Spanish history and literature, the notion of physical features as belying or supporting inherent characteristics is prevalent. In the medieval and early modern period, beauty, harmony, and grace were thought to mirror the goodness in the soul (Zuccolin 245). Appearance was also a tool for evaluation in the Middle Ages when sight was a primary means to attain knowledge (Melchior-Bonnet 101). Images of Bernardo's appearance, his aspect, his armor, and his clothes pervade the ballads and become part of his characterization. The descriptions are also another way to contrast the king with his vassal. Indeed, Alfonso's appearance is not described in positive terms; in the 105 *romances* that I examined from the Bernardo del Carpio ballad cycle, his appearance is not described at all.

The importance of appearance is common to the Middle Ages and the early modern period and could explain why the descriptions of Bernardo persist in the sixteenth century ballads. Published in the seventeenth century, Diego de Saavedra Fajardo's *Idea de un principe político cristiano* elaborates a connection between appearances and politics, whereby the ruler is the representative of God on earth. He explains that because a ruler's connection to the divine cannot be seen with the human eye, outward appearance evidences the link to the eternal, or godly, realm (Spica 86). According to Christine Raffini, attitudes regarding beauty in the early modern period

were widely determined by Marsilio Ficinos's theories (32). According to this view, men who are born noble are worthy of the privileges that they enjoy, and traits such as their beauty and fine lineage are outward signs of inner beauty. She explains that for Ficino, the soul unites the spiritual and the physical, and beauty represents the unity between the spiritual and physical being (31). In other words, if all men's souls are reflected in their outward appearance, the most important, esteemed, and powerful of men will have countenances that, like that of Bernardo, inspire awe.

An historical rather than fictional example of how physical appearance was inexorably linked to power and to the creation of power is provided by the reign of the Catholic Kings. Ana Isabel Carrasco Manchado's *Isabel I de Castilla y la sombra de la ilegitimidad*, for instance, documents how the reign of Ferdinand and Isabel was legitimized almost exclusively through image and ceremony. Her detailed analysis outlines the early days of their reign, which were filled with numerous legitimizing activities that had to do with the outward appearance of the sovereigns, including royal entrances, official declarations of respect, court gatherings, and jousting games. In the chronicles Carrasco studies and cites, including Fernando del Pulgar's, the chroniclers take great pains to describe the royal retinue, the Catholic Kings' clothes, the setting, the activities that took place and which, depending on the author's political alliances, sometimes even rewrote history. In the end, the meanings people inferred from these spectacles were both manufactured and manipulated. The jousts and other games, as well as the pomp and ceremony surrounding them, were meant to mimic stability and power where there was none: "La mirada no distingue bien entre el poder e imagen de poder,

una equivalencia de la se valieron por igual los reyes y los grandes y los grandes y nobles acudían a la justa, como un medio de fortalecer sus relaciones" (Carrasco 84).

The practice of observing the form was neither quick to lose favor from antiquity to the present era, for good or bad; it was a celebrated form of character assessment. Thinkers discuss the connection between physical symmetry and internal goodness from Antiquity on in western society, but Martin Porter traces the earliest signs of a belief in physiognomy to Asia and the Middle East as early as 1500 BC (47).[16] The commonly held idea during the Middle Ages, primarily drawn from the works of Aristotle and other Ancient texts, was that the body and soul were inseparable (Porter 52). According to these texts, any important male had to conform to physical perfection, because it indicated mental acuity, leadership aptitude, and moral decency. In addition, it is important to note how often Bernardo's appearance is highlighted whereas Alfonso's is not. Whereas the composers and editors of these ballads felt compelled to describe Bernardo in a manner that portrayed him as worthy, they did not include any descriptions of Alfonso. What is more, if physical appearance, pomp, and ceremony could be used to create an external impression of nobility, then the same could serve, as in Bernardo's case, as evidence of an inherent nobility and honor.

To take another example from Spain, Fernando del Pulgar's *Claros varones de Castilla*, which, like the Bernardo cycle of *romances*, enters into the political discourse on the fitness of leaders by cataloging Spanish history's great men, begins every chapter with a physical description of the subject and follows this with a list of each man's

[16] Texts that treat physiognomy in the Middle Ages include *Secretum secretorum* and *Poridat de las poridades* (Briere 129).

characteristics, deeds, and actions. It is noteworthy that the first words Pulgar dedicates to each man's portrait pertain to physical appearance, indicating the connection between internal goodness and outward beauty, or at least symmetrical form.

As Pulgar's text moves from greater to lesser figures in Castilian history, the descriptions become less and less flattering, such as that of the long-nosed Juan de Silva. Of course, we know that Pulgar's associations do not reflect reality. The representations, however, are what matter. The paternalistic hierarchy is reflected in the degree of handsomeness, whereby the best-looking men are the most important, while the less-important men are not as well proportioned. In the first chapter, Pulgar describes King Enrique IV as "El Rey Don Enrique quarto fijo del Rey Don Juan el Segundo fué hombre alto de cuerpo é fermoso de gesto é bien proporcionado en la compostura de sus miembros" (4). In the second *título*, on the admiral don Fadrique, he begins: "El Almirante Don Fadrique fijo Almirante Don Alonso Enriquez é nieto de Don Fadrique Maestre de Santiago e bisnieto del Rey Don Alonso fué pequeño de cuerpo é fermoso de gesto" (11). Continuing, he says the Marqués de Santanilla was "hombre de mediana estatura bien proporcionado en la compostura de sus miembros é fermoso en las faciones de su rostro de linage noble Castellano é muy antiguo Era hombre agudo" (19). "Bien proporcionado" was central to the conception of physical perfection. Fernando Alvarez de Toldedo was an "hombre de buen cuerpo" (26), don Juan Pacheco Marqués de Villena é Maestre de Santiago fijo was of "mediana estatura el cuerpo," but "bien compuesto las faciones fermosas é buena gracia en el gesto" (29). The Count don Rodrigo de Villandrando was "bien compuesto en sus miembros" (33), and don Juan de Silva, Count of Cifuentes "fué hombre delgado é alto de cuerpo é bien compuesto en la proporcion de

sus miembros la cara tenia larga é honesta la nariz un poco luenga" (39). Toward the end of the book, the *claros varones* exhibited the following admirable physical characteristics: "hermosas" faces or facial features (42, 47), tall, and well proportioned (42, 45, 46, 47, 48). The body proportions are especially interesting given that a disproportionate body meant a character "given to excess" (Briere 131).

In the Bernardo cycle, Bernardo is described as *lindo*, *hermoso*, and well proportioned, as in "El aya de Bernardo le descubre su origen," one of the *romances* in which Bernardo discovers his true origins. The following lines implicitly connect beauty, nobility and honor:

> Bernardo le dize: --Basta, mi madre, ya lo fablado,
> para servir de acicate al fijo del padre honrado.—
> Al cielo buelve los ojos, y en mil lágrimas bañando
> su hermosa afrentada faz, dize, mordiendo los labios. (24-27)

There is an implicit connection made between the beauty of his face and the revelation of his "rightful" place in society. When he learns that he has a noble, honorable father, Bernardo turns his eyes to heaven (26), which also signals his inner worthiness, and his face is described as beautiful. This is after he declares that the knowledge will spur him to action (25), that is, to free his father. His pose, tears falling from his beautiful face and eyes turned toward the sky or heavens, calls to mind numerous images of Christ or of sanctity. His beauty represents an inherent goodness.

Bernardo's appearance is also figured in other ways, including how other characters react to him and through his armor and other clothes. In an excerpt from

"Desafío de don Urgel y Bernardo," Bernardo's physical presence and force signal his military power, and garner him respect and influence:

> Quien miraba su postura le quedaba aficionado:
> era diestro y animoso, bien dispuesto y mesurado.
> Para hacer la batalla jueces les han señalado,
> pártenles el campo y sol, por que nadie esté agraviado. (61-64)

Here, we learn the audience's reaction to seeing Bernardo as he approaches a military challenge. His appearance is enough to earn him favor among his peers because it signals wisdom and goodness. His physical attributes and his presence contribute to Bernardo's identity as a prominent male and *hidalgo*, or gentleman.

In "Por las riberas de Arlanza Bernardo del Carpio cabalga," for example, it is Bernardo's image and its reception among those who view him that legitimate his masculinity.

> Por las riberas de Arlanza Bernardo del Carpio cabalga
> con un caballo morcillo enjaezado de grana,
> gruesa lanza en la su mano, armado de todas armas.
> Toda la gente de Burgos le mira como espantada,
> porque no se suele armar sino a cosa señalada
> Tambien lo miraba el rey, que fuera vuela una garza;
> diciendo estaba a los suyos: --Esta es una buena lanza:
> si no es Bernardo del Carpio, este es Muza él de Granada. (2-9)

The initial description and then reactions of "toda la gente" and the king signal Bernardo's prominence. They are all shocked and somewhat alarmed that he is armed,

and conclude that there must be something afoot. The king's comments on his lance, mentioned twice in eight lines, are not about his weapon, but about Bernardo as a knight. He enters, galloping on his mount, another sign of power. Bernardo's appearance legitimates him within the *romance* in the eyes of the other characters, whose responses serve to further legitimize him with readers outside the *romance*. The last lines quoted above compare Bernardo to another great hero, further aligning him with other powerful, masculine men. [17]

Bernardo is not the only character whose appearance is tied to worthiness in the cycle. The ballad "En la gran ciudad de Burgos el casto Alfonso reinando" portrays other men whose appearances validate their nobility. This ballad is set at the jousts:

> Toros corren los de a pie, grandes justas de a caballo,
> en que cada caballero muestra bien ser hijodalgo,
> unos con ricas libreas, otros con muy ricos mantos,
> muchos colores de plumas, muchos jaezes preciados,
> y allí muestra el que es ginete hazer más mal al caballo. (3-7)

In this forum, masculinity is a matter not only of jousting skills but also of how men show their *hidalguismo*. The rich ceremonial dress of the horses demonstrates that the riders are indeed knights and sets the stage for pageantry. Pageantry is not without meaning; it builds nobility, honor, and authority, as we saw above. Ruiz also notes, spectacle demonstrates power through ritual action (Ruiz 298).

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[17] The reference to Muza shows that power exists on both sides of the cultural and religious divide. The challenge this presents to masculinity mirrors the challenge presented by Bernardo's own masculine prowess and illegitimacy.

In “Las varias flores despoja,” another ballad, the images of two warriors come face-to-face in a kind of visual confrontation. Here too, the appearance of strength and military ability is more important than a battle scene, which does not appear in the text. Normally foes, Bernardo and Bravonel come together as allies to fight the French. In the opening lines of the ballad, Bernardo is described as the “gallardo castellano” (5). Special attention is paid to his armor and the description of the colors. On his shield, a lion (representing Spain) shreds a fleur-de-lis (representing France), and as Bernardo arrives, Marsilio, the Moorish leader, watches him and notes his agility: “de adonde estava mirando / el poderoso Marsilio la destreza de Bernardo, / cuyo valor esparzía con razón la fama tanto;” (15-17). The figure he cuts is directly linked to both his worthiness and valor.

Bravonel, the Moorish knight, comes out to meet Bernardo and is described in florid terms that show him to be just as brave. Unlike Alfonso, Bravonel equals Bernardo in physical appearance and presence:

> Era Bravonel de Acoyça, mora bella[18], aficionado,
> enamorado y valiente, valiente y enamorado.
> Lo uno y otro tenía, en uno y otro estremado.
> Rica marlota llevava de azul y verde damasco;
> por rapacejos, pendientes lágrimas de cristal claro,
> de lisas hebras de plata, por todas partes colgando,
> y unas letras que dezían: "Tanto temo cuanto aguardo;

[18] This might be a transcription error, but the text reads “mora y bella” in *Romancero tradicional de las lenguas hispánicas*, Ramón Menéndez Pidal (Vol. 1).

"que si esperança me anima, "zelos me fuerçan a llanto".
Azul y verde es la langa, y de la ancha adarga el campo,
y de azul y verde trae atada una vanda al braço.
Bate el moro entrambos pies, un alto alarido aleando;
parte el rebuelto tordillo derecho para Bernardo,
el cual al moro se viene, y el uno al otro llegando,
baxan lanças y cabeças con comedimiento largo,
y a Çaragoça se van, porque con sus gruessos campos
han de partir a otro día a Roncesvalles ufanos. (25-40)

These words portray Bravonel's character as more at ease in the court than on the battlefield: beautiful, accomplished on the battlefield, brave, and in love. His dress, lance, and arm badge are described in detail, and he, too, wears a motto that defines his role as a lover. The last lines, though, describe both knights in terms of their cordiality and urbanity (38). The setting is a show; there is no real action, and, instead, the text depicts an encounter of two great warriors, both characterized primarily through description of their appearance. Like Bernardo, whose illegitimacy complicates his masculinity, Bravonel serves as a complex example of masculinity because he is not a Christian, but a Moor. Although the text does not question his facility as a warrior, the description of Bravonel is possibly meant to code him as effeminate since being in love and lovesickness were considered madness during the medieval period, and could mean a man was less manly (Bullough 38).

Often Bernardo's *fama* precedes him, and he simply has to remind others of it using his armor and his carriage. As stated above, there are few battle scenes and

descriptions primarily figure Bernardo's, Bravonel's, and Roland's prowess as warriors. As with his physical attractiveness, his clothing signals his inherent worthiness. In contrast to the clothed, armed, or bejeweled and crowned pageant body, the naked body is exposed, feminine and vulnerable (Dyer 262-3). Many lines of the *romances* in the Bernardo cycle are dedicated to Bernardo's appearance, armor, and the trappings of his profession (his shield, sword, and horse.) Nobility is inherent to the person and mirrored in one's outward appearance. Bernardo is not noble or worthy because he wears beautiful, well-kept armor. Rather, he wears this armor as a natural result of his *hidalguismo*. In contrast, Alfonso's relative invisibility accentuates his asexuality and his lack of agency as a king. He does not exist in the visual realm of the ballads, nor can he hope to continue his line and father an heir to inherit the kingdom. That he does not have an image "visible" to the reader is telling: noble, upper-class masculinity was reliant upon rich display and meeting the monarchy's expectations for dress and appearance (Kuchta 234). [19]

"Áspero llanto hacía" focuses more the physical representation of knighthood in armor. The vivid imagery defines Bernardo's and Sancho's masculinity. In the ballad, Bernardo is mourning his father and retreats to the space where Sancho's weapons are stored. The end of the poem definitively marks the shift from a monologue Bernardo delivers about his lineage to a description of action in this first line: "Cesó su habla" (16),

[19] The one ballad in which Alfonso is linked to a display is "En la gran ciudad de Burgos el casto Alfonso reinando." Although he hosts a jousting tournament, definitely a sign of power and royalty, Bernardo disrespects him: "Pasó por junto a la tienda donde está el rey asentado, / sin hazer la reverencia que hazen los hijosdalgo" (11-12).

and continues with a stirring description of Bernardo arming himself, mounting, and calling his fellow *hidalgos* to arms in defense of his own and his father's honor. He says, "--Nadie me siga que no sea hijodalgo" (31), effectively declaring himself an *hidalgo* in word and action:

> Cesó su habla con esto, y del viejo arnés armado,
> [puso un casco en su cabeça con un bonete ocultado,
> y su ancha y luziente espada pendiente al siniestro lado.
> Hizo que con gran presteza le truxessen un cavallo,
> bien travado de buen hierro, de color castaño claro,
> [cabeça, pescuego y riendas de bayeta cubijado,]
> caparagón [de lo mismo, y el estrivo barnigado,
> borzeguí de cuero negro, no cual solía estirado,
> y las armas cobijadas de un capuz negro y cerrado,
> azicate] negro, y negro de la langa el hierro largo;
> negro el campo de la adarga, y en mitad dél estampado
> un latiente coragón puesto en un puño cerrado,
> por toda parte oprimido, roxa sangre destilando,
> y un letrero que dezía: "Romper tengo de apretado". (15-28)

This detailed description of Bernardo's military ensemble exemplifies the vibrant quality of the *romances*. Because the poet employs vivid imagery, readers can clearly picture Bernardo. The physical descriptions focus a good deal on his horse and his arms; he is literally a knight in shining armor. His helmet (16), his wide, shining sword (clearly a phallic symbol) hanging at his left (ready to be drawn by his right hand) (17), and his

shining “estribo” (21) all contribute to the 11 lines devoted to his physical description, a portrait of a warrior. His horse is likened to iron, and described as a light brown color, and his own armor and that of his horse are all black.

The image of a red heart enclosed in a fist that is emblazoned on the front of his shield connotes honorable, noble blood (26). The fist, representing Bernardo as the protector of his familial honor, emphasized via hyperbaton, is stamped on a field of black, the color of grief, anger, sadness, and perhaps revenge, the color of a dark heart. The poem concludes when Bernardo mounts a “bello andaluz” (30), and is followed only by “gente granada y apuesta, bien armados y a cavallo” (35). Through this description, not only his actions, the audience knows that Bernardo’s honor and masculinity are intact, especially given that this description immediately follows his declaration of his honor and lineage.

Earlier in the poem, Bernardo is alone, mourning his father’s death in the presence of the latter’s armor. The ballad describes the arms, and for Bernardo the disrepair of the armor represents his father’s fallen *hidalguismo*, or his nobility and honor. Eyes raised to heaven, he holds the armor and addresses it:

> do estava un antiguo arnés entre otras armas colgado,
> que era de su viejo padre, un tiempo dél bien usado,
> de polvo y orín cubierto, [decompuesto y maltratado,
> el cual Bernaldo descuelga], y tomándolo en la mano,
> los ojos altos al cielo dize con semblante airado:
> --En tanto que tú cubriste
> pecho que tanto valió

ninguno se le atrevió,
ni corto en nada le viste;
pero después que de espada
inhábil el braço vieron,
el respeto le perdieron,
como cosa ya passada. (11-15b)

In the poem and according to Bernardo, the ill-repair of the arms is emblematic of the ill-treatment his father, and his father's nobility and reputation, receive from Alfonso and others. When this armor was protecting Sancho, his father had repute among men. When his sword and arms fell into disuse, he lost respect. What is more, by employing synecdoche, indicating Sancho's whole person by referencing particular parts of his body and armor, the ballad uses the rusty and abandoned arms to represent Sancho's fallen honor.

While clothing and armor can signal dishonor as above, they can also signal inherent worthiness. In "Recogido en su aposento," Bernardo changes his clothing, marking a shift in the narrative. For much of the story, he remains loyal to Alfonso despite his own frustration, repeatedly defending the king against threats. After his father is killed, however, this changes: "y de bengarte, señor, juramento a mi Dios hago.-- / Y sobre las armas blancas luto se pone Bernardo" (15-16). Erasing himself from court and courtly jousts as indicated with the "armas blancas" (16), Bernardo symbolically chooses his father over his king in dress and wears mourning garments.

In the *specula pricipum* texts, the body was seen as a metaphor for many things, including the state and the world. The metaphor of the body politic was ubiquitous in

medieval political thought, whereby the state was a body and the king its head (Nederman "Mirror" 30), a metaphor that was often extended to justify or critique such actions as coups. The body as a metaphor persisted; for example, in the Italian Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci drew perfection in a human body as a reflection or microcosm of a universal symmetry (Lester). In the Bernardo ballad cycle, there are several texts that employ synecdoche in which a parts of the whole stands in for an entire person, usually Bernardo himself, as in the above example, or the use of *buena lanza* for warrior in "Por las riberas de Arlanza Bernardo del Carpio cabalga." As previously described in "Áspero llanto hacía," Sancho's armor represents his honor, and at the end of the same poem, Sancho's poignant end inspires Bernardo to begin a monologue about his father's and his own social status. Rather than employing abstract nouns, the ballad locates his honor in his body. Foreseeing that he will protect his father's nobility, Bernardo's speech further employs synecdoche, using body parts, here his chest, to represent himself and his father's place in society. He also indicates his agency via these images of body and arms.

> Mas yo haré con mi ida
> que tenga el callar por bueno,
> no con la mano en el seno,
> antes a la espada asida.
> Y esté de una cosa cierto:
> que cuando le entrare a ver
> tengo el pecho de meter
> de ti amparado y cubierto,

no para en el rey tocar,

que soy su vasallo al fin,

sino por si algún ruín

se quisiere adelantar. (15f-h)

Bernardo will protect their honor (i.e., cover or guard it) so that the king cannot touch it; in this image, the chest represents the whole person and their honor. The speech ends with Bernardo recounting his legitimacy and the Saldaña lineage:

que bien se sabe en España,

y el rey lo sabe también,

de adónde vienen y quién

son los condes de Saldaña. (11l)

It is not just the honor of any man that is at stake in these lines. The king is, in effect, threatening Bernardo's identity as a legitimate count and thus an heir to the throne. The images of Bernardo distinguish him both from the average man and from the king himself.

Closely related to the use of synecdoche is the use of phallic symbols in the Bernardo cycle. Often these symbols signal Bernardo's nascent potency and the potential threat he poses to Alfonso. As previously noted, his sword transcends its meaning as a weapon. The fact that he is more powerful, due to his skills as a warrior, is represented in the image of the sword. At times, his arm is included in his image: "que este braço y esta espada me harán temido y honrado—" ("Al pie" 16), or in "Áspero llanto hacía," where his sword is on his left side, at the ready. We also discussed the use of the lance above in "Por las riberas de Arlanza Bernardo del Carpio cabalga." Other phallic symbols

include Bernardo's his horse. In the Bernardo del Carpio ballads in the *Pan-Hispanic Ballad Project*, there are 35 instances of the word *espada* (sword) and 44 of *caballo* (horse).[20] In "Recogido en su aposento" (RTLH 265-66), for example, Bernardo mounts his horse without using the stirrup (14) as he rides off to take revenge for his father's death. The image is clearly meant to demonstrate his strength and I would argue mounting his horse with no help from the stirrup demonstrates his power. In "En la gran ciudad de Burgos el casto Alfonso reinando," Bernardo rebuffs the king at the jousts, demonstrating his autonomy, while "saboreando su caballo" (13), incensing Alfonso.

As we have seen, Bernardo's characterization as the perfect hero is due in part to the ballads' depiction of his appearance rather than through narration of his knightly deeds. The physical descriptions that almost every ballad affords Bernardo prompts other characters within the narratives, as well as readers of the ballads, to perceive Bernardo as internally worthy based upon his external beauty. Bernardo is the image of a perfect hero in Alfonso's stead. Within the texts, Bernardo introduces alternative examples of *hidalguismo*, nobility, not based on birth, but on his deeds and behavior proven through his physical perfection and appearance, self-control and a measured demeanor, aptitude as a warrior and leader, and lineage. On the one hand, Bernardo is the ideal *hidalgo*, while on the other, he is, and will always be, either a bastard or of questionable legitimacy. Many of the *romances* describe his dress and armor in their usual telegraphic style and ceremonial activities and royal audiences. In all of these, the illegitimate

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[20] By comparison, in the *Cid*, a much smaller body of work, there are a combined 58 instances of *espada(s)* 21 (37) and 76 of *caballo(s)* 36 (40), proving these symbols do have a role in portraying masculinity among classic Spanish heroes.

Bernardo is portrayed as nobler than all of the supposedly legitimate nobles around him, excelling at games, and maintaining a strong, regal presence. The effect is two-fold: it reinforces standards of masculinity because Bernardo may have a claim to nobility (this issue is never really resolved in the plot), while it simultaneously undermines these standards by implying the superiority of a meritocracy to a hierarchy based on nobility, lineage, and primogeniture. A man's ability to earn nobility and honor was the ethos of the Bernardo ballads at the time they were composed. In the early modern period, when the ballads were widely published alongside conduct manuals, the *romances* satisfied a nostalgia for a time when men were "real" men who earned honor through deeds rather than through the pageantry that was perceived as effeminate in the early modern court. The belief was that it would take men like Bernardo to represent Spain on the world stage and to protect Spanish identity from threats of effeminacy from within the nation and of military threats from outside of it.

Being a Warrior and Leader of Warriors

In the Middle Ages, the king's primary roles were those of judge and warrior, and his principle virtues were strength and wisdom.[21] Although in the early modern era, as discussed earlier, the courtier class was replacing the military class and warrior values (Cartagena-Calderón 323), a masculinity founded on actions was appealing to some early

[21] As Rodríguez de la Peña explains, strength and wisdom are important royal virtues in the Latin chronicles from the mid-eleventh to late thirteenth centuries, which he supposes is due to the relatively recent military campaigns against Moorish Spain, enlarging Christian control in the peninsula, and continued pressure from the Church to continue such campaigns and crusades (35).

modern readers who saw this shift as problematic for Spain's identity and viability as a nation and world power. If male virtues, especially those of elite men, included strength and the capacity to defend one's kingdom, then the ballads code Alfonso as feminine: he does not fight any of his own battles but he remains at court, never sallying forth as the knights do. The portrayals of leadership in the ballads call into question the roles Alfonso and Bernardo play as king and vassal, respectively.

The ability to overpower other men through violence or the threat of violence almost inevitably forms part of masculinity.[22] As Jo Ann McNamara notes, "Male sexuality is constructed on the phallus as a symbol of power, a myth that grossly overburdens physical reality. In contrast to the phallic imagery of masculinism, the penis is rarely erect. Thus, the necessary myth of constant, uncontrollable potency has to be ritually strengthened in male gatherings" (10). Male superiority was based on the claim to superior strength, and because this was a fragile claim, according to McNamara, it needed to be reinstated with regularity, both between men and women and between elite men and other men (4). This power dynamic did not change in the early modern period, in which masculinity still needed to be proven (Milligan 29). While Bernardo continually renews his claim to masculine superiority, Alfonso, despite his tyrannical behavior, does not. We can expect that the king would not need to prove his masculinity on the battlefield if he has knights to act on his behalf. It is worth noting, however, that his counterpart, Charlemagne, does go into battle. In one such conflict, Alfonso fights, but must be

[22] It was Aristotle who first distinguished between men and women in writing by citing men's physical superiority. Translated from gender to class system, the strongest men are thus superior to other men.

rescued by Bernardo when his horse is killed ("Bernardo se entrevista con el rey," RTLH 157-59).

Bernardo, however, must continually prove his masculinity, honor, and worth by defeating his enemies on Alfonso's behalf. In a few battle scenes with the French in the ballads, the narration focuses only on key moments, mostly comparing and describing Bernardo and his enemies and their physical prowess and abilities. In "Blasonando está el Francés," we have a portrait of two warriors facing each other, but no battle occurs. The *romance* consists of a comparison of their qualities and their cinematic confrontation rather than a narration of fighting.

> Blasonando está el Francés contra el exército hispano
> por ver que cubre su gente, sierra, monte, campo y llano.
> Dize Roldán que ha de ver si es tan valiente Bernardo
> como lo pinta su España, por león feroz y bravo.
> Van estampando la arena las tropas de los cavallos,
> con tanto ser y destreza, que apenas huellan el campo;
> *y contra el gran Bernardo al son de trompeta y caxas van marchando*.
> (1-7)

Although Roland is the enemy, as is quite typical in Spanish literature, for example the *Cid*, the enemy is portrayed as just as accomplished, famous, and gallant as the hero; in other words, the French are worthy. Here Charlemagne's men are such accomplished horsemen that their horses' hooves barely leave impressions on the earth. But they seem to be prideful, since the first verb used to describe them is *blasonando*. Bernardo would not stand as a great a figure in the national imagination as he did without overcoming the

challenge posed by facing a truly great but sworn enemy in Charlemagne and his knights, including his nephew Roland. The ballads cast Bernardo as a hero through depicting the prowess of the enemies he fights, including the accomplished and famous Roland.

As the ballad continues, it further describes the French who seek out Bernardo.

> Van los doze de la fama con el viejo Carlo Magno,
> haziendo alarde de Reinos que en poco tiempo han ganado.
> Los estandartes despliegan de flor de lises bordados,
> diziendo que han de añadir un castillo y un león bravo:
> no piensan que ay en la tierra quien las iguale en el campo,
> y esperan que en Roncesvalles darán fin a sus cuidados.
> Y contra el gran Bernardo al son de trompeta y caxas van marchando.
> (8-14)

Again, images of masculinity figure prominently in how the domination of one man by another plays out. Here the French want to add a castle and lion, the symbols of Castile and Leon, to the fleur-de-lis on the French standard. In addition to the role such a worthy and renowned enemy who can quickly conquer territory will play in the development of Bernardo's identity, there is another example of princely virtues at play, as the ballad seems to comment on a lack of humility as exhibited by the French. Their hubris blinds them because Bernardo is, in fact, their equal (12).

"Aguardando a que amanezca" also paints a picture of Spanish warriors and their enemies. Bernardo and his men are always portrayed as superior and their enemies are always worthy. Defeating unworthy enemies does not advance one's standing as a leader and a warrior. In practice, the poem is a speech, a military *arenga*, that Bernardo orates to

his men before going into battle. An opening reference to the "entrance" appears to be a sexual image connoting territory to be penetrated by the *leoneses*. "Aguardando que amanezca, para conocer la entrada,/ estava el fuerte Bernardo en los mojones de Francia," (1-2). The ballad continues with a hyperbolic statement of their particular strengths as Spanish soldiers "con trezientos compañeros, que es la costumbre que usava / que diez bastan para mil cuando son hijos de España; (3-4). The ballad also focuses on the description of both groups of warriors. The Spanish are figured as gentlemen, *hidalgos* (24) while the French are confused with the Moors (22).

> Cuando ya el sol por las cumbres dora las humildes plantas,
> cual de sarracena gente oyen grita y algazara:
> aperciben sus cavallos, que ya lo estavan de armas,
> y en nombre de hijosdalgo para sus contrarios marchan. (21-24)

The Spanish forces are at once on the border of France, but facing the "*sarracena gente*" (22), a convolution of the Arab and French enemies. The implication here seems to be that the Spanish *hidalgos* are worthy, but the French and the Moors are inferior. Being Spanish implies honor earned by their ancestors and transferred to the individual.

A similar moment unfolds in "El invencible francés" when Bernardo faces Roland. Again, the image is of two legendary warriors meeting on the battlefield. The opening epithet for Roland probably resonated for many noblemen in the early modern era when the government was consolidating and centralizing power. "Fuerte senador romano" would conjure images and understanding of democratic powers and equality among those of patrician blood, although it literally references the fact that Charlemagne is the Holy Roman Emperor and that his men could be considered his "senators." The

poem continues by reminding us of Roland's reputation as a warrior and building suspense before he faces Bernardo on the battlefield:

> El invencible francés, fuerte senador romano,
> aquel que al bravo Agricán le venció y tornó cristiano,
> y ganó del fiero Almonte el rico cuerno preciado,
> con que hizo desafíos que al mundo puso en espanto;
> aquel que en Abraca solo venció todo un campo armado,
> y nunca siendo vencido, venció las hadas y el hado,
> cual suele mostrar más luz la luz que se está acabando,
> está en la guerra postrera, postrera fuerça mostrando. (1-8)

The last line of this section explicitly shows that force is demonstrated not by force alone, but also by his posture, the image he strikes (8). Like Bernardo and all other good warriors, Roland inspires fear and awe among "mortal" men. The list of Roland's military deeds begins to resemble myth more than the recounting of the successes of a man. Roland has never been defeated and is the consummate warrior, but the description is not just about Roland, it is also about Bernardo; his capability to defeat such an enemy builds his reputation and his masculine identity as a warrior.

The poem indicates that Bernardo has already fought and defeated several other warriors (11-12) and should not need to seek out Roland, but he does anyway. The implication is that Bernardo is tireless and valiant as he hunts down Roland, his true equal:

> Y no le basta el orgullo, la buena espada y cavallo;

que lo ha el señor de Brava con el que nació en el Carpio
porque después de aver muerto a Dudón, aquel dudado,
con el marqués Oliveros, y sus hijos negro y blanco,
viendo por sus manos hecho de sangre francesa un lago,
y que el fin de aquella empresa estava en Roldán gallardo,
el gran sobrino de Alfonso furioso busca al de Carlos;
hállale en sangre teñido, y él viene en ella vañado.
Los más bravos coraçones que humano pecho ha encerrado
juntos a batalla vienen con fuerça y ánimo osado.
Para verla se suspende la del uno y otro campo,
entre la esperança y miedo los coraçones temblando.
El cielo que a Orlando[23] espera, fortuna que se ha cansado,
dan y quitan la vitoria de un francés a un castellano. (9-22)

The ballad references the noble heritage of each great man and, the negative portrayals of Alfonso notwithstanding, the point here seems to be image of the meeting of two noblemen, each a king's nephew and vassal. The epithet *furioso*, here applied to Bernardo, would draw on and remind the listener of the Italian *Orlando furioso*, further suggesting their parity. Finally, the two, "whose chests contain the bravest hearts among us" (17), meet face to face. Like a tournament, all are watching, on the edge of their seats, so to speak, as action stops on the battlefield, the onlookers are both scared and excited (20), trembling with positive and negative emotions. The ballad has no denouement; instead, the last two lines simply announce the battle's outcome without narrating its

[23] The ballad makes use of both the Spanish and Italian names for Roland.

events. Rather than describing the battle, the ballad emphasizes the two warriors meeting face-to-face on the battlefield and the prediction that, in the end, Orlando (Roland) will die. This plot structure focuses on the most climactic moment, when the two heroes meet as equals on the field, deciding the fate of two countries, as summarized in the last hemistich (22). This *romance* demonstrates how Bernardo's aptitude as a warrior is proven by his encounters with other worthy men and warriors. It is not enough to inspire fear and awe; one must truly be fierce, an attribute that can only be exhibited in contests against other fierce men.

Bernardo's relationship to his heritage and to Spain is another way that the cycle depicts him as an eminent male. As previously noted, in some ballads, Alfonso contacts Charlemagne to give him the kingdom, which upsets Bernardo and the noblemen because of what French rule will mean to them as Spaniards. They do not want to give up their heritage. Bernardo, unlike Alfonso, is figured as a proud Spaniard and invokes feelings of national pride in others, and he delivers many passionate speeches that inspire his countrymen to fight for Spain. "Con tres mil y más leoneses" also narrates events that occur after Alfonso offers the kingdom to Charlemagne. When Alfonso tries to retract the offer due to pressure from Bernardo and the other nobles, Charlemagne refuses, and the French become a military threat. The ballad demonstrates Bernardo's leadership in the form of a call to arms, thereby contrasting Bernardo with a king who cannot command, let alone motivate, his people, and who is even willing to surrender the kingdom. A hyperbolic number of men accompany Bernardo, further illustrating his leadership. The fifth through tenth lines enumerate the effect that Bernardo has on the people:

Los labradores arrojan de las manos los arados,
las hozes, los agadones; los pastores, los cayados;
los jóvenes se alborotan, aliéntanse los ancianos,
los inútiles se animan, fíngense fuertes los flacos,
todos a Bernardo acuden, libertad apellidando,
que el infame yugo temen con que los amaga el galo. (5-10)

They are all calling for freedom to escape the possible yoke of French reign. Becoming part of the French kingdom would threaten their identity as *leoneses*. Because Alfonso has decided to cede Leon to Charlemagne, he is at fault for instigating this threat, while Bernardo, in contrast, is associated with freedom. The struggle between the *leoneses* and the French represents the struggle for domination of one man over another, because they each represent their respective countries' honor.

In another part of "Aguardando que amenezca," Bernardo reiterates to his countrymen that they are all both loyal and hidalgos (7) and that the upcoming battle is, indeed, worthy of their effort: "que esta empresa a que venimos es digna de buenas lanças" (8). Here *lanzas* represent the phallus, Spanish masculinity, and power. Before they enter the fray, however, he tells them what he expects of them and challenges them to leave before crossing the border if they do not intend to follow through, fight honorably, and commit themselves wholly: "porque el que entrare una vez la suya ha de ser muy cara; / que cara ha de ser la cosa donde la honra se gana" (11-12). Their honor, then, has a high price. He continues, explaining that although he expects them to face the enemy head on and not turn their backs: "hazer espaldas los pechos, y no pechos las espaldas" (14). In contrast to Alfonso, he does not expect them to defend (watch) his

back (15), and instead, Bernardo issues a challenge to his men, expecting them to either fail him at the border by leaving or not fail him at all, where failure is defined as not committing to fighting loyally by his side.

> y si no guarde las mías, que sólo aquesto me basta,
> porque mi langa no teme toda Francia cara a cara;
> y aquel que no se atreviere a mantener su palabra,
> más vale faltarme aquí, que no conozcan sus faltas.
> Todos juntos le responden que no tema la batalla,
> que cada cual es Bernardo los que a Bernardo acompañan. (15-20)

The men declare their solidarity, saying that each one who goes with Bernardo is Bernardo (20), throwing into stark contrast the bravery and loyalty that Bernardo inspires, with the king's deteriorating capability to command.

We might contrast this leadership moment above, in which Bernardo promises to stand by his men, with Alfonso's treatment of Bernardo. Where Bernardo expresses solidarity, Alfonso is egoistic, such as in one version of "Bernardo se entrevista con el rey" (RTLH 157-59). Bernardo, wronged again, delivers one of many harangues against Alfonso's leadership style, attacking his king's sincerity:

> y yo, como soy traidor, el mío os di con presteza,
> sacándoos, como sabéis, de aquella mortal refriega,
> por lo cual me prometisteis con razones halagüeñas
> de darme a mi padre libre sin lisión y sin ofensa;
> pero mal vuestra palabra cumplisteis y real promesa,
> que para ser ley, por cierto, tiene muy poca firmeza, (24-29)

He employs sarcasm in the opening line to underscore how loyal he has been, repeatedly saving the king only to be denied his father's freedom. The focus of this section lies not on this betrayal, but of the uttered promise, a royal promise, and the weakness of Alfonso's word, implying that the law under him has no strength. Time after time, Alfonso promises to free Bernardo's father but never does, leading to many such moments in which Bernardo puts Alfonso on the spot and demands that he finally keep his word.

The cycle contains many moments in which Bernardo leads other men. For example, in "En la gran ciudad de Burgos el casto Alfonso reinando," the king calls Bernardo's father a traitor and Bernardo reacts thusly:

> El rey estando en aquesto, Bernardo el Carpio a llegado,
> el rostro muy encendido, con un semblante endiablado:
> con boz alta y presurosa desta manera a hablado:
> --Todos aquellos que dizen que el del Carpio era bastardo,
> y que es su padre traidor y por tal aprisionado,
> todos mienten por la barba, y yo me ofrezco a provallo;
> sálganse todos tras mí, los que fueren de mi vando.--
> Todos se salen tras él, dexando solo el palacio. (35-42)

The poem closes with a scene that shows the men following Bernardo rather than backing their king, and thereby testifies to Bernardo's ferocity and bravery and shows that he, not the king, has the men's respect.

Often, Bernardo's leadership is tied to his love of his kingdom and fellow countrymen, and unlike Alfonso, he is portrayed as a true patriot. "Con tres mil y más

leoneses," Bernardo gives the following characteristics as evidence of the manliness of the *leoneses* in order to inspire them to fight the French: their veins have enough blood, their arms are strong enough, and their chests are broad enough not to suffer the indignity of succumbing to French rule.

> --Libres, gritavan, nacimos, y a nuestro rey soberano
> pagamos lo que devemos por el divino mandato.
> No permita Dios, ni ordene que a los decretos de estraños
> obliguemos nuestros hijos, gloria de nuestros passados:
> no están tan flacos los pechos, ni tan sin vigor los braços,
> ni tan sin sangre las venas, que consientan tal agravio. (11-16)

The overarching theme is that their masculine dignity is being robbed from them by the French as a result of Alfonso's lack of masculinity, his chastity figured as impotence. They will not concede the insult of simply giving up their land (17).

Invoking the battle between the Romans and Numantines,[24] an iconic moment in Spanish history and nationalistic discourse, Bernardo makes the call to arms:

> Si a la potencia romana catorze años conquistaron
> los valientes numantinos con tan sangrientos estragos,
> ¿por qué un reino, y de leones, que en sangre libia bañaron
> sus encarnizadas uñas, escucha medios tan baxos? (21-24)

Like the section above, with three terms relating to bloodshed in four lines alone (*sangrientos, sangre, encarnizadas*) and with references to an iconic Spanish enemy,

[24] The Romans fought the Numantines as they expanded their territory in the Iberian Peninsula in the second century B.C.

Bernardo ties the conflict to a national identity, which Alfonso seems able to dismiss in the face of his own personal conflicts. As the following lines suggest, "giving" his vassals to another king is not in his purview: "Déles el rey sus averes, mas no les dé sus vassallos; / que en someter voluntades no tienen los reyes mando.— " (25-26). The same contrast is seen in Alfonso's attitude toward his past and his relationship to the land. While Bernardo regards the threat of the Spaniards becoming Gauls as of the utmost importance, the king is willing to sacrifice Spanish identity to avoid a battle. The implication seems to be that the king's avarice is also an issue.

Bernardo assembles a considerable number of men and marches on the French. The last lines of his military harangue draw on Spain's illustrious heritage, further underscoring the importance of place and history to their identity as *leoneses*:

> Marcha a la ciudad augusta, cuyos muros baña ufano
> el caudal famoso de Ebro del mundo tan celebrado,
> do el hijo del Zebedeo fundó el edificio raro
> que ciñe el Santo Pilar, estribo de nuestro amparo. (33-36)

The walls, river, buildings, and Christian ancestors are all invoked to foment a sense of pride of place and to highlight the threat of losing this place. It is clear that unlike Alfonso, Bernardo feels tied to the history and places of his forefathers, securing his leadership acumen.

Bernardo is able to lead his fellow countrymen into battle as if they are his vassals.

Con esto Bernardo ordena sus escuadrones bizarros,
a quien desde una ventana mira don Alfonso el Casto.
Como a su sangre le mira, que le es como sangre grato.
Su gallarda compostura y valor considerando…(27-30)

As they march into battle, Alfonso watches Bernardo, seeing his own "blood" (i.e., lineage), which is *grato* pleasing to him. Bernardo's posture, described as *gallarda*, is mentioned in the same line as his valor (30), again linking physical form and inherent goodness. Although Alfonso is a witness to bravery (27), he does not partake in the courageous acts.

"Bernardo se entrevista con el rey" (RTLH 156-57), documented in 1580, presents more contrasts between the king's and Bernardo's leadership abilities. The opening scene evinces Bernardo's strengths and reminds readers and other characters of his power, recalling another famous hero who rebelled against a king and conquered a city he ended up ruling, the Cid. The ballad characterizes Bernardo's men as prepared and *buena gente*, all seasoned knights (RTLH 156-57, 2). Just as Bernardo's accomplishments and prowess reflect well on the king when relations between them are good, this description serves to underscore Bernardo's own power and leadership. The three hundred men who accompany Bernardo, an image oft-repeated in the ballads, contrasts with the fateful moment in which Alfonso cannot command his men to seize the rebellious Bernardo later in the poem. The tactical decisions Bernardo must make as he approaches a court where he is unsure of his status underscore his military abilities.

Con trecientos cavalleros sale del Carpio Vernardo,
todos bien apercebidos, buena jente y de a cavallo.

Camino ban de León, que el rey embía a llamallo,
y sin saver para qué él se ba ya reselando;
con la sospecha que tiene a los suyos ba hablando:
--Encargóos, amigos míos, pues que sois tan esforçados,
que en llegando a la corte del rei don Alonso el Casto,
que solos diez de vosotros me vayan acompañando,
los otros, de dos en dos, ivos derecho a palacio,
de suerte que el rey no entienda que todos sois de mi bando. (1-10)

The king is not meant to know how many men Bernardo has with him. They all go to court, not knowing what kind of reception to expect, and Bernardo is prepared for the worst: the need to resist his own imprisonment.

The men's obedience demonstrates Bernardo's strength as a leader. He has no problems getting his men to follow orders, even when that means possibly committing treason against the king.

Todos juntos le prometen de obedescer su mandado;
a trecho de media legua Bernardo se a adelantado
con solos diez cavalleros, y éstos los más ancianos;
los otros de dos en dos se derraman por el campo,
y cuando Bernardo allega todos son en el palacio. (11-15)

In addition to Bernardo's strengths as a leader, the ballad shows his military and political acumen. He knows how to approach an uncertain political reception and employs military tactics, fooling his potential foe by advancing only with his oldest men. Rather than ambushing the court, he approaches strategically, prepared for either a peaceful

resolution or a military struggle, which demonstrates Bernardo's intelligence, political savvy, and temperance. We might contrast this decision with Bernardo's reaction to Charlemagne's military ambitions as portrayed in "Bernardo inculpa a Carlomagno de la matanza." Bernardo will not spill blood without due cause. These decisions, from the tactical moves to the temperance demonstrate Bernardo's good reason and good leadership.

In "Bernardo se entrevista con el rey" (RTLH 156-57), the king, upon Bernardo's arrival, intemperately, according to Bernardo, calls him a traitor. Alfonso's opening claim, that Bernardo is *mal venido* (17), unwelcome at court, traitor and son of a traitor, contrasts, with the poem's claim that he arrives *apercebido* (2). In fact, Bernardo has arrived well and prepared. Before he knows how formidable a foe he faces, the king risks his relationship to his vassal with inflammatory comments.

> El buen rey cuando lo biera desta manera a hablado:
> --Bernaldo, seáis mal venido, traidor y de padre malo,
> que en tenencia os di el castillo, con él os avéis alçado,
> por lo cual prometo y juro que seáis vien castigado.--
> Bernardo le respondía con el bonete en la mano: (16-20)

Bernardo's attitude toward the king's gift of Carpio[25] is becoming a threat, "avéis alçado" (18), for which he will be punished, the king promises (19). Carpio was a reward for

[25] Some *romances* in the cycle reference this *prestimonio* or payment. According to the chronicles (such as the *Primera crónica general*), Bernardo believed that the king gave him Carpio on a permanent basis, whereas Alfonso viewed the gift as temporary. This

good service, something in which Bernardo has never faltered. However, it turns into a threat to the king because of the dynamic between them and also because Bernardo is becoming a political threat, garnering more and more power in his own right with many men serving him. Bernardo prepares to answer, holding his helmet, which is at once a sign of humility and deference, but perhaps also a reminder of his status as a warrior and, therefore, his power.

"Bernardo se entrevista con el rey" (RTLH 157-59) also illustrates that Bernardo is able to inspire and lead men. Whereas he is able to lead his men to plot against the king, Alfonso is unable to convince his men to seize Bernardo. His honor threatened, the king demands his men apprehend Bernardo, but they refuse to listen:

> Prendelde, gritava el rey, pero ninguno lo intenta,
> porque vieron que Bernardo al braço el manto rodea,
> puesta la mano en la espada, diziendo: --Nadie se mueva,
> que soy Bernardo, y mi espada ni aun a reyes se sujeta
> y sabéis muy bien que corta, de que tenéis esperiencia.--
> Los diez, visto el duro trance, a la contienda se aprestan;
> ponen mano a los estoques, del ombro los mantos sueltan,
> ya los lados de Bernardo con feroz muestra se allegan.
> avisando a los demás con una acordada seña;
> los cuales del fuerte alcáçar toman las herradas puertas,
> gritando: --¡Viva Bernardo, y quien le ofendiere muera!—

---

becomes another conflict between them in other versions of the story as recounted in the chronicles, but in the ballads I am studying, it is only a passing reference.

Vista esta resolución, dixo el rey con faz risueña:
--¿Lo que de burlas os dixe, tomándolo avéis de veras?
--Burlando lo tomo, rey,-- Bernardo le respondiera.
Y salióse de la sala sin hazerle reverencia.
Con él buelven los trezientos, con bella y gallarda muestra,
y derribando los mantos, fuertes armas manifiestan,
de que el rey quedó corrido y su injuria sin enmienda. (37-55)

Bernardo's arm and sword represent his power, strong and at the ready, intimidating without even being employed. Nor, the poem declares, will his arm or sword be subject to any king (40). Then Bernardo not only commands the men who are supposed to be the most loyal to the king, but he also commands his own men to come to out of the shadows as a further threat. Bernardo's exit with his 300 men drives the point home that he is not only a good leader to his own men, but would be a good leader to all of Leon in comparison to a man whose word cannot be trusted and who cannot command his own people, let alone keep a subordinate in line. The king attempts to play off the entire incident as a joke, but because joking is not the domain of the king, doing so undermines his authority. The fact that Bernardo, always described as courteous, does not pay his king reverence (52) or go through the courtly motions shows that the king is unworthy of respect.

The Bernardo cycle describes Bernardo as the ultimate warrior, in addition to his other princely qualities. These qualities, evidenced by his aptitude to lead, the battles he fights, the battles he is reported to have fought, the worthiness of his enemies, his skills as a tactician and diplomat, and his devotion to Spain and its people make his character

more appealing than the chaste and traitorous Alfonso. These qualities underscore the honor and nobility he has earned, and the honor and nobility with which he was born, even if Alfonso refuses to recognize that nobility. What is more, in a court culture that many thought was in decline due to effeminate men, a manly man such as Bernardo, who valued Spain's history and was willing to fight for it, would be appealing to many in the early modern period. During sixteenth-century conflicts with the French, Bernardo was the anti-Roland. The popularity of the ballads in this period and the medium in which they were published, not only in broadsides but also in collections, speaks to this nostalgia.

Mesura and Emotions

Measura, which can be translated as self-control, temperance, and also, prudence (Drury 43), is a chivalric value (Chasca *Estructura* 29) that all heroes must develop, and is seen in the *Poema del mio Cid* and in the Bernardo cycle.[26] In the cycle it is an important point of contrast between Bernardo and Alfonso, once again underscoring their differing degrees of honorability, especially true in the case of Sancho Díaz's imprisonment, which is portrayed as unjust. During the early modern period, the quality of self-control was associated with masculinity (Moulton 133). Aristotle claims that anger evidences a scarcity, a surfeit, or a mean, and that a person can err by showing too much or too little anger (Peek 214). Rather, appropriateness is emphasized whereby a person becomes angry when it is warranted but is not prone to anger. Being too meek would also

[26] Drury notes, however, that in later representations of the Cid, such as in the *Las mocedades de Rodrigo* and the Cid ballad cycle, the Cid more often displays *desmesura* and is portrayed as an intemperate warlord (43).

be problematic (Peek 214). Measure, then, is of great importance. In the Bernardo cycle, while Bernardo does have moments of anger, such as we saw above in "En la gran ciudad de Burgos el casto Alfonso reinando," that is, mostly in moments in which he is making a show of force, in many ballads, his calm is contrasted with Alfonso's hotheadedness.

For example, in "En corte del casto Alfonso" (Wolf), when the king accuses Bernardo of threatening him by appearing at court with his own vassals,[27] Bernardo clarifies that he is not there to endanger the king, but rather asking for his father, something he deserves (27-28). But despite Bernardo's loyalty, the king does not react mercifully to the request, but rather overacts with anger:

> …Empero el rey, con gran ira,
> le dijo: --Partíos de mí, y no tengáis osadía
> de más esto me decir, ca sabed que os pesaría:
> ca yo vos juro y prometo que en cuantos días yo viva
> que de la prisión no veades fuera a vuestro padre un día. --(28-32)

In this particular moment, Bernardo has not run out of patience and bows to the king's sovereignty rather than disagree, even as he reinforces the idea of mercy: "empero yo ruego a Dios, también a Santa María, / que vos meta en corazón que lo soltedes aina"

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[27] I chose to call them Bernardo's men for a reason. Amongst the *romances*, one could interpret the men that accompany Bernardo either as his colleagues, *compañeros*, or as his own men. This varies from ballad to ballad. In some ballads, he is coming from Carpio, his own landholding. In others, Bernardo defines them as "los que comen mi pan." In other moments, he is in an audience with the king and calls to his fellow knights to stand with him rather than against him with Alfonso.

(35-36). Even though Bernardo respects Alfonso's sovereignty—"--Señor, rey sois, y faredes a vuestro querer y guisa;" (34)—the ballad portrays the king's actions as ruthless. Throughout the cycle, Bernardo is rendered as the real hidalgo, the hero, the calm leader, while Alfonso is cast in the role of villain, "cruel y tirano" ("El aya" 33).

In one of many versions of "Bernardo se entrevista con el rey" (RTLH 157-59), Bernardo appears before Alfonso, who spews a string of insults at him, but the young hero does not react:

> Con solo diez de los suyos ante el rey Bernardo llega,
> con el sombrero en la mano y acatada reverencia;
> los demás, hasta trezientos, para palacio endereçan
> de dos en dos divididos, porque el caso no se entienda.
> --Mal venido seáis--, le dize, --alevoso, a mi presencia,
> hijo de padre traidor y engendrado entre cautelas,
> que con el Carpio os alçastes dado os le habiendo en tenencia;
> mas fiad de mi palabra, que de vos tomaré enmienda;
> aunque no ay de qué admirarse, si el traidor traidor engendra;
> no quiero admitir disculpa, pues ninguna tenéis buena.--
> Bernardo, que atento estava, responde con faz serena: (1-10)

In contrast to the king, who is insulting the knight who has saved him from many a military disgrace, Bernardo remains calm, "con faz serena" (10). Being the excellent knight comes easily to Bernardo. Without struggling, he wins at arms and curries favor among others. In addition, he cultivates a public façade in front of everyone except his

father, God, and the audience of the ballad. The king, on the other hand, comes across as belligerent and incapable.

The ballad "Bernardo se entrevista con el rey" (RTLH 156-57) also contrasts the king's inability to control his emotions with Bernardo's prepared, calm demeanor, his logical dismissal of the king's arguments, and his ability to command the men around him against the king's wishes. Bernardo sarcastically, or "como traidor" (26), reminds the king that he has fulfilled his duty as a vassal and implies that the king would be dead without him.

> --Habláis con enojo, rey, al fin estáis enojado;
> mi padre no fue traidor, ni en mí traición se a hallado;
> acordárseos devía de lo que se os ha olvidado,
> cuando en la del Romeral os mataron el cavallo,
> que vos quedastes a pie de mucha gente cercado;
> Bernardo, como traidor, el suyo os diera de grado,
> pues puse por vos la vida y la vuestra livertando;
> estos servicios, buen rey, mal me los avéis pagado,
> pues murió en vuestro servicio el padre que me a engendrado,
> que si yo fuera buen hijo, su muerte ubiera bengado;
> pero yo la vengaré en cosa que os haga daño.—(21-31)

The king is failing to uphold his duty as sovereign by refusing to repay Bernardo for his services and by forcing him to avenge his own father's death. In other words, the bad blood between them is all the king's doing, a result of his own bad judgment and intemperate decision.

Alfonso is neither discreet nor measured; rather, he broadcasts his emotions and his reaction to Bernardo. In "En la gran ciudad de Burgos el casto Alfonso reinando," Bernardo, already betrayed by the king, arrives at court in Burgos and slights Alfonso, who visibly and audibly reacts. He walks past the king's tent, an image of royalty on the battlefield or, in this case, the ceremonial jousting field. Both fields are arenas in which men demonstrate their masculine prowess, and the ballad uses this physical setting to depict an interpersonal conflict between Bernardo and Alfonso. The public reverence that Bernardo fails to pay the king is critical to the king's legitimacy vis-à-vis the rest of the nobles. Although he does not behave like a vassal, Bernardo is *galán* (10), or elegant, an *hidalgo*. He simply passes by, enjoying his horse.

Y cuando en el regozijo andavan más engolfados,
sin ser de nadie sentido, por la plaça avía entrado
un muy galán cavallero con su langa y su cavallo.
Pasó por junto a la tienda donde está el rey asentado,
sin hazer la reverencia que hazen los hijosdalgo,
a pasado muy sereno, saboreando su cavallo. (8-13)

Bernardo's powerful, serene presence is contrasted with the king's reaction.

Dixo el rey a los suyos con semblante alborotado:
--¿Bistes aquel cavallero que de tal arte a pasado,
sin hazer la reverencia que a mí era acostumbrado?
Váyanme luego por él y que venga a mi llamado— (14-17)

This poem contrasts both men's abilities to maintain self-control and their acumen as warriors. Alfonso is easily provoked, here *alborotado* (14), incapable of maintaining a

self-possessed demeanor. When Bernardo fails to behave according to the courtly code, Alfonso feels the need to act, immediately calling Bernardo to him (17).

The ballads portray the lengthy sentence that Alfonso imposes on Sancho as intemperance by highlighting his lack of mercy. While Alfonso might have justifiably imprisoned Sancho for a short while, he never shows mercy on the count or his family. "A los pies arrodillado" outlines the reasons that Alfonso has kept Sancho in prison too long and uses this treatment to illustrate his lack of mercy. In effect, the poem is a description of the qualities that Alfonso should have and of the reasoning he should use when deciding Sancho's fate. Bernardo humbly asks that his father be released, showing reverence and even acknowledging that the king's initial reaction of imprisoning Sancho was justified (4). He argues that his father, already grey-haired, has done his time and deserves to be set free, if not because the punishment has already met the crime and Sancho has shown significant remorse as exhibited by his tears, then because Bernardo has earned his father's freedom by the blood he has spilt protecting the king (8):

A los pies arrodillado del casto rey don Alfonso,
pide Bernardo a su padre, muy humilde y muy quexoso:
--Poderoso rey--, le dize, --yo te confiesso y conozco
que la ofensa de mi padre te ha causado justo enojo;
pero advierte, casto rey, que te ofendió siendo moço,
y que en la dura prisión cubren ya canas su rostro.
Ya es tiempo que le perdones, pues con ser un yerro solo,
yo le he labado con sangre y él con agua de sus ojos;
y si la que tengo suya no te mueve, rey Alfonso,

la mitad es de tu hermana a pesar del mundo todo.
Considera mis servicios, señor, que no son tan pocos,
que medidos con la ofensa no estés menos riguroso.
Tu real palabra cumple, y si no a Dios hago boto
de tomar tanta vengança que cause en tu reino assombro. (1-14)

Rather than promising to exact his own revenge, Bernardo declares that God will judge the king if he does not act justly, reminding Alfonso of who sits at the top of the hierarchy. The *romance* comments on the style of leadership adopted by Alfonso, who lacks the strong hand, command of men, and mercy that a just leader such as Bernardo possesses.

In "El aya de Bernardo le descubre su origen," Bernardo's nurse opines that when Alfonso punishes Sancho, it is not a just punishment but an aggressive act against the Saldaña family that is neither just nor measured:

Casáronse los dos solos, por lo que non sois bastardo,
y para más se vengar y fazervos mal y daño,
da sus reinos al francés, faziéndoos desheredado;
por lo cual parece mal, fijo, al mundo que tu braço
consienta que esté el buen conde afligido, preso y cano.(13-17)

The isolation of his mother and imprisonment of his father are described as actions to "do Bernardo wrong and harm" (14) and to ensure he does not inherit (15). She does not view the king's actions as motivated by a defense of honor or an execution of justice. While the ballads portray Alfonso as pigheaded or tyrannical for keeping Sancho in jail despite Bernardo's efforts to free him, the nurse accuses the king of outright malevolence.

The entirety of "Bernardo inculpa a Carlomagno de la matanza" speaks to the self-control and responsibility of leaders, especially in the employ of violence. Although Charlemagne is a manly king and leader, his behavior is also characterized as intemperate and overly ambitious. In this ballad, Bernardo accuses Charlemagne of using violence unnecessarily in that he uses it not for self-defense, but rather to invade Spain. The sight of the battlefield provokes a strong reaction from Bernardo:

> pues viendo el campo vencido, muerto, roto y destroçado,
> mandó llamar sus trompetas y a recoger a tocado,
> y de un pequeño recuesto el estrago está mirando,
> tanto cavallero muerto, tanto herido gritando.
> Bernardo, aunque muy furioso, se a enternecido mirando
> el estrago que está hecho, por ser de pueblo cristiano, (9-14)

The repetitive language underscores the unnecessary carnage: the army is defeated, dead, broken, and destroyed (9). Bernardo, usually fierce against his enemies, shows compassion because the fallen are all Christians (French and Spanish). His strong reaction to the unfettered bloodshed leads him to condemn Charlemagne aloud, a bold move. He absolves himself of any blame by explaining the circumstances under which violence is a necessity rather than an unconscionable act:

> y dize a sus cavalleros, como con Carlos hablando:
> --¡O Carlos emperador, mal te a ido porfiando,
> queriendo eredar el reino del rey don Alonso el Casto,
> teniendo tantos parientes a quien tocava eredallo!
> Que si el rey le avía ofrecido, ya se avía desculpado,

y tú por fuerça y violencia querías ser coronado
del reino que mis pasados con su sangre an rescatado
de alárabes infieles, que le tenían usurpado;
mas como es tan justo el cielo lo a a tu costa remediado,
el cual me será testigo que en nada soy yo culpado,
pues a defender su tierra cada cual está obligado. (15-24)

Bernardo considers bloodshed motivated by greed to be an unconscionable act, ill-befitting a ruler. Charlemagne has no right to the land, and his desire to accumulate more territory leads him to violence and force. He is not considering the common weal; rather, he is acting in pursuit of personal gain. In the value system depicted in the Bernardo del Carpio ballads, the king must first protect his vassals, not sacrifice their lives for his own ends.

Bernardo manages to appear serene in the face of Alfonso's anger by hiding his emotions. In "Recogido en su aposento," Bernardo retreats to a space where he can express his emotions after his father's death.[28] The *romance* narrates his thoughts and creates a sense of space in which Bernardo feels at ease and in control. He comments with indignation on the king's decision to kill his father, a nobleman. The narrative juxtaposes the inappropriate behavior of the king with Bernardo's actions as a vassal and a son.

[28] In another version, Bernardo is not alone, but nonetheless guards his emotions: "Limpiándose está los ojos para más disimulallo, / porque no entiendan que llora los que le estavan armando" (RTLH 265-66, 3-4).

Recogido en su aposento Bernardo se estava armando,
sospiros echa del alma, y de coraje llorando,
dize: --¡Ay!, dulce padre mío, perdona al frágil Bernardo,
que si yo buen hijo fuera ya debieras de estar salvo,
pero pues triunfó la muerte, y en prisión me as acabado,
aquesta cobarde vida feneçerá peleando,
asta que conozca el rey qué es prender a un hijodalgo,
y matarle asi en prisión como si fuera villano;
mas ya que bengado mueras, ¿qué te aprovecha, Bernardo?,
que bivirás con dolor de no avello livertado,
porque a cuanto eternamente traigo en el alma fijado,
asta feneçer la vida por tu libertad llorando,
y ya que matar no pueda al rey por ser su vasallo,
en cosas suyas queridas pretendo de ser bengado,
y de bengarte, señor, juramento a mi Dios hago.--
Y sobre las armas blancas luto se pone Bernardo. (1-16)

Alone in his domain, Bernardo shows raw emotion, sighing from his very soul and crying "de coraje." Reflecting on the situation, he considers his filial duties, and plans his next move.[29]

It seems that emotional control, not a lack of emotion, signals masculinity in the Bernardo cycle. Bernardo expresses both sadness and anger quite readily in private, with

[29] The color imagery in these lines is significant. The white armor used for jousting, associated with regalia and celebration, is replaced with the black mourning wear.

a tone that defines them as unremarkable. Emotions illustrate the motivation for actions, especially Bernardo's, since he is usually showing his anger and his sadness when he is faced with an injustice and is ready to declare his revenge on Alfonso. The emotion that Bernardo exhibits is a reaction to the restrictions Alfonso's places on his ability to maintain his familial honor and becomes something that he must act on. For example, in "En corte del casto Alfonso" (Wolf), when he learns that he is in fact the son of a nobleman, Bernardo reacts, almost as if in an aside:

> Las dueñas, cuando lo oyeron, a Bernaldo lo decían.
> Cuando Bernaldo lo supo pesóle a gran demasía,
> tanto que dentro en el cuerpo la sangre se le volvía.
> Yendo para su posada muy grande llanto hacía;
> vestióse paños de duelo, y delante el rey se iba. (18-22)

Bernardo's most frequently expressed emotions are anger and sadness. Although Bernardo's blood boils, he waits to react until he is alone in his lodging. After he weeps, he dons mourning clothing and goes to pursue the matter with the king.

In another ballad that depicts Bernardo mourning his father, "Áspero llanto hacía," we see him set aside his emotions in favor of taking action. The *romance* provides a detailed description of his agitation and its physical manifestations. His weeping, introduced in the title, becomes the focus of the ballad's early lines and the surfeit of emotions he feels: "En el pecho no le cabe el coraçón fatigado; /esparce ardientes sospiros" (3-4). But he neither accepts solace nor wants to be seen in this state. He wants to avenge his father, but not until he purges his emotions so that he can then maintain his reputation among other men.

De nadie consuelo admite, ni quiere ser visitado:
por una parte pretende vengança del duro caso;
por otra ve que le falta aun tiempo para llorarlo.
Mas venciendo al sentimiento el valor del pecho osado. (6-9)

As in the previously described *romance*, Bernardo is alone with his father's armor, perhaps a metaphor for his physical seclusion, since it could represent the barrier between his interior and exterior worlds. Being exposed emotionally would be to show weakness or intemperance and leave him vulnerable his enemies.

Self-control and temperance are important to Bernardo's characterization as an honorable man and are qualities that Alfonso clearly lacks. They are also qualities that underscore Bernardo's innate honor and belie Alfonso's nobility. Alfonso is unable to control his emotions and exhibits poor judgment, in part because of his lack of temperance. The ballads portray his continued punishment of Sancho after decades in prison as unjust. Unable to balance his commitment to Bernardo as vassal and nephew against his need for revenge, the latter gets the better of him. As a result of Alfonso's failure to offer mercy to Sancho, he later finds himself in the position of needing Charlemagne's help to save his kingdom, a situation in which he once again exhibits poor judgment. Alfonso even reacts with anger to Bernardo's justified requests for Sancho's freedom. Bernardo's quality of *mesura* and self-control, bordering on stoicism, might appeal to an early modern audience fearful of a court culture where the artful expression of love was the measure of masculinity, a court culture that championed virtues that were difficult to maintain, and where a king had more absolute power in spite of any bad behavior he might exhibit.

Standards of *Hidalguismo*, Lineage, and Legitimacy

In the earlier sections of this chapter, I have illustrated the many ways that Bernardo is portrayed as masculine and honorable: the descriptions of his qualities as considered in the two versions of "Prisión del conde de Saldaña y crianza de Bernardo": his appearance, his acumen as a leader and warrior, and finally, his self-control and temperance. The poems that narrate Bernardo's illegitimacy provide a contrast to those ballads that extol his virtues, thereby challenging standards of nobility and honor. If Bernardo is so wonderful but his illegitimacy negates his honor, then is the honor conferred by birth really valid? The subjective quality of Alfonso's nobility belies the value of an aristocracy and seems to hint that a meritocracy that holds more validity. In the eyes of many characters in the cycle and in those of the audience, it is Alfonso who is dishonorable while Bernardo appears to be honorable. At the same time, Bernardo takes great pains to prove his nobility. Different versions of the same ballads and of various ballads are equivocal on this point. Some insist that he is noble and that the marriage was secret but valid, while others portray him as a bastard but honorable in his deeds and his role as king's vassal.

The Bernardo cycle, I argue, reflects these contemporary tensions between ideas of aristocracy and meritocracy. On the one hand, Bernardo is a bastard, born outside the bonds of a recognized marriage. On the other hand, many ballads insist on the legitimacy of his parents' marriage and that he is not only the perfect knight, but also the nephew of the king and the son of the princess and an *hidalgo*. The body of oral narratives complicates the issue by seeming to uphold and challenge the hierarchy at the same time. While a looser power structure is a hallmark of Spanish feudalism, the desire for more

social mobility is a characteristic of the early modern period, too. As McNamara points out, because distinctions that defined hierarchy in the period were completely arbitrary, it is no surprise that they were contested in a variety of spaces, and that this legitimizing, like gender distinction, resulted in constant struggle (4). This battle was complicated by new laws in Europe in the Middle Ages that defined legal inheritance in increasingly narrow terms. In twelfth-century France, for example, inheritance was first limited to blood relationship and then, more specifically, narrowed to patrilineal descent (Baswell 153). In the early modern period, perhaps in response to the increasing strictures on inheritance and nobility, people began to question whether legitimacy was the only path to nobility. For example, according to Quilligan, "the underlying assumption of sixteenth-century conduct books such as *The Courtier* – insofar as they become commodities to be bought – is that it is possible by industrious study to learn those 'natural' behaviors formerly thought to have been inborn, which are innately appropriate to one's class or family of origin. In essence, these books assume that those (men) who can play the part convincingly become the part they play" (210). Boscan's translation of *The Courtier* was contemporary with the first *romanceros* and was widely circulated in Spain at the time (Holloway 240). According to Weissberger, the rise of humanism and the *letrado* in late fifteenth-century Castile also signaled the development of what was a perhaps limited meritocracy whereby men could rise in hierarchy, gaining fame and power (to a point) based on their own efforts (91).

Bernardo's worth is represented both in and outside the legitimizing system. He is a good man, honorable, loyal, and brave, and he is appreciated within the political system as a good knight and vassal. Contradictorily, his authority also relies on the "objective"

validation that a blueblood lineage can provide. He is both the *buen rey* and the good servant. When he learns that the king, indeed, the whole kingdom (apparently in fear of the tyrannous king) (21), have hidden his identity from him, he is understandably distraught, as portrayed in "El aya de Bernardo le descubre su origen": "--La culpa tenéis vos, madre, en avérmelo callado, / pues si lo oviera sabido ya le oviera libertado" (18-19). In the line quoted above, he cries out in pain and vows to avenge his rights as the unsung hero who has defended Alfonso's power and saved his kingdom despite the toll that has taken on his own future. He refers to his service and the injustice of not freeing his father:

> --No se honren mis amigos de me llevar a su lado,
> y yo entre los moros finque preso, muerto o mal llagado,
> y arrástreme mi trotón fasta me fazer pedaços,
> y cuando esté en más aprieto se me canse el diestro braço,
> que si por bien no me da Alfonso a mi padre amado,
> que le tengo de seguir como a cruel y tirano.—(24-33)

The anaphora, "*y*" and "*que*," intensify his indignation and his vow to free his father or to no longer serve as Alfonso's subject. The right to do so comes from both his humble service as vassal and his right as the "legitimate" heir. This version of the text seems to support Bernardo's claim to legitimacy, as to other ballads, and the values of both a meritocracy and a hierarchy, even as it recognizes the reality of a hierarchy.

As stated above, the *romances* are ambiguous in their conclusions on this point, as can be seen in the two *romances* we have considered that treat the subject of Bernardo's birth. The first, "Nacimiento de Bernardo del Carpio" (RTLH 176), validates the

hierarchy by showing that Alfonso's sister was not only his sister but also the *infanta* and was therefore capable of producing the next heir to the throne. The word *ynfanta* is juxtaposed with *caballero*. Even so, in this version a secret marriage does not legitimize the union, even though it results in Bernardo, a *caballero*. Lineage is imperative to masculinity. Bernardo's case seems ambiguous. He is noble by blood and even by family lines (if we count the secret marriage) and a good man, deserving of praise and among "los buenos de España" (RTLH 176, 6); however, the ambiguity of his parentage means his *hidalguismo* and his identity are always in question.

The last line of "Nacimiento de Bernardo del Carpio" (RTLH 176) is reminiscent of the chronicles of Spain's greats, such as *Claros varones*. An example of a poem that positions Bernardo within the hierarchy, it ties Bernardo to a group of elite men, even if he was born outside the bonds of a legitimate marriage. All of its descriptions of Bernardo, Jimena, and the count signify their noble nature, while Alfonso is again described only as celibate. The short poem reads:

> En el reyno de León quando el casto rey Alfonso reynaba,
> hermosa hermana tenía, doma Xiniena se llama,
> y enamoróse della el buen conde de Saldama.
> Andando en estos amores, la ynfanta quedó preñada,
> y parió a un caballero que Bernaldo del Carpió se llamaba,
> y era muy gentil hombre y de los buenos de España. (1-6)

Several of the descriptors in this passage serve as prologue material to the ballad cycle, suggesting how readers should view the characters of both Bernardo and Alfonso. As these lines show, while Alfonso is celibate, his sister is beautiful, which we have seen is a

sign of inner worth and provides the possibility, in the face of a barren monarchy, for a male heir. That she falls in love with the "buen conde" serves as another indicator of her nobility, and she gives birth to a gentleman: "era muy gentil hombre y de los buenos de España," one of Spain's great men.

"El aya de Bernardo le descubre su origen" opens with the revelation of Bernardo's identity by the old, wise nanny, addressed as "mother" throughout the conversation. The popular heroic trajectory famously identified by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* that starts with the old crone telling the hero who his father is might signal to the listener that Bernardo is the hero and thereby the measure by which other men should be evaluated. We are told:

> Contándole estava un día al valeroso Bernardo
> Elvira Sánchez, su aya, que de niño le ha criado:
> --Sabredes, fijo, sabredes, por lo que avéis preguntado,
> que non sois bastardo, non, del rey don Alfonso el Casto. (1-4)

The old woman goes on to tell him that he not only has a father and therefore is not a bastard, the focus being on his identity as a legitimate man, but also that his father was actually a count, an *hidalgo*, neither the bastard son of the king or a *villano* (6). This addresses the question of his identity less as an emotional revelation and more in regards to how the outside world sees him. Paternal descent is of the upmost importance, because it has implications for his moral character and future. As an *hidalgo*, he is part of a separate class that defines itself, with a good deal of success, as better than non-noble men, and thus has more access to power and land.

The importance of legitimacy is demonstrated in Bernardo's immediate response to the woman: "Bernardo replica: --Pues algún padre me ha engendrado" (5). The "algun" recalls the "algo" of *hidalgo*, that is, he *is* a subject, a somebody rather than a nobody. The next line reveals that his father was an *hidalgo*, his mother the sister of the king, and that they were legitimately married. The alliteration of the soft consonant /f/, as well as the internal assonant rhyme of "fidalgo*"* and "villano,*"* place a soothing emphasis on the revelation:

> --Padre fidalgo avéis, fijo, fidalgo, que non villano:
> el conde don Sancho Díaz, que en Saldaña es su condado.
> os ovo en doña Ximena, en casa del rey estando;
> y como su hermana era, por vengarse del agravio,
> en el castillo de Luna puso al conde aprisionado,
> y a vuestra madre también reclusa y a buen recaudo,
> porque aunque público, non fue el matrimonio aclarado.
> Casáronse los dos solos, por lo que non sois bastardo,
> y para más se vengar y fazervos mal y daño,
> da sus reinos al francés, faziéndoos desheredado;
> por lo cual parece mal, fijo, al mundo que tu braço
> consienta que esté el buen conde afligido, preso y cano.(6-17)

By this account, Jimena and the Count of Saldaña were legally but not publicly married since they followed the tradition of secret marriage. To avenge his familial and personal honor, the king punishes both of them and disinherits Bernardo, giving his lands to France, an act that would have struck a chord with readers in the early modern period

when the national dialogue was to preserve first Castile, and then Spain, from any invasion from the north or south. Bernardo, who up until this moment believes he is an orphan, learns that he is not simply a legitimate child, a "fijo del padre honrado" (25): he is a prince.

Despite the fact that the *romances* portray Bernardo as honorable and Alfonso as dishonorable, the king's legitimacy is never questioned. Bernardo's, on the other hand, is, and this remains a major motivation for the liberation of his father. Bernardo's quest to free his father is really about his own honor. Although neither the audience of the ballads nor many of the other characters question Bernardo's worthiness, to maintain his honor, it seems imperative that his legitimacy be recognized by the dishonorable king.

Conclusion

These texts play with the idea of nobility and honor. To everyone except the king and his supporters, Bernardo is honorable and noble, but due to the king's authority, he remains illegitimate. The depictions of Bernardo seem to reflect both medieval ideals of leadership and early modern nostalgia for those medieval values due to contemporary social realities. Using as a counterpoint the Latin and vernacular texts on leadership, especially the *specula principum*, this chapter has traced similar characteristics that were being debated and defined as ideal leadership qualities. Drawing on classical philosophy, authors of ethical texts defined and questioned what the "best" men should be. As a result, Bernardo's merits contrast with his position in the aristocracy. The argument of masculinity at this time was that those born into privilege (aristocracy) also deserved it (meritocracy). Despite privilege being assigned by birth and a paternal hierarchy, the underlying assumption, or rather sustaining myth, was that nobles merited the power that

they held. The problem was that the hierarchy, while reflecting a power structure, did not always reflect increasing goodness or interest in common weal, as depicted in the characters of Alfonso and Charlemagne, and this was obvious to others around them. As this chapter has argued, the *romances* are one of the places we see the tensions over the ideal and the reality play out.

One of the most interesting aspects of the ballads is that while it is a given that Bernardo is the superior male, it is also a given that he is not the king. Although he undermines Alfonso's authority, the ballads never portray him as a true contender for the throne, only a problematic one. While the ballad cycle depicts Bernardo's competence by referencing his prowess on the battlefield and the jousting field, his character is fully communicated through his physical appearance, leadership skills, and temperance. Yet those who view him as a bastard always challenge these qualities, and he is shut out of the most elite echelons of power. Although he poses a threat to the king as an angered, rebellious vassal, he will never be king.

The perceived decline of Spain that many in society blamed on the disappearance of the military class and the emergence of an effeminate noble class may explain the plethora of Bernardo del Carpio ballads printed in the early modern period. As Leah Middlebrook puts it, the educated upper class of the time was asking itself, "Were Spain's noblemen still heroic and virile in the modern age? If so, was poetry still the discourse in which to celebrate them?" (163). For the publishers of these *romances*, I have argued, the answers were no and yes respectively, and many early modern readers turned to medieval heroes like Bernardo to relive an imagined glorious past of unprecedented military victories, especially against the French.

CHAPTER TWO

PATERNITY, CHASTITY, AND FAMILIAL HONOR IN THE BERNARDO DEL CARPIO BALLADS

At the time the *romances* were originally composed, masculinity was defined (according to Bullough) as "a triad: impregnating women, protecting dependents, and serving as a provider to one's family. Failing at these tasks leads not only to challenges to one's masculinity, but also to fear of being labeled as showing feminine weaknesses, however a society defines that" (34). This medieval triad of masculinity continued to prevail in the early modern period, when masculinity was still associated with virility – that is, with manliness and the ability to sire children, especially sons (Fox 294) and maintenance of family honor, which included care for dependents, was tied to *hombría*, or manliness (Correa 102-03). Of the two primary male figures in the Bernardo cycle of ballads, Alfonso does not meet any of these standards of masculinity, which is, in part, why he is not a *buen señor*, a good king. As the cycle reminds us continually, Alfonso is chaste, does not protect his dependents, and even harms members of his family. In contrast, Bernardo, though not a father himself, is the best vassal in all of Spain, does care for his dependents, and cares for his family as best he can.

As I will show, Alfonso's lack of honor and masculinity are demonstrated throughout the ballad in the ways he treats people, especially his failure to take care of his dependents, including both his vassals and his family. The consequence of his behavior is his own dishonor as well as that of his kingdom. Meanwhile, although Bernardo behaves honorably in most instances, he is forced to be a neglectful son, unable to restore the familial honor through his deeds as a king's vassal and free his father. Honor played a central role in configurations of both manhood and nation in late-

medieval and early modern Europe (Milligan 294), a fact we see depicted in the ballads. Although there was no universal definition of honor in the early modern period (Barahona 120), most texts of the time described it as not only inherited through families and related to one's relative proximity to the king (Correa 100), but also earned through deeds and conferred by observers upon persons they respected and who demonstrated virtue (Barahona 120, Correa 101). Unlike Bernardo, Alfonso is born noble and thus has honor conferred upon him at birth, but he does not act honorably. The ballads show how important Bernardo's father's freedom is for his honor and identity. The *romances* also demonstrate how Bernardo's and Alfonso's attempts to act honorably (or what Alfonso perceives to be honorable) keep the other from acting honorably. Alfonso does not free Sancho, Bernardo's father, because he swore he would not. This prevents Bernardo from being a good son and a good vassal to the king at the same time, because he must either accept Alfonso's oath or rebel against his king and free his father. Alfonso and Bernardo should be honoring each other, Bernardo by being an excellent vassal, and Alfonso by recognizing Bernardo's deeds and rewarding them. Instead they do the opposite.

Family Honor: Alfonso el Casto as King

Alfonso is born honorable because he is born noble. His honor, then, unlike Bernardo's, is his to keep and defend; therefore, he does not have to earn it in the same way a vassal or bastard nephew of the king would. Throughout the cycle, however, he is portrayed as effeminate, tyrannical, and dishonorable, all of which make him unmanly and unfit as king. Among the strongest criticisms leveled against him is his lack of an heir; he is usually referred to as Alfonso el Casto, perhaps recalling Enrique IV, el Impotente. His chastity, though, is used in the cycle as an ironic euphemism for his moral

and physical impotence. Alfonso's obligation as king is to produce an heir, ensuring stability of his bloodline and of the state. Alfonso creates other threats to the stability of the monarchy, however, by not limiting his sister's sexual activity. As Jimena's brother the king dictates whom she marries, thereby ensuring the stability of the kingdom and his dynasty. It is also his role to ensure she does not lose her honor (here sexual purity). What is more, her transgression emasculates him, because showing control over female's sexuality demonstrated male potency (Fox 294). In the ballad cycle, he fails on all counts.

Often the ballads and the characters in them portray Alfonso as an unjust king because he punishes Sancho for too long and does not reward Bernardo for his loyal service with his father's freedom. Criticism often overlooks that the justification for his original punishment of Sancho and Jimena is often not at issue in the ballads. In fact, the ballads portray the initial punishment as an attempt by Alfonso to restore his own honor, which is violated by Jimena's offense. As the king, these responsibilities are even more important, since any son of Jimena's, and more significantly, the father of her child, will have a claim to the throne. Initially, Alfonso must imprison the count to protect his family's and his own honor. Thus Bernardo's very existence challenges Alfonso's honor and masculinity as well as his authority.

The ballad "El conde don Sancho Díaz," for example, describes the tryst that resulted in Bernardo's birth as a sin committed by Sancho and Jimena. It exculpates Bernardo, a small child at the time of this narration, but blames Sancho Díaz, count of Saldaña, for offending the king. The *romance* describes Alfonso's reaction to the marriage and birth of his nephew, neither of which was done with his permission: "y no lo sabiendo el rey ambos se avíen desposado, / y de eu ayuntamiento nació Bernaldo

del Carpio. / Mucho pesó al rey Alfonso" (3-5). The unsanctioned marriage jeopardizes Alfonso's authority, and sullies his sister's honor as well as the family's honor.

After the king finds out about the affair, he calls the count to court, and when the king does not greet him, Sancho takes this as a bad sign. Sancho is locked up and asks the king what he has done wrong to lose favor:

> --Señor, ¿en qué os ofendí? ¿Por qué soy tan mal tractado?
> --¡Assaz hezistes, el conde, que bien sé lo que a passado
> entre Ximena, mi hermana, y vos, conde mal mirado!
> Pero yo os prometo y juro que vos seáis castigado,
> que en toda la vuestra vida de prisión seréis librado:
> moriréis de dentro della en Luna aherrojado.
> --Mi señor sois, vos, el rey--, respondió el conde llorando,
> --haréis vos vuestro querer contra mí, vuestro vassallo.
> Por merced, señor, os pido que tomedes a Bernaldo,
> que se cría en las Asturias, que es hijo de vuestro hermano.
> De mi pecado no a culpa, que yo soy el que he errado.—(16-27)

Whereas in many *romances*, Bernardo or other characters argue that the marriage was secret or that the punishment has run its course, in this ballad, the count readily admits his guilt, further underscoring the initial justice of Alfonso's decision. In fact, he refers to his relationship with the king, mentioning his status as king's vassal, implying that the sin is greater for this connection. Sancho pleads only that the king have mercy on his own nephew. Because Sancho does not question the king's leadership skills or his judgment, this ballad portrays Alfonso as a just king.

In other ballads that depict events that occur later in the plot, Alfonso's actions are questioned by other characters and in the ballads themselves, but from the king's point of view, they are framed as a choice that could seem honorable. The king sticks to what he perceived to be an important oath, insisting that he cannot go back on it. In "Alfonso el Casto ofrece el reino a Carlomagno,"[30] (Wolf) Don Arias and Don Tibalte enlist the queen's help to free Sancho Díaz, Bernardo's father:

> --Mucho vos ruego, señor que me déis, si os viene en grado,
> al conde don Sancho Díaz, que tenéis aprisionado;
> ca este es el primer don que yo vos he demandado.--
> El rey cuando aquesto oyó gran pesar hubo tomado,
> y mostrando grande enojo, esta respuesta le ha dado:
> --Reina, yo non lo faré, no vos trabajéis en vano,
> ca non quiero quebrantar la jura que hube jurado.—(27-33)

In part, Alfonso, in his role as king, is enforcing what is his right, indeed his duty, to enforce: his own familial honor. The word "jurar" emphasizes the importance of his oath. Although the justice of Sancho's punishment is open to interpretation, Alfonso bases his argument on a valid foundation. Going back on his word might weaken his authority. The intervention by the queen is an interesting plot element. The queen's intervention shifts

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[30] The title of this *romance* is troubling in that it does not reflect the ballad's theme. Given that it was published in a mid-sixteenth century *romancero*, it is possible that the title represents the editor's judgment of the king's actions. Of course, it might just be an error either from the Pan-Hispanic Ballad Project or the original editor, a misplaced or misinterpreted rubric in the transference of the text from manuscript to printed book.

the negotiation of power from one between two men, an inferior and a superior, to one between a man and a woman, also between a superior (the king) and an inferior (the queen).[31] Despite the intervention by the queen, who might have been able to mitigate the tension and power struggle between Alfonso and the Saldaña family, he denies her request all the same.

In another example, "Al casto rey don Alfonso está Bernardo pidiendo," Bernardo lists all of the good deeds he has done for Alfonso and draws a contrast between himself and his father to show the injustice of the situation, although he also treads lightly:

> Hijo soy de vuestra hermana, mirad, rey, si os viene a cuento
> darme ligítimo padre, y no natural soltero.
> No quiero enojaros, rey, sino dezir sólo aquesto:
> que mi padre está en prisión, y yo en la guerra sirviéndoos.—(17-20)

The last line juxtaposes Bernardo's service to the king with the disservice the king has done to him demonstrating the contradictory nature of the *romances* as an *oeuvre*. Despite berating Alfonso for giving the kingdom to France (1-16), Bernardo ends this discourse by stating that he does not want to anger the sovereign, but rather to just state his opinion (19), suggesting that in this particular version, the king might be "right," or at least making a gesture toward the king's authority. He does, however, challenge the imbalance within the relationship and the king's justification for the count's

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[31] This moment is reminiscent of the dynamic between God and Mary in Gonzalo de Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, where Mary is called on by numerous sinners to mediate their relationship with a judging God. God can remain the strict judge while Mary can act as the merciful savior.

imprisonment. When faced with Bernardo's request, Alfonso does not have an easy choice: either he diminishes his own authority by going back on his word and validating the count's actions or he invites the wrath of his nephew, a powerful ally.

Another less negative treatment of Alfonso is found in the conclusion of in "En León y las Asturias Alfonso el Magno reinaba." In this depiction of Sancho's death, Alfonso does not kill or maim Sancho, but frees him too late; rather than commit homicide, he is negligent. The ballad is one of very few in which Bernardo follows through on his oath of revenge. After Bernardo wreaks havoc, the "grandes de los sus reinos" ask Alfonso to free Sancho (13-14), and although the king agrees (17), Sancho is found dead:

Prendió muchos cavalleros; al rey venciera en batalla;
los grandes de los sus reinos al buen rey le suplicavan
que dé a Bernaldo su padre don Sancho Díaz de Saldaña,
porque Bernaldo los prende, y a muchos dellos matava:
las tierras todas les corre, dello gran mal se causava.
El rey, por bien de su reino, lo que piden aceptava,
si Bernaldo le da el Carpio, castillo que edificara.
Bernaldo tovo por bien de dar lo que demandava.
El rey cobrara el castillo, por el buen conde embiava
a Luna, castillo fuerte, donde el conde preso estava.
Don Tibalte y Arias Godos al conde muerto hallavan:
en baños al conde meten, su persona adereçavan;

honradamente lo traen donde el rey Alfonso estava.
Salió el rey a recebirlo con Bernaldo y su mesnada.
Llegando cerca del conde, Bernaldo se adelantava:
llegó al conde su padre, las sus manos le besava:
cuando las vido estar frías, y la color demudada,
y que no le respondía a lo que le preguntava,
entendió que el conde es muerto: muy gran el mor levantava,
a grandes vozes diziendo: --¡A, buen conde de Saldaña,
en mal ora me endrastes, pues que bivo no os cobrava!
De vuestra larga prisión yo, buen señor, fui la causa:
no me llamen vuestro hijo, pues de veros no gozava
sino muerto como estáis ¡gran dolor es a mi alma!— (12-35)

In the other ballads in which the count is returned dead, the king's vengeance and lack of mercy are clearly to blame. If we are presented with the possibly untenable situation of a king caught in the conflict between being omnipotent, and thereby protecting his honor, and displaying the mercy expected of him as is implied in the above lines, it is perhaps less clear that the fault lies with the king. What is more, in this ballad, the count receives honorable treatment in death, presumably at the king's command or at least with his blessing. Indeed, in the end it is Bernardo who inculpates himself for his father's death: "no me llamen vuestro hijo" (33). The last lines of the ballad might imply that revenge, even if it is Bernardo's, is not justified. In any case, Alfonso, although portrayed as a tyrant in the majority of the ballads, is here presented as justified in his initial punishment

of Sancho and Jimena, even if the tryst between them still demonstrates that Alfonso is not able to maintain his family's honor.

Alfonso's first failure as a man responsible for his family's honor is allowing Jimena to become pregnant when he should be caring for her and maintaining her virginal *honra*. Although a difficult task, maintaining his family's honor was considered the duty of the patriarch. Within the ballads, this failure comes to underscore Alfonso's chastity and his refusal to or inability to sire an heir. As Bernardo matures and begins to fight for his father's freedom, as I will explain below, Alfonso's initial attempt at justice, which could initially be understood as defensible, becomes tyrannical. This leads to another masculine failure in not caring for his dependents in an appropriate way, instead unduly punishing his vassal and nephew, Bernardo.

In many of the *romances*, Alfonso's impotence is underscored as a quality unbefitting of a king, and unbefitting of a man. Both at the time of composition and in the early modern period, sex and generative sex is the normative male function (Vélez Quiñones 250).[32] Dian Fox concurs: "Male potency was central to the integrity of the subject in both the personal and public spheres" (294). An unmanly, impotent king makes the kingdom, and thereby his and all of his people's identity, vulnerable because without an heir, the kingdom is open to attack from other kingdoms due to decreased stability and lack of monarchical control over the throne, as I will demonstrate below in "No tiene

[32] Some theorists believe that the male need to dominate females comes from the need to legitimize or make primary the paternal role. As Coltrane points out, "The principle of generational continuity restores the primacy of paternity and obscures the real labor and the social reality of women's work in childbirth" (47).

heredero alguno" and "Con los mejores de Asturias." Paternity is also heavily implicated in masculinity for all men. In fact, beginning in the seventeenth century, society began to treat men who could not have children in the same way that they treated the unhealthy or insane: as abnormal. A man's manliness was determined through litigation that relied on medical expertise and testimony (Behrend-Martínez 1085). Edward Behrend-Martínez explains: "Early modern manhood was defined through male sexual performance and production. Of all the things a person had to do to achieve and maintain status as a man, sexual penetration was the crucial physical act. Only penile erection, penetration and emission in the vagina competed and perfected a marriage, and aside from ordination, only marriage elevated a man to full male status in early modern society" (1077). Alfonso fails to achieve what was a basic definition of masculinity during the early modern period. He is identified as "casto" forty-four times in 105 ballads, always ironically as a euphemism for his impotence. What is more, others often seem to emasculate him, including Sancho and Bernardo, and thus symbolically castrate him in these ballads.

Despite the fact that Bernardo is not a father, often the ballads emphasize Alfonso's chastity and powerlessness with Bernardo's abilities. Bernardo is depicted as a man who would make a good king and who deserves the crown. In "Hueste saca el rey Orés" the word *casto* (chaste) seems to be interchangeable with *powerless*. In this *romance*, the disagreement between Bernardo and the king has not yet progressed to a total break in the relationship, but there is mounting tension. Although Bernardo saves the king in battle, Alfonso refuses to keep his promise to free Bernardo's father. Before that part of the plot unfolds, however, the ballad implicitly contrasts the two men:

Hueste saca el rey Orés, rey de Mérida llamado;

con la gran gente que lleva va muy sobervio el pagano.
Entrado se ha por la tierra del rey don Alfonso el Casto;
en llegando a Benavente cerco a la villa ha assentado.
El casto rey que lo supo muy buena gente ha juntado,
y luego fue sobre el moro, donde con él ha lidiado;
la batalla fue muy cruda, sangrienta de cada cabo,
por donde Bernaldo andava los suyos ganavan campo;
mas los moros, que eran muchos, al rey tenían cercado:
si no llegara Bernaldo, allí le huvieran captivado;
empero como llegó luego al rey ha descercado. (1-11)

In these eleven lines alone, the word *casto* is used twice in the context of a powerless king who cannot defend his kingdom without Bernardo. The poem connects his impotence in facing the enemy and in siring an heir. The poem states that Alfonso would have lost the battle were it not for Bernardo, unlike Bernardo, who proves his masculinity and potency in battle after battle.

After a long description of Bernardo's military prowess, the poem describes how he saves the kingdom and Alfonso:

según los que le ferian pudiera aver peligrado
si por Bernaldo no fuera, que llegó por aquel lado,
que faziendo maravillas desbarató los paganos;
sacando al rey del peligro en que lo avía fallado. (28-31)

The *romances* depict the king as heirless, and powerless. Often the same scene portrays these two statuses. The king relies on Bernardo to save the kingdom and for his own personal safety.

"Alfonso el Casto ofrece el reino a Carlomagno" (RTLH 201) contrasts the agency of two kings: Alfonso and Charlemagne and serves as another negative depiction of Alfonso and his impotent monarchy. Charlemagne, the crowned Holy Roman Emperor, is too busy fighting the Moors to help Alfonso, and behaves in a manner befitting a warrior king. Charlemagne's omnipotence, action, and agency are juxtaposed against Alfonso's impotence, inaction, and lack of agency. The poem contrasts Alfonso, who cannot defend his kingdom and is even willing to offer it to Charlemagne, with the emperor, who attends to his own battles and would never give France up.

> El francés le dio respuesta que estava bien acordado,
> y por estar al presente con los moros ocupado,
> no iva a verse con él para complir su mandado.
> No fue tan secreto esto que no fuesse divulgado:
> mucho pesaba a los grandes, mucho más a Bernaldo. (11-15)

The use of the word "*grandes*" rather than "*hidalgos*" also serves to contrast the king with Bernardo. Because he is grouped with the other "*grandes*," the reader is aware that Bernardo is a noble and rightful heir, depending on if the observer believes his parents' marriage was legitimate or not. Alfonso is not "*magnum*" like Charlemagne, nor is he "*grande*," like his fellow nobles.

Alfonso's chastity places the kingdom's honor at risk. The ballads emphasize Alfonso's inability to father an heir, highlighting his unmanliness and refuting his fitness

as a monarch. It also makes him look either foolhardy or conniving for punishing Sancho, Jimena, and Bernardo, since the latter is the only possibly legitimate heir. In some poems, Alfonso is willing to give his kingdom to France rather than legitimize his nephew. It might be that, to Alfonso, Bernardo represents a possible take-over by the Saldaña family. Certainly such political maneuverings were common in the medieval and early modern eras. Without an honorable father, that is, one who is not in jail, Bernardo represents a less serious challenge to the king's power, because no matter how brave a warrior he is, how much of a military menace he poses, or how loyal a vassal he is, he cannot dethrone or succeed the beleaguered Alfonso. Whereas having been sired by a nobleman would have made Bernardo a legitimate contender for the throne, his father's imprisonment devalues all of his accomplishments and renders Bernardo unable to change his situation. Alfonso's impotence, in a similar manner, undoes his status both as a man and a king. Jimena's transgression restrains consolidation of political power because she removes control over succession from Alfonso's domain. Unregulated female sexuality risks political power, so controlling women's sexuality, is imperative to political power in the late medieval and early modern period (Weissberger 22). This element of the Bernardo cycle also distinguishes the cycle from other cycles, such as those narrating the Cid's exploits. In this cycle, the conflict with the French and the threat French rule would present would be especially interesting to a sixteenth-century audience. Whereas the Cid is an important Spanish hero, Bernardo would be seen as the antidote to French military threats.

"No tiene heredero alguno" names the problem of Alfonso's chastity and lack of heir outright, leading with Alfonso's conundrum. The ballad describes the political

complications this poses for Alfonso's identity and the kingdom.[33] In the ballad, Alfonso makes a secret pact with Charlemagne to give him his kingdom:

> No tiene heredero alguno Alfonso, el Casto llamado;
> a Carlo-Magno el de Francia mensajeros le ha embiado
> en secreto, que viniesse contra moros ayudarlo,
> y que le daríe a León que de Alfonso era reinado.
> Carlos que oyera al mensaje luego se avíe aparejado.
> Mucha gente trae consigo: Roldán, que es muy estimado,
> y otros muchos cavalleros, que los pares han llamado. (1-7)

We might guess that other nobles are questioning Alfonso's authority since he turns to a new ally to help defend against the Moors rather than the men from his own kingdom. Indeed, the ease with which Charlemagne assembles the Twelve Peers and other knights underscores Alfonso's political isolation. In this case, the reader might assume that his authority is fragile, that he suspects he is losing control to other men in his own kingdom, and that he hopes to forge an alliance with another powerful man who is Bernardo's equal, since he himself is incapable of defending Leon and does not seem to have any other ally. As if to contrast the Moors and the Christians, the poet specifies that the worthy men aiding and then ruling the Spanish are *caballeros* (7). The poem's reference

[33] Depending on the ballad or version, the kingdom is identified variously as Leon, Castile, or Asturias. In my analysis I reference the location used in poem I am analyzing. Where it is unclear, I usually refer to Leon and the *leoneses* because those are the most frequent references. Often, I just use the word "kingdom."

to these worthy men, who are not Spanish, are perhaps even meant to be a contrasted with Alfonso, who must turn to others to preserve the Christian kingdom.

Being ruled by the French, however, is not acceptable to the *ricos hombres*, the rich (read powerful) men of the kingdom, and they ask Alfonso to renege on the agreement. The allusions to money might be making another statement about Alfonso's lack of financial resources. Perhaps he can no longer fund campaigns against the Moors, a problem that would have resonated with a reader at court in 1600 since Spain's decline was caused, in part, by the high costs of the colonies as well as the wars with and in Flanders.

> Los ricos hombres del reino de Alfonso se han querellado;
> pidiéronle que revoque la palabra que avíe dado;
> si no, echarlo han del reino, y pondrán otro en su cabo,
> que más quieren morir libres que mal andantes llamados.
> No quieren ser de franceses subjetos los castellanos:
> el que más enojo tiene era Bernaldo del Carpio,
> que era sobrino del rey, cavallero aventajado. (8-14)

The above passage makes clear that the king does not have unilateral authority. The "rich men" (8) threaten him with a *golpe de estado* unless he nullifies the pact with Charlemagne. The poem again illustrates how an heirless monarch places the identity and autonomy of the Spanish state in jeopardy.

The peril of French dominion is patent; the Castilians would rather die free than submit to life under the rule of Charlemagne and the French. Living under the reign of a king without Spanish blood would amount to losing their identity. Charlemagne, insulted

when Alfonso withdraws his offer, warns that he will take the kingdom forcibly. The wealthy nobles choose to fight the French invasion, and Castile remains independent. Bernardo saves the day:

> Venció el rey don Alfonso por el esfuerço sobrado
> de Bernaldo su sobrino, que era el más señalado.
> Mató Bernaldo por sí a Roldán el esforçado,
> y a otros muchos capitanes de Francia muy estimados. (23-26)

Alfonso's reign, however, is still at risk, since he has no heir and has isolated Bernardo, the greatest menace to his authority and power.

"Con los mejores de Asturias" links the ideas of paternity, legitimacy, and masculinity. In this version of the story, Alfonso has not overtly betrayed his country by offering the kingdom to France. Instead, the French seek to exploit his lack of an heir. At the same time, Bernardo's nobility is highlighted in the opening line and title of the ballad, by connecting him to the best men of the kingdom: "Con los mejores de Asturias sale de León Bernaldo" (1). The French plan to invade because Alfonso has no heir, despite the fact that his nephew is one of the best men in Asturias, a point made clear by the "como si no hubiera" (4):

> Con los mejores de Asturias sale de León Bernaldo,
> puestos a punto de guerra a impedir de Francia el passo.
> Que viene a ocupar el reino a instancia de Alfonso el Casto,
> como si no huviera en él quien mejor pueda heredallo; (1-4)

Bernardo makes a call to arms. He begins by reminding them of their duty as the king's vassals, invoking their identity as Asturians, and explains how an attack from the French would amount to a devaluation of their nobility and honor:

> --Escuchadme, leoneses, los que os preciáis de hijos de algo,
> y de ninguno se espera hazer hechos de villanos:
> a defender vuestro rey vais, como buenos vasallos,
> vuestra patria y vuestras vidas y las de vuestros hermanos;
> no consintáis que este reino, que os ganaron los pasados,
> por la flaqueza de un día vengan a regirlo estraños;
> no mezcléis la noble sangre que os dexaron los pasados
> con la de gente enemiga, si no fuere peleando;
> no dexéis assí perder la libertad que os ganaron,
> y que hijos vuestros mañana tengan de Francia un pedaço;
> y en vuestras armas reales verán de aquí a pocos años
> sembradas flores de lises en lugar de leones bravos.
> Aquel que con tres franceses no se atreviere en el campo,
> quédesse, y seamos menos, aunque havemos de igualallos,
> que yo y los que me seguieren a cuatro tememos campo,
> y si a más nos cupiere para toda Francia vasto.—(7-22)

Bernardo's speech has the desired effect: "Aquesto dicho, arremete con la fuerça del cavallo; / síguenle los leoneses con ánimo denodado" (23-24). *Patria*, or fatherland, links paternity and identity. Annexation by another kingdom could result in more than violence and bloodshed. They face endangerment to the *patria*, liberty, and the purity of

their blood lest mixing with lesser men dirty it. In all of the *romances* that recount the conflict with Charlemagne, the country is figured as an identity-granting fatherland. Men and women of Asturias will move from one fatherless state (with the *casto* Alfonso as king) to another, in a sense, where they separated from their Spanish blood, and *patria*. In a sense, this means that they all become bastards; they would be effectively removed from the fatherland under French reign and would be parentless. Their removal from the father(land) and therefore identity, and legitimacy parallels Bernardo's fate.

"Retirado en su palacio" contains another striking first hemistich (also the title) that demonstrates Alfonso's passive reign. It begins with a dialogue among *los grandes* (the warriors and landed gentry) debating Castile's role as an independent state or as part of a larger kingdom, the two choices Alfonso presents. Indeed, the entire poem is a debate about the merits of Alfonso's decision to offer the kingdom to Charlemagne. Emotions, confusion, and discord run amok as the dialogue opens in the communal voice of the nobles:

> en confuso conferir se oye un susurro discorde,
> que sala y palacio assorda la diversidad de vozes.
> Unos dizen: --Libertad es bien que Castilla goze,
> que harto tiempo ha sido esclava del profeta falso, torpe,
> sino es que nuestras miserias, nuestras culpas y errores
> nos tengan ya condenados a extrangeras sumisiones.
> Govierne el galo su tierra, no nos fatigue y enoje,
> y estienda por otras partes sus límites y mojones.— (5-12)

The reader first hears from those who are against giving the kingdom to France. The nobles' unified voice insists that Castile free itself from its misery, errors, and France (11). The nobles correlate freedom from France with freedom from many negative elements of the human condition. French control would impinge on the freedom of men who see themselves as Castilians.

After a much shorter counter-argument—"Otros dizen: --No es afrenta, ni es bien que por tal se tome, /ampararse un reino de otro con honradas condiciones.—" (13-14)— the case for a free Castile is renewed by the mob that bursts into the space with the rallying cry:

…--¡Viva Castilla y sus temidos leones!
¡Viva el casto rey Alfonso, con tal que esta voz no estorve!
¡Viva quien la reforjare, y si no en nuestros estoques
ha de dexar oy la vida desde el pechero hasta el noble!
¡Viva el famoso Bernardo, libertador de los hombres,
que el infame yugo abate y estrangeras opressiones!— (17-22)

The mob calls the fearful lions (17), that is, those of Leon, to take up arms or to be killed as traitors (19-20). Line twenty communicates parity among the commoners and the nobles: "desde el pechero hasta el noble" (20). If they all have to fight, it indicates that all men, in all social strata, have the right to maintain their Spanish, or *leonés*, identity.

As is the case in every ballad in which the kingdom is at stake, Bernardo saves the day, inciting anyone still reluctant to fight, reminding them of their identities as Castilians, or reaching back further, as Visigoths. Invoking the idea of *limpeza de sangre*: "en la sangre ilustre y clara" (27), he asks the group:

¿cómo a la parlera fama queréis obligar pregone
vuestros valerosos hechos sugetos a otras naciones?
Primero el rigor del cielo ardientes rayos arroje
sobre la aflicta Castilla, que nombre de esclavo tome.
Esso no consentiré, que aunque el mundo se trastorne
no ha de ser, o han de morir a mis manos sus autores,
que muchas ay sin las mías para este efeto concordes,
que es dulce la libertad, y la esclavitud inorme.—(29-36)

Bernardo explains that French rule is both a burden and a tragedy if he and his compatriots waste all that they have done to build the kingdom (28). He calls it slavery (32, 36). We might contrast the "valerosos hechos" (30), here attributed to the entire group but also, we know, attributable to Bernardo and his men, but not to Alfonso. In fact, Alfonso's very lack of agency and potency is what has led to the possible loss of his kingdom. Bernardo's speech is powerful enough to sway those supporting Alfonso's decision to give away the kingdom to change their mind. Interestingly, this is an example in which Bernardo wins a conflict with the king through rhetoric rather than through force or threat of revenge.

"En León y las Asturias Alfonso el Magno[34] reinaba" is one of the few texts in which Bernardo actually follows through with his oath, by avenging his father. In the *romances* as a whole, many battles have a battlefield or war setting, but that is not the main topic in any ballad, rather, Smith explains, "within a military setting they go on to

[34] The epithet might be employed ironically since he is usually called *el Casto* and is hardly portrayed as "great" throughout the cycle.

deal with the human drama or the tragic personal situation which has arisen out of the battle or siege or expedition" (Smith 10). The conflict is usually between two people, and the stakes are personal and social rather than economic. But in this ballad, Bernardo takes violent action against the land by ravaging the king's holdings. Bernardo not only removes himself as part of the king's power, he removes himself from the body politic, removing the military arm: "se desnaturaba" (10). He then attacks the land, a symbol of fertility and fecundity, further rendering the kingdom barren.

"Desafío de don Urgel y Bernardo" recounts a different kind of conflict with the French, endangering Spanish honor. The poem narrates a duel between Urgel and Bernardo, although the actual fighting is limited. The king assembles the courts and holds festivities, which should be a peaceful and celebratory scene. Rather than take part in the festivities in a manner dictated by his position and the rules of social decorum, the French knight, Urgel, disrupts the festivities and issues a challenge to fight any man and prove that he is the best knight, "rey vasallo" (19), that is, among the knights of both France and Castile. The interruption discomfits the crowd and the king:

> Sus palabras descorteses a todos han alterado;
> conocido fue de algunos ser Urgel el esforzado,
> uno de los doce pares, mucho temido y dudado.
> Bien había caballeros que le hubieran demandado
> aquellas locas palabras que ante su rey ha hablado;
> mas no osaron por temor, que el rey estaba enojado
> de una líd que fue otorgada otra vez sin su mandado;
> también porque sabían que el rey estaba inclinado

para dar el plazo y honra a su sobrino Bernaldo.
Soberbio está don Urgel, porque nadie lo ha reptado.
Iban dueñas y doncellas, todas hacen cruel llanto,
porque en la flor de Castilla un francés se haya nombrado. (20-31)

The power structure has been disrupted, because a challenge has been issued without Alfonso's consent. Because Urgel is French, one of Charlemagne's knights, his presence and challenge are dangerous. The king does not want a conflict with the French and fears that his nephew, Bernardo, will be displaced as the best knight. The Spanish phrase, *rey vasallo* (19), is important here because is specifies that they each man represents his kings. If Bernardo loses, he imperils his own honor as well as Alfonso's and all of Castile's. What is more, that a knight's actions can achieve this effect provides a powerful reminder of the tenuous nature of the king's power. The crowd is quaking at the challenge (20), yet the king cannot protect himself or his country, or prevent such a challenge from taking place in the "flor de Castilla" (31). Urgel has struck at the heart of Castile.

Further underscoring the tenuous nature of monarchal power, the king must appeal to Bernardo to save face. Metaphorically speaking, Alfonso gets down off his high horse, so to speak, or dais: "El buen rey con gran enojo abajóse del andamio" (32) and seek out a solution to the military challenge. Alfonso is literally "brought down" by the situation and seeks out Bernardo, who has made a political statement by not even appearing at the jousts. This is an image of the dynamic between Bernardo and Alfonso. While the king does exercise some power over Bernardo, in terms of their honorability, Alfonso keeps decreasing in renown, while Bernardo builds his reputation and honor

through his deeds. Although other knights are interested in the challenge, his people counsel him to look for his nephew: “Los castellanos con saña dicen: --Salga don Bernardo.--A buscallo iba el buen rey con diligencia y cuidado” (36-37). In this scene, Alfonso is brought down to in esteem, in part because cannot control the situation, symbolically represented with the image of him descending from his dais. His behavior makes him as dishonorable as illegitimacy. Meanwhile, all the Castilians recognize Bernardo’s valor.

Because Alfonso and Bernardo are not on friendly terms in this moment of the plot, Alfonso is vulnerable to such a menace to his own honor as well as the honor of the kingdom. Even he acknowledges that only Bernardo can defeat Urgel:

> --Todas las gentes de España han venido a mi llamado;
> solo vos, mi buen sobrino, os andáis de mí apartando,
> que no queréis ver mis fiestas, y estáis de mí despagado.
> --Aqueso, mi buen señor, vuestra alteza lo ha causado,
> que tiene preso a mi padre con guarda y aherrojado,
> y no es justo, estando preso, que yo esté regocijado. (40-46)

Bernardo agrees to fight Urgel after Alfonso once again promises to free his father. The resolution of the conflict for Alfonso *romance* reminds both the king and the audience of Bernardo’s potency, the high stakes of their relationship, and the risk that Alfonso runs when he alienates Bernardo:

> tan bravos golpes se daban, que el rey estaba espantado.
> De los escudos y mallas todo el campo está sembrado;
> mas un punto de flaqueza ninguno ha demostrado.

Sin conocerse ventaja tres horas han peleado. (69-72)

Bernardo beats Urgel and in a moment of dramatic foreshadowing, "Así quedó vencedor, y el frances fue deshonrado / y después en Roncesvalles le acabó de dar su pago, / que en muy reñida batalla la cabeza le ha cortado (82 -84)." The dishonor of the Frenchman is all of France's dishonor, while Bernardo's honor is, as we have seen, his own, Alfonso's, and all of Spain's. In the early modern period, honor was increasingly associated with the individual and extended to the nation as a whole (Milligan 16).

The ballads portray the potential loss of a utopian, manly Castile. The cycle makes clear that Alfonso is out of touch with what his people want (Sancho's freedom) and need (a champion of their honor and identity). As the poems above show, the men of Castile take their nationality to heart. Their identity, based on the freedom to govern themselves in their own land, is of the utmost importance. French rule would have the same effect on the Castilians as Bernardo's father's imprisonment had on Bernardo. Without that connection to the father, the origin and the lineage, a man is a bastard, illegitimate, and, to an extent, politically impotent. Alfonso's inability to engender an heir is not his problem alone, and it affects his manhood and identity, as well as the honor of the whole nation.

The popularity of a military hero, like Bernardo, who defeats the French and preaches about Castilian heritage, is not surprising in early modern Spain. As Marjorie Ratcliffe explains regarding the popularity of the Bernardo ballads in the sixteenth century, although people understood the stories they told to be simply legends (i.e., fiction), the theme of rebellion against a potential French rule struck a chord during the early modern period: "siguió contándose como reflejo de los esfuerzos militares de

España en Europa en general y contra Francia en particular" (959). Not only is Bernardo's military prowess on display in these ballads, making him a model of traditional modes of masculinity, but also he defeats enemies that Spaniards were fighting against at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries.

These scenes in which the Spaniards are fighting against rule by the first Holy Roman Emperor would have likely enticed those anxious about Hapsburg rule and changes to Spanish culture. Readers of the sixteenth century would have been able to relate to the depiction of potential takeover from outside the nation that's described in the ballads. What is more, some Spaniards perceived that both foreign political and cultural influences could weaken Spanish masculinity from within, as we see in the ballads. In "The Poetics of Modern Masculinity in Sixteenth-Century Spain," Leah Middlebrook argues that not all Spaniards reacted favorably to Charles V as he began his reign in the early sixteenth century. The nobility "chafed" (151) against his rule and saw him as a peril to Spanish identity. A great deal of anxiety over imperial rule existed in Spain during Charles' reign (151). The *leoneses* in the Bernardo cycle reacted with similar anxiety to the potential of French rule. They saw rule by a foreign entity as a risk to their identity and the honor that they had built over a span of hundreds of years, harkening back to the Visigoths and Numantines, both of whom are referred to in the ballads. In the sixteenth century, Charles V represented another foreign entity, the Holy Roman Empire.

The Hapsburg dynasty also coincided with an increase in popularity of Italianate poetry, and the two became associated with each other by some elite Spaniards (Middlebrook 151). Like the Hapsburgs, Italian poetry also made a historical, and to

some superior, Castilian tradition vulnerable. As Middlebrook explains, Juan de Boscán witnessed and chafed against this traditionalism

> His new lyric with subtle, pleasurable acts of discernment and finely tuned aesthetic judgment, whereas the highly regular, accentual-syllabic rhymed couplets and quatrains of the traditional forms rode roughshod through the head like warring knights, striking the ear with blows (*golpes*) before slamming off and away. The metaphor set traditional, metrical verse in strong contrast with the modern style; but it also linked the traditional poetry with the caballeros, or proud Castilian knights who were still moved by the galloping poetics. These men, Boscan, implied, resisted the new poetic forms in the same manner that they resisted the new political culture. (154)

Although not every person associated the *romance* form with the historical pride of the nation, those who saw political and cultural changes as risks to Spanish nationality may have found solace in depictions of heroes like Bernardo. In the cycle, Alfonso, like Charles, contends with invading forces and the destabilization of patriotism and identity.

In the value system of the Bernardo ballads, a king on the throne who was not masculine could prove disastrous for him, his people, and his nation. Alfonso's failure as a king begins with Jimena's transgression. As her brother, the male relative, he should be controlling her sexuality and therefore the bloodline and, as king, his possible successor. Alfonso's chastity, often framed as impotence, fails to provide the kingdom with stability. Likewise, his inability to care for his subjects and vassals leaves the kingdom vulnerable when he alienates Bernardo. He even chooses to make a foreign king an ally rather than unite his subjects, as Bernardo is able to do, against the Moors and the French.

Family Honor: Bernardo as Son

Bernardo, in contrast to Alfonso, is not clearly honorable by birth, but he acts honorably both in his actions as a vassal and as a son. He is a bastard when he is born, because the king defines the relationship between Jimena and Sancho as illicit. When Bernardo learns he has a father, however, he tries to free him through his service to the king. His legitimacy and therefore his honor and status are tied to his father's status. This means that he must free his father. As Alma Mejía González states, "Todo su ánimo está encaminado a obtener la libertad de su padre, hazaña que respaldará su honor y le devolverá la legitimidad" (47). When Bernardo is unable to free his father, he blames himself, repeatedly calling himself negligent.

Bernardo grows up not knowing his father is alive, because the king hides it from him over the course of his life. "En corte del casto Alfonso" narrates Bernardo's reaction to the news that his father is alive when he learns about his imprisonment.

> En corte del casto Alfonso Bernaldo a placer vivía,
> sin saber de la prisión en que su padre yacía.
> A muchos pesaba de ella, mas nadie gelo decía.
> Non osaba ninguno, que el rey gelo defendía,
> y sobre todos pesaba a dos deudos que tenía;
> uno era Vasco Meléndez, a quien la prisión dolía,
> y el otro Suero Velásquez, que en el alma lo sentia.
> Para descubrir el caso en su poridad metían
> a dos dueñas fijas dalgo, que eran de muy gran valía;
> una era Urraca Sánchez, la otra dicen María,

Meléndez era el renombre que sobre nombre tenía.
Con estas dueñas fablaron en gran poridad un día,
diciendo: --Nos vos rogamos señoras, por cortesía,
que le digáis a Bernaldo, por cualquier manera ovía,
cómo yace preso el conde su padre, don Sancho Díaz;
que trabaje de sacarlo, si pudiere, en cualquier guisa,
que nos al rey le jurarnos que de nos non lo sabría. --(1-17)

As soon as Bernardo learns that his father is imprisoned, his role as a son mandates that he liberate him. Bernardo is distraught, however, because he is unable to carry out this duty. He reacts strongly, his blood boiling. To emphasize his sadness and rage, Bernardo dons mourning clothes before he appears before the king:

Cuando Bernaldo lo supo pesóle a gran demasía,
tanto que dentro en el cuerpo la sangre se le volvía.
Yendo para su posada muy grande llanto hacía;
vestióse paños de duelo, y delante el rey se iba. (19-22)

Here we see the responsibility Bernardo carries as a son both to his biological father and to his figurative adoptive father, the king.

Bernardo is distressed that Alfonso refuses to release his father because Sancho's continued imprisonment keeps Bernardo from meeting his responsibilities and maintaining his own honor as well as his father's. His honor depends on being a good son. The king's having repeatedly broken his promises to release his father have forced Bernardo to break another social contract: that between father and son. In "Mal mis

servicios pagaste," he says:

> No de su muerte me pesa: pésame que dizen otros
> que si yo buen hijo fuera, no te guardara el decoro.
> Ya maldigo el diestro braço, que por servir un rey solo,
> dexa perecer su sangre, porque le aborrezcan todos.
> Por mí se podrá dezir que han sido tiempos ociosos,
> pues con honrosas hazañas mi propio padre deshonro.
> Bien puede dezir que tiene hijo descuidado y moço,
> si cautivo le he dexado, por ser esclavo forçoso. (9-16)

As an *hidalgo*, his duty is also to his father and his father's honor. Here, however, his father has fallen into a state of disgrace, and Bernardo's inability to reclaim familial honor results affects both their honor in a symbiotic way. He is an "hijo descuidado," a negligent son, a common theme in the ballads.

His inability to free his father has a profound effect on Bernardo's emotions. "Hincado está de rodillas ese valiente Bernardo" is a very touching portrait of filial loyalty. Rather than focusing on the power structures that are sustained or broken within the relationship, these lines depict the emotional elements of the relationship between father and son and focus, for the most part, on Bernardo's feelings of guilt. The opening line portrays the image of a powerful man bowing in reverence before his father, his highest authority after God. Bernardo's humility serves as another comparison to Alfonso. The very short poem employs dramatic irony when describing the king's "mercy," or benevolence, at returning father to son:

Hincado está de rodillas ese valiente Bernardo,
delante el conde su padre para vesalle la mano,
porque el Casto rey Alfonso en merçed se lo a otorgado.
Cuando la mano le toca, fría y muerta la a hallado,
y con temor reçeloso buelve y rebuelve mirando
el cuerpo difunto y frío, que de velle está dubdando.
Con lamentos y sospiros en el coraçón forjados,
alzó los úmidos ojos y habla jemiendo y llorando. (1-8)

Although he initially touches his father's hand in jubilation, Bernardo soon realizes it is cold and that the king has fulfilled his promise to release his father while at the same time upholding his oath to never do so. By returning Sancho to Bernardo dead, Alfonso cruelly grants Bernardo's request. The poet's devotion four of the eight lines to a portrayal of Bernardo's grief amply communicates that the son is broken-hearted over his father's fate.

Bernardo is not the only character who views his behavior toward his father as neglectful. By opening with hyperbolic tears, "Bañando está las prisiones" underscores the importance of Bernardo's actions and their effects on Sancho. It highlights the (assumed) negligence of his son, a negligence that is imposed by Alfonso.

Bañando están las prisiones las lágrimas que derrama
el conde don Sancho Díaz, esse señor de Saldaña,[35]

[35] The ballad's emphasis on title and "señor de Saldaña" signals Sancho's nobility and land ownership, a right that Alfonso limits through his imprisonment. Sancho's title is a recurrent theme in this cycle, underscoring Bernardo's lineage.

y en su llanto y soledad fuertemente se quexava
de don Bernardo su hijo, del rey Alfonso y su hermana:
--Los tiempos de mi prisión tan aborrescida y larga,
por momentos me lo dizen aquestas mis tristes canas;
cuando entré en este castillo apenas entré con barba,
y agora por mis pecados la veo crecida y blanca.
¿Qué descuido es éste, hijo? ¿Cómo a bozes no te llama
la sangre que tienes noble a socorrer donde falta? (1-10)

In this segment of the ballad, we see Bernardo's father faulting his son for the same reason that Bernardo faults the king: negligence and lack of mercy. Although Bernardo pleads with Alfonso on his father's behalf, the count has no way of knowing this from prison. The employment of the monologue serves as an authority-creating narrative frame, giving the wronged a voice. Through Sancho's eyes, we see the injustice, but we know it is Alfonso, not Bernardo, who is at fault:

Sin duda que se parece la que de tu madre alcanças,
que por ser de la del rey juzgarás como él mi causa.
Siempre los que aquí me tienen me cuentan de tus hazañas
si para tu padre no, dime, ¿para quién las guardas?
Aquí estoy en estos hierros, y pues dellos no me sacas,
mal padre devo de ser, o mal hijo, pues me faltas.
Perdóname si te ofendo, que descanso en las palabras,
que yo como viejo lloro y tú como ausente callas.— (11-18)

The count's words highlight the same themes we have been seeing and cast Alfonso's actions in a more "objectively" critical light. The poignant ending of the ballad underscores the dramatic irony employed throughout the poem; only we know that his pleas to his son are unwarranted. Sancho also makes assumptions about his lover, Bernardo's mother, presuming that she is still at court rather than isolated or imprisoned like himself. He feels the perceived abandonment acutely, extending his situation beyond his own seclusion and assumes he is the only one unfairly punished.

Paternity is also important in Bernardo's characterization. The ballads make contradictory points about his legitimacy and nobility. Bernardo's being the son of two nobles does confer rights upon him. On one hand, he is the hero, the champion of each situation, but on the other hand, he is a rebel who does not fit the hero mold entirely. Although we are meant to side with Bernardo, the context often portrays him as a rebel rather than as a legitimate successor to the throne. Nor does the cycle include a happy ending in which Bernardo claims his birthright. Bernardo remains on the margins in one way or another in every poem. In this way, the patriarchy is reinforced because, unlike in the resolution in *Poema de mio Cid*, the rebel vassal is never redeemed by the king. Despite the fact that he lacks the inherent honor of the nobly born, Bernardo's deeds earn him honor. Even though the king never honors him, he is still perceived as honorable among his peers and by the reader.

The importance of paternity and lineage to masculinity seems to be questioned by the Bernardo del Carpio ballad cycle. At times, it seems the ballad's narrative is meant to convince us that Bernardo is noble and that his status as illegitimate in birth does not matter. But at other times, the ballads insist on his status as an *hidalgo*. One of the major

factors in Bernardo's honor is his relationship to his parents, especially his father. Responsibility of a son to his father is not the only way in which Sancho helps to define Bernardo's masculine identity. In the following section, I will analyze ballads in which Sancho's status affects his son's reputation and status.

The ballad "Prisión del conde de Saldaña y crianza de Bernardo" (RTLH 198-200) uses tropes of masculinity analyzed in the previous chapter to depict Sancho's nobility and to portray Alfonso's actions as indefensible. The effect of the father's condition on Bernardo appears in the title itself, which lists the ballad's two themes: Sancho's imprisonment and Bernardo's upbringing. The ballad employs descriptions of the main characters –Alfonso, Jimena, and Sancho – that are all positive, placing them on equal footing from the beginning, contrasting Alfonso's opinion of his sister and her lover:

> Reinando el rey don Alfonso, el que Casto se dezía,
> andados diez y siete años del reinado que tenía,
> cuéntase dél en su historia, que este noble rey havía
> una muy hermosa hermana, que como a sí la quería,
> llamada doña Ximena, la cual, mientras él hazía
> mil bienes y sanctas obras con que mucho a Dios servía,
> dizen que se casó a hurto con el conde Sancho Díaz,
> que era conde de Saldaña, de gran linage y valía. (1-8)

The first line also introduces an obvious tension and irony: Leon needs an heir, and we know from other ballads that there is a worthy heir in its midst. Jimena is portrayed as beautiful, one of the most important virtues for a noble woman, and her bridegroom (here

they are married) is worthy and of good lineage. Sancho is also from a good family, so Bernardo's lineage is distinguished on both the maternal and paternal sides.

The ballad describes the count with many of the same qualities with which Bernardo is portrayed in other texts. Bernardo even intimidates the king's guards to the point that they think twice before seizing him, as does Bernardo in "Bernardo se entrevista con el rey." Whether deliberate or inadvertent, this seeming allusion results in a blending of the characters because they are depicted in the same scene. The king, knowing Sancho is powerful in his own right, prepares for a show of force:

> Sabiendo el rey cómo el conde en su palacio assistía,
> mandó armar sus cavalleros; a todos apercibía
> que estuviessen bien a punto, y a la guarda que tenía,
> porque en ser en su presencia el buen conde Sancho Díaz
> echen mano todos del, le prendan sin covardía,
> de tal suerte que no pueda irse por ninguna vía.
> A punto y apercebidos, el conde venido havía:
> no ay ninguno que tuviesse para prenderle osadía.
> Cuando vio el rey que dudavan, a grandes bozes dezía:
> --Varones, ¿por qué dudáis, que no lo prendéis aína?-- (25-34)

The king eventually gets them to seize the count, but not before they hesitate. It is important to note that Sancho has earned such renown as a warrior that they do not at first "dare" to seize him. This speaks to the count's position before his imprisonment and therefore to Bernardo's parentage, honor, and masculine qualities. Despite Sancho's later status as an alleged and imprisoned traitor, his valor contributes to Bernardo's legitimacy.

Another version of "En corte del casto Alfonso" (RTLH 203-04) explores the legitimacy problems that Bernardo faces due to his father's imprisonment. Based on the honor system, Bernardo's relationship with his father should add to his honor and status since Sancho himself was a legitimized subject within the social hierarchy. This version explores Bernardo's legitimacy in relation to his father and the king as his vassal and nephew. Part of Alfonso's power over Bernardo results from Bernardo's status as an illegitimate person; he is no one without a father. Bernardo's concern with his own honor is what motivates him to free his father from jail. It is not simply about Bernardo's responsibility to him as a son or the questions of justice and mercy involved. Throughout the *romances*, Bernardo's identity will be legitimized through his own actions, but first and foremost, he is validated vis-à-vis another man, his father through a legitimate birth and through the father's nobility. Bernardo's legitimacy, of course, is the one contested area of his masculinity.

This poem connects Bernardo with a group of four nobles, two of whom are his relatives (4), lending credence to his claims of legitimacy.

En cortes del casto Alfonso Bernaldo a plazer bivía,
sin saber de la prissión en que su padre yazía.
A todos pessa con ella, mas nadie se lo dezía,
que non ossava ninguno, porque el rey lo defendía.
Sobre todos les pessava, a dos deudos que tenía:
el uno Velasco Méndez, a quien la prissión dolía;
el otro Suero Velázquez, que [en] el alma lo sentía.
Para descubrir el hecho en su puridad metían

a dos dueñas hijasdalgo, que eran de muy gran valía;
llaman a una Urraca Sánchez, la otra llaman María,
Meléndez era el renombre que sobre el nombre tenía. (1-11)

The naming of the men above serves two purposes. First, as *hidalgos* themselves, their feelings about the injustice validate Bernardo's feelings about the king's unjust behavior. Their names also underscore their lineage. The ballad cycle proposes both that men should be judged on their own merit, but also that Bernardo is noble due to his father's lineage. Bernardo is also tied to their nobility as their relative (5). It is important to them, "les pessava" (5), that he be legitimized, most likely because their own names are affected by his lack of status. Their positive attitude toward Bernardo reflects narrowing definitions of heirs through the medieval and early modern periods (Baswell 155). As power became more consolidated among fewer political and Church entities, the precedent whereby a monarch might delegitimize his nephew came to bear on all noblemen and women. Two women, then, also gentry, *hijasdalgo*, step in to help Bernardo.

The word "purity" in the next line serves a function in terms of lineage. In the text, it means that they were speaking in secret. But the word also underscores ideas of goodness, in a poem about lineage, invokes the Spanish, *limpieza de sangre*, or purity of noble bloodline. The poem evokes an exclusive, noble hierarchy that Bernardo has been unjustly left out of.

Con estas dueñas hablaron en gran puridad un día:
--Señoras, nos vos rogamos, señoras, por cortessía,
que digades a Bernaldo, en cualquier manera o guissa,

cómo está presso el buen conde su padre, que es gran mancilla;
que procure de sacallo por cualquier manera o vía,
que nos al rey le juramos que de nos nada sabría.—(12-17)

Mancilla means stain, a *tacha* on Bernardo's reputation or character. His otherwise clean bloodline is stained with the shame of his father's imprisonment. The two *hidalgos* are worried about Bernardo's honor and the welfare of his father. Velázquez and Méndez, the nobles named in lines six and seven, call him the *buen conde* and entreat the Urraca Sánchez and María, Meléndez to advise Bernardo to free Sancho at all costs.

What is more, the revelation of his true identity deeply distresses Bernardo, as any threat to one's identity might; his status as a bastard devalues his status as a male. He is in pain (19), his blood is boiling (20), and he cries out from his *posada*. In order to protect his honor and status, he moves to question the king:

Púsose paños de duelo, para los palacios se iva.
El buen rey desque lo vido, tal pregunta le hazía:
--Bernaldo, ¿por aventura cobdicias la muerte mía?—
Bernaldo dixo: --Señor, vuestra muerte no quería;
mas duéleme ver que es preso mi padre gran tiempo avía,
y pídooslo por merced, si yo vos lo merecía,
que me lo mandedes dar, que ya razón lo pedía.—(22-28)

This ballad contains one of many depictions in the 100 or so ballads that are part of the Bernardo del Carpio cycle that recount Bernardo asking the king to free his father in exchange for his service. The majority of the ballads in the cycle include the same scene, although they vary in the degree that Bernardo is ready to take his revenge.

"Por las riberas de Arlanza Bernardo del Carpio cabalga" demonstrates the significance of the word "bastard," the importance of Bernardo having a lineage, and the necessity of his parents' having had a valid marriage. His parents' nobility is described in the ballad.

> --Bastardo me llaman, rey, siendo hijo de tu hermana
> y del noble Sancho Díaz, ese conde de Saldaña
> dicen que ha sido traidor, y mala mujer tu hermana.
> Tú y los tuyos lo habéis dicho, que otro ninguno no osara:
> mas quien quiera que lo ha dicho miente por medio la barba;
> mi padre no fue traidor, ni mi madre mujer mala,
> porque cuando fui engendrado ya mi madre era casada. (12-18)

Bernardo is perturbed because people are talking about him in an unfavorable way, questioning his honor. But in the text, Bernardo is careful to compare Alfonso and his people with other nobles who would not dare say such things (15), because Bernardo's family, according to him and his allies, is indeed noble. In this version, he and his parents pay with their reputations for what Alfonso is deeming an illicit affair. Bernardo disputes what everyone is saying about him and his family, that his mother is a bad woman and his father a traitor. He argues that he is legitimate, noble, and, what is more, the heir to Leon (20). Although the issue of whether it is "true" is never resolved and seems to vary from version to version, he is clearly the hero of the cycle. This poem makes a point of denying his illegitimacy.

In contrast, "Nacimiento de Bernardo del Carpio" (RTLH 178) tells the story of Bernardo's birth and how his parents' status as sinners affects his own honor. Out of 105

romances in the Pan-Hispanic Ballad Project database's selection of Bernardo ballads, 13 are titled "Nacimiento de Bernardo del Carpio." In this version, Bernardo's mother ruminates on her distress over Bernardo's lack of status.[36] In the cycle, there are plenty of instances in which it is "admitted" that Bernardo is a bastard. The opening scene invokes Moorish festivals in the springtime, where "aquel que amiga tenía, allí se la congraciaba / y el que no la tenia, procuraba de alcanzarla" (4-5), perhaps meant to serve as condemnation of the sin of lust that leads Bernardo's parents into sin.

> Hermana tiene el buen rey, que Ximena se llamaba,
> namoróse el conde della, ese conde de Sandaya,
> aquel del caballo blanco, el déla silla dorada.
> Un día se vieron juntos, Ximena quedó preñada.
> El buen rey, como lo supo, mandara a emprisionarla.
> A Ximena la encerrara y al buen conde emprisionara.
> Al fin de los nueve meses, Ximena parida estaba,
> parida estaba de un niño como la leche y la grana.
> Un día lavando al niño, su madre bien le miraba:
> --¿Para qué venistes, hijo, a madre tan desdichada?
> Tu padre está en la prisión, y tu madre aquí encerrada.—(6-16)

Although the ballad does not describe Jimena in detail, it portrays Bernardo's father using markers of masculinity and nobility similar to those I have already examined in Bernardo. Sancho is mounted on a white steed with a golden saddle (9). In this version, the marriage is not portrayed as secretly legitimate, but rather a dalliance. The king, who does not

[36] This is one of only a few instances in which women narrate events.

merit a description in the ballad, imprisons both of them, and Bernardo is born nine months later. While washing him, perhaps further connoting the importance of purity to nobility and also invoking images of baptism, both of which are legitimizing forces, Jimena laments his position of having been born to disgraced parents, both of whom are locked away. In this case, it is the parents rather than the king who affect the son's status.

The poem focuses on the fact that material comfort cannot replace status and legitimacy, a position strengthened by the queen's acknowledgement. The use of apostrophe creates a poignant scene when Jimena catches the attention of the queen. The queen demonstrates compassion for her sister-in-law and wonders what Jimena wants for:

> Oído lo había la reina desde la sala onde estaba:
> --¿Qué tienes tú, Ximena, Ximena la mi cuñada?
> Si te faltaban comidas, ¡cuántas en mi mesa estaban!;
> si te faltaban vestidos, yo te daré seda y grana;
> si te faltaba dinero, yo te daré oro y plata.
> --Ni me faltaban comidas, ¡cuántas en mi mesa estaban!,
> ni me faltaban vestidos, mía es la seda y la grana;
> ni me faltaba dinero, mío es el oro y la plata;
> el niño ya tengo grande, por su padre preguntaba.
> --Por Dios te juro, Ximena, Ximena la mi cuñada,
> que ni pan coma en manteles, ni ponga mi cabeza en almohada,
> hasta que salga ese Conde, ese conde de Sandaya.— (17-28)

The queen lists the material resources that she and the king have provided in order for Jimena to be comfortable, and Jimena agrees that she should be. Breaking the choral

rhythm of the previous three six lines ("if you want for, I will give you…, I don't want for…, I have…"), thereby underscoring the point; however, Jimena questions her child's fate. The repetition of the word "grana" connects the ideas of plenty and of rich clothes provided to Jimena (23) to Bernardo, the seed (13): the outer finery cannot make up for Bernardo's lack of social status. The queen understands and swears that she will neither rest nor eat until the count is released (28). In prison, the count cannot look after his son, so Bernardo's mother must. Jimena's worry over his legitimacy is validated by the queen even if Jimena might have violated her own and the king's honor by becoming pregnant.

This group of ballads shows how his parents' status negatively affects Bernardo's honor. Bernardo is not objectively born noble, because his legitimacy is questioned, but the ballads are not clear about his legitimacy throughout the cycle. While some ballads depict his parents as marrying in secret, others present them as having engaged in an affair. Regardless, as a young knight, Bernardo works to restore his familial honor by winning battles for Alfonso, hoping the king will free his father in return. His inability to obtain freedom for Sancho distresses him because of the ways his father's status as a prisoner affects the honor of them both.

Caring for One's Dependents and Family

At the time of the ballads' composition, some political writers and leaders held the theory that that if a king treats his vassals and subjects well, it would benefit him as the monarch. The Bernardo cycle of *romances* seems to be in accord with this argument, as Alfonso's treatment of Bernardo leads to his own domestic and foreign policy muddles. Kings have a responsibility to their vassals and inferiors both in their role as rulers and as part of a contract into which they have entered. At times these contracts

have been quite explicit. Carrasco explains that during the time of the Catholic Kings, vassals paid fees, *obediencias*, the royals, and in return, the local lord received a written agreement, a *confirmación real*, resulting in a two-way contract (105). The king must continually show that he is serving the common good (Carrasco 133). Mucho earlier, Alfonso el Sabio in the *Siete Partidas* (Partida Segunda), reminded fellow kings of their "servicio a Dios," explaining that they must also "hacer gracias e mercedes a sus súbitos e naturales" (Carrasco 138). This is the root of paternalistic society: care in exchange for obedience. Cary Nederman documents the introduction of a concept of love in politics in the late Middle Ages, a relationship in which the monarch and the people try to do what is best for each other. If this is not achieved, "discord" and "discontent" result (180). The anonymous *L'estat et le gouvernement* dated from 1347, declared that a tyrant could expect a revolt and the ruin of his kingdom as the natural consequence of an unbalanced relationship between lord and vassal where the king did not have the interest of people at heart (Nederman 197). Some *specula* texts' critiques go one step further, suggesting economic policy whereby the monarchy promotes the economic welfare of its citizens. The people's economic welfare, this theory contends, would lead to economic welfare for the king (Nederman 198). *Speculum regum* demonstrates that some thinkers believe there should be consensus between subjects and monarchy where their well being and lives were concerned (Tang 116).

At the same time, these arguments could have appealed to a sixteenth century audience nostalgic for more parity in the power structure. Bernardo has no political power over the king, but if a king continually threatens the honor and identity of those below him, he loses their support, as implied in many ballads in the cycle. Each

individual's status depends on others in their social circle, including people with power who are defined in part by their inferiors (Raffini 123). This reciprocal relationship relies on a commitment between the people in the kingdom, including everyone from the king's vassal to the commoner, and the king. The people are due a degree of respect and protection from the king, where as the king is due loyalty from the people.

Constituency building is clearly defined in the Bernardo *romances* as successful governance via Bernardo in positive examples and via Alfonso in negative ones. Part of Bernardo's success and positive image comes from his ability to lead his men. Part of what makes Alfonso an unsympathetic character is his lack of compassion toward Bernardo, Sancho, and Jimena. Alfonso's inability or unwillingness to care for those inferiors does not just define him as a bad leader; it also has serious consequences for everyone around him. For example, when he withholds the rewards Bernardo is due, the kingdom is imperiled.

In the ballad "De León sale Vernardo," the verb *pagar* illustrates that the relationship between Bernardo and Alfonso is meant to be reciprocal:

> De León sale Vernardo, penoso, confuso y triste;
> por mostrar más su dolor, de negras armas se viste,
> diciendo va: --Rei Alfonso, buen pago a mi padre diste
> de los continuos servicios que del siempre recibiste,
> bien pagas darte el caballo, cuando menester le ubiste,
> bien pagas el serte fiel en las guerras que tubiste.—(RTLH 254-55, 1-6)

The verb is repeated three times in six lines, ending with a declaration of Bernardo's loyalty. According to the ballad cycle and lord-vassal relationships in the medieval era,

Bernardo's loyalty should earn repayment (Vaquero 156) and Bernardo requests Sancho's liberty. The opening line which declares Bernardo's state of mind, "penoso, confuso y triste" (1), illustrates the negative effects Alfonso's treatment.

"Al casto rey don Alfonso está Bernardo pidiendo," like the majority of the *romances*, portrays the most oft-repeated scene in the Bernardo del Carpio ballad cycle in which Bernardo complains to the king that he is not being treated fairly and states his arguments to support this: that he is, in fact, Alfonso's nephew, and that he has spilled blood on the king's behalf. The king, however, dismisses these reasons and, in doing so, violates the social contract between them. Bernardo offers additional reasons that support his stance that Alfonso's actions are unjustified:

Al casto rey don Alonso está Bernardo pidiendo
con muy sentidas palabras lo que no basta por ruego:
--En el castillo de Luna tenéis a mi padre preso,
sólo a vuestros ojos malo, aunque a los de todos bueno
Cansadas ya las paredes de guardar en tanto tiempo
a un hombre que vieron moço, y ya le ven cano y viejo.
Si ya sus culpas merecen que sangre sea en descuento,
¡harta suya he derramado, y toda en servicio vuestro!
Acordaos, señor, de cuando a Carlos distes el reino
y vuestra real palabra mis fidalgos la cumplieron,
pues saliendo a la demanda como buenos cavalleros,
la respuesta que dio Francia vino escrita en nuestros pechos.
Cuando las guerras civiles que huvistes con los gallegos,

truximos nuestras espadas manchadas en sangre dellos;
y cuando con castellanos tuvimos también recuentros,
según vinieron las almas, fue mucho venir los cuerpos.
Hijo soy de vuestra hermana, mirad, rey, si os viene a cuento
darme ligítimo padre, y no natural soltero.
No quiero enojaros, rey, sino dezir sólo aquesto:
que mi padre está en prisión, y yo en la guerra sirviéndoos.—(1-20)

The last line juxtaposes Bernardo's service to the king in many examples with the disservice the king has done to him. Bernardo's monologue also highlights his blood ties to the king. Alfonso's ingratitude is another sign of his ignoble behavior.

There are other poems in which Alfonso's treatment of his nephew is depicted as unmanly and dishonorable. A king's responsibility is to his subordinates, and this includes caring for his family. Alfonso should behave like a father to Bernardo. For a time he does (when Bernardo does not know about his actual father). The poem "Prisión del conde de Saldaña y crianza de Bernardo" (RTLH 196-97) narrates the story of Bernardo's upbringing. Despite being upset by his sister's transgression, the king showers his young nephew with love:

Después de aver esto fecho, a las Asturias embía
por Bernaldo su sobrino y en sus palacios lo cría,
al cual tanto el rey amava y tan gran amor avía,
como si fuera su hijo, porque ninguno tenía. (50-54)

Many *romances* in the cycle highlight how much the king loves Bernardo as nephew and vassal.

Once Bernardo tries to free Sancho, however, Alfonso becomes disloyal to his own family. In "Mal mis servicios pagaste," for example, Bernardo reminds Alfonso of their common lineage and asks the king what he, Alfonso, will do now that the he has also disgraced his own family member, that is, Bernardo, with his actions. Bernardo reminds Alfonso that he has also caused his mother, Alfonso's sister, pain by locking his father away. After this lengthy description of the various social contracts Alfonso has violated with both his family members and his vassals, Bernardo explains that he himself must take revenge.

> Cuando obligación tuviste, con ser mi madre tu tronco,
> me trocaste la palabra, ¿qué harás agora, Alfonso?
> Nunca ella mi madre fuera, ni yo Bernardo, pues gozo
> de sus yerros y mi agravio, que fueron dos malos gozos.
> Si tus ofensas vengaste, desde agora, rey, te informo
> que he de vengar mis ofensas, que no con reyes me ahorro.--
> Esto le dize Bernardo al rey su tío, y dexólo
> con la palabra en la boca, y él se fue hecho un demonio
> para buscar su vengança entre cristianos y moros,
> que tiene muchos amigos, porque es amigo de todos. (17-26)

The poem's closing lines remind the listener that everyone likes Bernardo, whereas Alfonso has amassed a list of enemies. In this way, Bernardo invokes the social contract and the honor he has earned and the political power he now wields. Furthermore, these lines emphasize honor by implying that one must have his men on his side in order to

remain honorable. Alfonso severed relationship with Alfonso evidences the importance of alliance building in the last two lines.

"Antes que barbas tuviese" further details the blood relationship between the king and Bernardo. The blood ties we see between the two main characters in the cycle parallels the figurative relationship between vassals and their king. As outlined above, it is a paternal relationship, here underscored by what the paternal nature of the relationship between Alfonso to Bernardo *should* be. We see this in line three, where Bernardo points out that the exile of his mother by the king meant "que nunca fuera mi madre" (3). This line falls between Bernardo's accusation that his father is never delivered to him and the assertion he and Alfonso are blood relatives. The physical spacing between the references to his parents further emphasizes his status as an orphan due to his uncle's decisions, and draws a parallel between his lack of parents by pointing to Alfonso's betrayal of him as his vassal and as his adopted son. Because the king's actions toward Bernardo should be paternal, "nunca me das mi padre" (2) could also mean (figuratively) "you were never a father to me":

> --Antes que barbas tuviesse, rey Alfonso, me juraste
> de darme a mi padre vivo, y nunca me das mi padre.
> Cuando nací de tu hermana (que nunca fuera mi madre),
> le metiste en la prisión, y aún dizen que meses antes.
> Acuérdate, Alfonso rey, ya que no del, por mi parte,
> que es tu hermana sangre tuya, y que es mi padre mi sangre. (1-6)

Finishing the syllogism of the last two lines would imply that his father, the count, is also Alfonso's own blood, or at the very least, his charge. Another version recorded in Bogotá

in the early twentieth century explicitly states: “Acordáte, rey Alfonso, acordáte de mi sangre, / que no es oficio de reyes el vengarse de la sangre.— ” (6, RTLH 258). It is not kingly to take revenge on your own relatives. The patriarchal roles that Alfonso plays, badly, are as king, uncle, and brother. Alfonso fails as a king, uncle, and brother both because he does not care for his dependents, and he even actively harms them.

The connection between the king and his patriarchal, even paternal, roles is also evident in “A los pies arrodillado.” Bernardo insists on the blood connection between Sancho, Jimena, Alfonso, and Bernardo (9-10) and the heavy price that he and his father have paid: blood and tears, respectively (8)[37]:

A los pies arrodillado del casto rey don Alfonso,
pide Bernardo a su padre, muy humilde y muy quexoso:
--Poderoso rey--, le dize, --yo te confiesso y conozco
que la ofensa de mi padre te ha causado justo enojo;
pero advierte, casto rey, que te ofendió siendo moço,
y que en la dura prisión cubren ya canas su rostro.
Ya es tiempo que le perdones, pues con ser un yerro solo,
yo le he labado con sangre y él con agua de sus ojos;
y si la que tengo suya no te mueve, rey Alfonso,
la mitad es de tu hermana a pesar del mundo todo.
Considera mis servicios, señor, que no son tan pocos,
que medidos con la ofensa no estés menos riguroso.

[37] “Prisión del conde de Saldaña y crianza de Bernardo” contains the best illustration of this.

Tu real palabra cumple, y si no a Dios hago boto

de tomar tanta vengança que cause en tu reino assombro.— (1-14)

Bernardo reminds the king of their blood relationship, leaving a lasting impression that his impending revenge is justified because Alfonso has betrayed him as a *señor* and an uncle. In the king-vassal relationship of the Middle Ages, Bernardo's retaliation would have been viewed as justifiable. What begins as a respectful plea, however, turns into a chilling threat in the last line.

Indeed, if the relationship between a knight and a king were not reciprocal, there were certain consequences for the king. "Sentado está de finojos" and two versions of "Bernardo se presenta al rey con armas negras" develop the themes of the broken social contract and the potential dangers that exist when an authority breaks promises to supporters whose acceptance and loyalty uphold his authority. The first line of "Sentado está de finojos," opening with Bernardo under Alfonso's gaze, is reminiscent of the themes about appearance and masculinity discussed in the previous chapter. Bernardo, feared by the Moors and prized by the Christians, questions Alfonso's attitude toward him. The ballad offers a physical description of Bernardo and of his armor, an always-implicit threat to Alfonso because it signifies his nephew's prowess as a warrior.

Sentado está de finojos delante de Alfonso el Casto,

el espanto de los moros y onor y prez de cristianos.

Non costosos atavíos tienen su cuerpo adornado,

sinon armas, porque adornan mejor al pecho esforçado.

Fáblale de aquesta guisa: --¿Qué tuertos, rey, o qué agravios

vos a fecho mi buen padre, le castigades tanto?

Cuando vos matara el vuestro, si avedes pecho fidalgo,
¿non viel bastar deviera prisión de tan largos años?
¿Tanto[s] desafueros fizo, o tantos desaguisados
en querer la hermana vuestra con disignios tan honrados?
Si en la sangre non le iguala, los sus pensamientos altos
bien bastaron a subirle lo que le baxa su estado.
¿Sabedes, rey, lo que cuido? Que vos mostrades tan bravo
tan sólo por atajar los intentos de Bernardo:
non queredes vos que herede un sobrino castellano,
sino un francés estrangero que en todo, rey, sois estraño.
La mi palabra os empeño que os [ha] de mostrar si basto
a defender a León y a darle [a] sus pares cabo:
y después que lo aya fecho, que en fazerlo poco fago,
me avedes de dar mi padre, sinon lo dará mi braço.
--Conócele el rey sañudo, teme un moço desacato,
y éntrase en su sillero; Bernardo sale bramando. (1-22)

The reciprocal relationship, from which up until this point it seems only Alfonso has been benefiting, is in jeopardy "sinon lo dará mi braço" (20). Here, the poet employs synecdoche to connote Bernardo as a warrior. His arm, often figured in phallic terms with the sword extended and ready, represents Bernardo and his might as a warrior. As Alfonso alienates Bernardo by not freeing his father, the king is essentially cutting off his own power, his militaristic strength, as represented by Bernardo. Without Bernardo as his knight, Alfonso has no recourse when he and his kingdom are targeted by military

campaigns. Bernardo also insists on his claim to the throne, challenging Alfonso's motives to ally with the French (16-17). In fact, the last lines of the poem confirm that the king takes on a new military threat in Bernardo himself. That Alfonso is now afraid of Bernardo signifies that a shift in power has taken place.

A similar scene is depicted at the end of "Al pie de un túmulo negro." The text takes up events that occur after Sancho's lifeless body has been returned to Bernardo. Addressing both his father and the king, the young knight a promises to exact revenge for Sancho's death, thereby following through on his responsibilities to his father:

> --Seguro puedes [Sancho] ir de la vengança,
> amado padre, al espacioso cielo,
> que al azerado hierro de mi langa,
> que de sangre francesa tiñó el suelo,
> y levantó de Alfonso la esperança
> hasta el celeste y estrellado velo,
> ha de mostrar que no ay seguro estado,
> siendo Bernardo vivo y tú agraviado.
> Uno soy solo, Alfonso, y castellano,
> uno soy solo, y el que puede tanto,
> que deshizo el poder de Carlo-Magno,
> dexando a toda Francia en luto y llanto.
> Esta es la mesma vencedora mano
> que a ti te dio vitoria, al mundo espanto;

y esta misma te hará, padre, vengado,

que Bernardo está vivo y tú agraviado. (i-xvi)

Bernardo does not threaten Alfonso outright in every poem. In fact, often the threat is simply portrayed through a depiction of Bernardo's military prowess, as described above in "Sentado está de finojos." The king has broken promises and violated social obligations to his family. Bernardo declares that "ha de mostrar que no ay seguro estado" (vii). In other words, no man, not even a king, can, or should isolate himself by treating subordinates badly. Alfonso had depended on him before, but now, angered and wronged, Bernardo poses a constant threat that holds the potential to unseat and dishonor Alfonso, thereby restoring his father's honor as well as his own.[38]

The *Poema de mio Cid* also has a rebellious vassal. In order to illustrate what is happening in the Bernardo cycle, it might be helpful to compare the two works. The differences between the two such as the resolution or lack of resolution in the Bernardo ballads, speak to the time period in which the ballads were printed. Neither the Cid nor

[38] These ballads are not the only works of fiction that portray a rebellious vassal. Mercedes Vaquero compares the Bernardo cycle to the *Poema de mio Cid* and the *Cantar de Fernán González*. She argues for a new genre of epic, the Spanish epic of revolt, in a work that bears that name. While there are many differences in the events depicted in the *Cid* and in this cycle of ballads, similarities between the two also exist. For example, the king initially confers honor, but later removes it (Chasca "King-Vassal" 187). The heroes then earn their honor through their actions alone rather than through dependence on the king (Chasca "King-Vassal" 191).

Jimena blame the king Alfonso of the *Poema* for his exile. Alfonso is not depicted as a bad king, but rather as not as good as the Cid. The Cid and his wife blame his exile on other enemies (Chasca "King-Vassal" 184), and his later conflicts are also due to other enemies (the Infantes de Carrión). After the Cid has earned his honor, the king acts as an adjudicator between the Cid and the Infantes of Carrión. He is the one who can mete out justice (Chasca "King-Vassal" 188) and both the Cid and all of his vassals look to the king's authority. All the actions in the poem are aimed at the restoration of the king's favor. In contrast, in the Bernardo cycle of ballads, it is Bernardo and the other nobles who debate Alfonso's pact with Charlemagne and make the decision to reverse the king's decision.

Finally, in the Cid, the relationship between the king and his vassal is such that, as Chasca observes, they "are co-participators in honor and dishonor, but on an unequal plane, since the Cid can theoretically be ruined by a legal defeat, while the king remains fundamentally immune" ("King-Vassal" 188). In contrast, by the end of the "plot" of the ballad cycle, the king is vulnerable to dishonor. The resolution of the conflict between them is not that Alfonso finally confers honor upon his vassal as occurs in the Cid, but rather that Bernardo breaks away and remains honorable, despite conflict with his king. This makes the Bernardo ballads not just an example of medieval literature, but medieval literature of a particular sort that men at court who longed for a time when nobles had more power and authority at court may have found agreeable. This, perhaps, accounts for why the Bernardo ballads were widely printed in the *romanceros* of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Bernardo and Alfonso each risks harming the other in his attempts to preserve his own honor. For Alfonso, that means keeping the oath he made as king, even if he must alienate a man who is both his nephew and his most trusted knight. For Bernardo, that means defending his parents' names as well as his own, even at the expense of treating his king with insubordination. Bernardo and Alfonso operate in a system in which each should honor the other. In her examination of the Bernardo del Carpio story from the chronicles, Mercedes Vaquero addresses is the controversy over the *prestimonio*, the land or money granted temporarily ("*en tenencia*") or permanently ("*de heredad*") to a vassal in exchange for his loyalty. Kings were often capricious in such matters, and this practice had ended by the time of Ferdinand III's reign. Land could no longer be given and then taken away (156-7). This practice seems to be echoed in the Bernardo ballads when the king repeatedly promises to free Bernardo's father but never comes through. Both in the ballad cycle and in medieval society, nobles and the king, however, understood such capriciousness as unjust.

This chapter has considered the idea that the *specula* texts from the Middle Ages document an ideology of leadership in which the king was expected to serve his people, to love them, and to care for them as his dependents. If this did not happen, commoners and vassals alike were justified in rebelling. Alfonso faces such consequences for his actions in the Bernardo cycle. He repeatedly denies Bernardo his right as a vassal, and he makes his kingdom and his people vulnerable by refusing to validate a possible heir, instead allying himself with Charlemagne. The king's decisions are not met with blind obedience. Instead, the nobles and Bernardo push Alfonso to act differently and even overturn his decisions. Portrayals of this power dynamic between the king and the nobles

(including vassals) might have been especially appealing to the ballads' readers when these *romanceros* were being printed in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the relationship between the king and the other nobles was shifting in Spain. Before and during the reign of Catholic Kings, heroes such as the Cid and Bernardo, men who were able to maintain honor and gain renown through their (mostly militaristic) deeds, embodied masculine values. Men of the Middle Ages were, as perceived in the early modern period, consummate warriors who could save Spain from attack both inside and outside its borders. And these men were not just the stuff of fiction. The Cid actually existed, even if the *Poema* is a work of fiction, and Mercedes Vaquero has documented the possible inspiration for the Sancho Díaz character in the Bernardo cycle. My point is that monarchical authority strengthened throughout the early modern period and that restrictions were placed on nobles to reduce their power. When Charles V took the throne, even more policies that "constrained the agency of the great noble houses and placed restrictions on the individual exercise of violence" were put into place (Middlebrook 147). The discourse surrounding the monarch also changed; Charles's promoters portrayed him as a messiah, so any texts praising Spain's military successes placed all men's deeds as subordinate to the will of God and the sovereign in the patriarchal hierarchy. Individual glory became Charles's (Middlebrook 147).

At court, the model of ideal nobility was also refigured in terms of subordination to the monarch, which might be why Bernardo was such an appealing hero. The perfect courtier was not only a perfect warrior but also a perfect servant. He was a warrior who was nonetheless subservient to his master, even feminine to a certain extent (Moulton

130). According to Cartagena-Calderón, "The disempowered courtier found himself in a position of dependency in relation to the prince or king that mirrored a behavior culturally viewed as feminine at the time" (324). Nobles were forced to develop the skills to operate in a world where the prince had ultimate power over them (Cartagena-Calderón 324). Whereas previously nobility was undergirded by military deeds, at least a perceived shift to currying the monarch's favor was now taking place (Vélez Quiñones 278).[39] It stands to reason, then, at a time when the great Spanish heroes of old were being venerated as models for early modern men that at court, where honor depended more on deeds than the favor of a capricious king, would attract many sixteenth-century readers.

Conclusion

Throughout the Bernardo del Carpio ballad cycle, Bernardo and Alfonso illustrate qualities that made a man masculine during this time period—fathering children, caring for a family, and caring for dependents. In these ballads, Bernardo becomes more honorable because he fulfills all of his masculine duties other than fathering a child, whereas Alfonso is shown to be an unfit, unmanly king because he does not fulfill any of these duties. Although Alfonso originally attempts to preserve his familial honor by imprisoning the count, because he clings to his oath, he ultimately loses the support of his vassal and becomes a dishonorable tyrant, a *mal señor*. His uncharitable relationship with Bernardo, his reliance on his nephew for defense, and his failure to produce an heir all

[39] Although this is not Vélez Quiñones' argument, I specify perceived because the need to curry monarchical favor is documented during the reign of the Catholic Kings (see Weissberger) and earlier (see Vaquero).

put his kingdom and his people in jeopardy. French rule endangers Spanish identity, because, according to the voices in the poems, to submit to French rule is to negate centuries of Spanish glory.

These themes, the threat of a foreign ruler and a system in which honor is earned rather than conferred upon men at the will of the king, would have been especially interesting to people who were reading the *romanceros*, the collections of *romances*. All of the ballads examined in this and the previous chapter came from collections printed between 1530 and 1600, a time when Spain was experiencing a great national crisis. Many nobles perceived that Spain was in decline; the glories from the past would no longer add to the nation's renown. Although the glorious history of Spain as portrayed in the ballads was an invention, that did not make it any less important to readers of the sixteenth century who found the character of Bernardo appealing because, despite having had a king who failed to honor him, he could fight the French enemies and preserve Spanish glory. The early modern noble Spaniard was increasingly isolated from the king of military prowess he would have associated with Spain's illustrious past. The ballads, however, could have served as a bridge to that time and those men who made Spain great in the early modern imagination.

CHAPTER THREE

PERVERSIONS OF MASCULINITY IN "LA INFANTINA" AND "LA SERRANA DE LA VERA"

This chapter will explore the men's relationship to female sexuality and the political and economic phenomena that controlled it within society. The theoretical framework of this analysis of the relationship of women and masculinity is borrowed from Gayle Rubin's seminal article, "The Traffic in Women," in which she examines the ways in which women are exchanged between kin groups for political reasons, i.e., the exchange of power. It is the argument of this chapter that the *"*La serrana de la Vera*"* and "La infantina" *romances,* both recorded at the beginning of the seventeenth century, reflect the social pressures of the time regarding marriage and the exchange of women. These *romances* each present the story of an unnamed protagonist that opted out of this exchange and the consequences and problems of their actions. I argue not that the ballads are "preaching" how to live, but rather that they reflect the anxiety about gender roles that, as Rubin indicates, are found in many societies, whether simple or complex.

The *serrana* and the unnamed male wanderer from "La infantina" are the two people who do not participate readily in the social exchange upon which the political social structure rests: heterosexual marriage and the "ownership" and exchange of women, specifically of their sexuality. In "La serrana de la Vera," a male wanderer, the narrator of the ballad, encounters the *serrana*, who removes herself from this system by living as a man in the wild. Rather than allowing her sexuality to be controlled by others, she controls it herself and indeed possesses (and disposes of) men at will. Whereas in this society a young woman's sexuality typically would be controlled by men, her father or her husband, in this ballad, she controls her own sexuality. In the second *romance*,

another unnamed wanderer encounters a beautiful woman, a self-proclaimed *infantina*, or princess, offers herself up as his wife or his lover, but the wanderer, rather than participate in the social structure in which he knows he must take part, neither accepts nor rejects her offer, asking her to wait while he asks his mother for advice. The *romance* then narrates his indecisiveness as a missed opportunity and the character sentences himself to death. Both ballads thus present a version of masculinity that they implicitly critique. In the first, the young woman's adoption of masculine characteristics is questioned because she is demonic. In the second, the subject refuses to meet the social standards of masculinity by not adopting masculine characteristics and as a result punishes himself with a death sentence. Nonetheless, these are not narratives that exclusively reinforce patriarchy.

Overwhelmingly, the current literature on gender suggests that ideas of masculinity and femininity are plural and shifting rather than singular and static. That is, according to theorists of gender, there is more than one way to be masculine or feminine and each individual's gender identity can encompass more than one type of each. Less clear to scholars, however, is the relationship between the hegemonic notion of masculinity (comprising strength, stoicism, fierceness, and logic) and the ideal notion of femininity (comprising a nurturing nature, warmth, and obedience) and the actual lives of individual men and women—that is, how we relate to, reject, or conform to those constructs.[40] As Scott Coltrane notes, "Authoritative males and nurturing females from

[40] I am choosing not to use the term "hegemonic femininity" because hegemony is oppressive by nature. Although it is theoretically possible for femininity to be hegemonic, such is not the case in the femininity that I am examining here.

ancient times come to stand for some underlying masculinity or femininity that supposedly resides deep within humans" (46). As a result, individuals struggle to reconcile these ideals with what they feel and experience on a daily basis. While we all agree that these ideals exist and either conform or rebel against them, or sometimes even both, what we end up calling gender and how we view who we are as individuals is a more complicated matter. In her explanation of Simone de Beauvoir's theories on femininity, for instance, Toril Moi explains that De Beauvoir invites us to understand gender as a sum total of a "lived experience" including "the way in which the individual woman encounters, internalizes, or rejects dominant gender norms" (82). De Beauvoir, Raewyn Connell agrees, "showed gender as a developing engagement with situations and structures" (30). Although De Beauvoir's theory was developed in reference to women, its insights are clearly just as true for men, the difference being that men's place in the power structure is quite different in that it can be hegemonic, whereas that of women nevery can be.

Applying this theory to men, we know that men also have a history of conforming to or rejecting ideal masculinity. But while women often seem to be freer to explore their masculinity, men generally are not as free to be feminine. To elaborate, while masculinity in females could be perceived as a positive trait during the early modern period, a feminine male is generally an object of scorn. There are always exceptions, but during the early modern period, a woman's being masculine could be seen as a step up while a man's being feminine was most often perceived as a step down. According to Michael Kimmel, "Masculinity is born in the renunciation of the feminine, not in the direct affirmation of the masculine, which leaves masculine gender identity tenuous and fragile"

(127). Therefore, men's relationship to masculinity is not the same as women's relationship to femininity, and perhaps even more importantly, men's relationship to femininity is not the same as women's relationship to masculinity.

Nonetheless, just because an ideal role might threaten an individual's personal identity does not mean that there were not alternative ideas of masculinity, non-hegemonic models, that enter into dialogue with the ideal.[41] Against the backdrop of the standard, the ideal, or the model of masculinity, we are presented with the pluralities, the exceptions and the alternatives. Often the dialogues in art and literature feature such non-hegemonic men. One example is what Arthur Flannigan-Saint-Aubin terms a testicular/theatrical male who has other qualities, such as a male version of hysteria (such as the *gracioso*), that would be considered un-phallic but are also true of the calm, present, and enduring but not aggressive male. Flannigan-Saint-Aubin offers the example of Superman as the "phallic man of steel, while Clark Kent is the testicular sweet, enduring male" (252). Spanish literature contemporary to the printing of the *romancero* collections provides other examples of non-hegemonic men. In *Historia del Abencerraje y la hermosa Jarifa,* we might consider Rodrigo the phallic male who strives to maintain his place as phallic, and finally puts Abindarráez in his place as the non-hegemonic, subordinate male with a heavy-handed generosity, bestowing him with gifts he cannot reciprocate. In the *La vida es sueño,* Segismundo begins the play as a hysterical, non-hegemonic male portrayed as a hotheaded savage who is transformed into the consummate prince, the phallic male. Don Quijote also is a non-hegemonic male, making

[41] See José R. Cartagena-Calderón, "Of Pretty Fops and Spectacular Sodomites: *El lindo don Diego* and the Performance of Effeminacy in Early Modern Spain."

attempts to achieve an ideal male status, but failing both as a country gentleman in the real world and as a knight errant in the imagined world he constructs.

That one model or type of masculinity may be held up and imitated and another openly criticized or mocked does not mean that dissenting types do not exist, that they should not exist, or that they are being quelled. In his analysis of the *Song of Roland*, for instance, Simon Gaunt sees the two heroes, Oliver and Roland, as two halves of an ideal whole. To use the model suggested in the previous paragraph, Oliver represents the subordinate model, reasonable and shying away from attack in favor of prudence, while Roland represents the phallic, aggressive male, charging straight ahead. It is, of course, *The Song of Roland*, not of Oliver, but, as Gaunt argues, that does not mean Oliver is not as important to the tale, as another kind of man. A careful reading of the text reveals anxiety regarding the narrow construction of masculinity through the dissenting voices in the text, even if they are eventually silenced (Gaunt 23). What I propose to demonstrate in this chapter is that the dissenting voices that are silenced in the stories within the two *romances* it examines nonetheless engage with and communicate to their listeners and readers a plurality of masculinities and femininities. As we shall see, these ballads portray anxiety about the tensions between constructions of ideal masculinity and femininity, especially those concerning marriage and heterosexual relationships, that were based on the socio-economic and socio-political situation of the time in which they were written.

An Allegory of a Cave: "La serrana de la Vera" and Her Relationship to Masculinity

Like many *romances*, the *"*La serrana de la Vera*"* has been collected in both oral and written form, the former in many areas of Spain and the latter from the early modern era. Menéndez Pidal and María Goyri collected twenty-one versions, which shows its popularity through the centuries (McKendrick 277). This *romance* demonstrates the threat that an uncontrollable woman poses to a man and how he must leave her domain to protect his masculinity. It explores the role that women, especially dangerous ones, play in the construction of masculinity. In the words of Eve Sedgwick, "Only women have the power to make men less than men within this world. At the same time, to be fully a man requires having obtained the instrumental use of a woman, having *risked* transformation by her" (40). This ballad examines the importance of the role of women in the creation, affirmation, or destruction of masculinity, as Vern Bullough notes, most often through control over female sexuality (34).

Although, as discussed earlier, there is no way for us to authoritatively date individual *romances*, this *romance* about a wild, uncontrollable Amazonian who threatens the hapless wanderer enjoys a very interesting history.[42] Despite that not many written versions of this *romance* have survived, we do know that during the early modern period, the story enjoyed a rebirth as a popular play, raising the question of what in the story may have attracted an early modern audience. One possibility is its presentation of an unruly female, as there are countless examples from other works. Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano points out, for example, that Rosaura in Lope's *El animal de Hungría*, raised in the wild and uneducated in the gender systems that her city counterpart Teodosia is, must be taught her subordinate role and place in society. As Yarbro-Bejarano argues, "*Animal*

[42] Another apt comparison would be to the Sirens found in Greek mythology.

exemplifies a particular discourse on femininity that fuses the narrative of female subordination from Genesis with The Aristotelian account of female imperfection. Teodosia teaches Rosaura to value her beauty and her reproductive function as the source of her value to men as opposed to the male's moral superiority" (18). This and works like it demonstrate the desire to suppress the emotions and animal-like behavior exhibited by such women in favor of the controlled and rational "natural" state that comes more naturally to men. As Mar Martínez Góngora argues about works from this period, the feminine is associated not only with this unnatural state, but with that unnatural state in excess (7). This unnatural state of women must be controlled or it can wreak havoc.

The first depictions of the female protagonist in the ballad are of her femininity. In a version attributed to D. Gabriel Azedo de la Berrueza in Madrid in the year 1677, according to Piñero, the ballad opens by establishing the woman's beauty with quintessential descriptors: "Blanca," "rubia," and "ojimorena." Long hair has often been associated both with female sexuality and with the temptress. More specifically, Piñero says "Los cabellos largos femeninos se han interpretado como símbolo de la provocación sexual y de la fertilidad. El dejarlos sueltos, el peinarse, al melena o lavársela significaba por parte de la mujer la provocación evidente al varón" (415). The first description of the woman in the *romance* is not of her warrior or masculine qualities but her feminine ones. She is marked with the same descriptors, "pale" and "blond," as women in thousands of poems, establishing her femininity first. These descriptions ready the reader or listener to expect her to follow or at least comment on the usual social roles that accompany her gender. In the conventions of the time, this would indicate to us that the subject of the ballad, the *yo*, who we are likely to assume is male, given that subjects usually are, has

run into an object with which to either confirm or challenge his masculinity. From western antiquity through the early modern period, it has been argued, women were seen not so much as the "Other" to men as simply that which is not male: the void. Gerda Lerner summarizes this process in *The Creation of the Feminist Consciousness:* "The metaphors of gender constructed the male as the norm and the female as deviant; the male as whole and powerful; the female as unfinished, physically mutilated and emotionally dependent" (3). We know now that these constructions are not given truths, but rather creations that place woman in a role within the patriarchy to confirm masculinity through their own objectification, thereby creating the male subject.

But the next line in the ballad signals to us that the woman is not simply feminine, but also masculine, and not just because of a disguise. She is wearing a *montera,* suggesting both her location and her adopted gender characteristics. The *montera* has a long history of association with hunters in folklore, and therefore with masculinity (Piñero 408). Readers also know that cross-dressing, or wearing garments typical of the opposite sex, shows what Laura Levine terms gender pollution (134), so they are prepared for a dialogue about gender. But the images in these descriptions are contradictory, both sexual and feminine, practical and male. Her skirt is short, surely intended as a sexual image, but also indicating a dangerous woman, since her genitals are not enclosed and hidden away but easily accessible, not contained. Still, this image is preceded by the caveat "porque no la estorbara" (4), meaning that she is wearing a short skirt so that it does not get in the way of whatever she might need to do. We thus immediately know that she is unlike other women whose role is to remain in the house, perhaps in control of child rearing and managing the house. She is independent woman,

providing for herself, a description that appeals to twenty-first-century sensibilities and lends itself to feminist readings. These descriptions give us a mixed impression of a woman who is at the same time aggressively sexual[43] and masculine. This quick series of images quite economically positions the *serrana* as a double threat to the male subject. The *yo* of the poem can be effeminized by either a woman, if he cannot control her sexuality, or by a man who dominates him. The *serrana* has the dual potential to trap him with her feminine wiles or to dominate him with her masculine qualities. In the end, she does both.

In the next line she is wandering among the "riberas" (5), an image that connotes fertility and water, often associated with sexuality (Piñero 408). This woman is not the restrained wife or virgin acceptable to society. She is located in a lush environment that leads the reader or listener to associate her with sex and sexuality. At the same time, however, she is walking, unaccompanied and unrestrained, with none of the familiar hierarchy controlling her and monitoring her behavior. What is more, we learn in the next line that she is carrying hunting weapons, a sling and arrows (6).[44] An action with many symbolic meanings, hunting is, of course, associated with men and masculinity and with the male role in sexual relations. It is the man who hunts the woman and traps her as a trophy, thereby further confirming his masculinity.[45] Digging a little deeper into this idea also reveals that the hunting man is an agent of action and therefore a subject. The

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[43] In the early modern period, unrestrained sexuality, but not seduction, was associated with women, not men.

[44] The arrows could be read as a phallic symbol here.

[45] For more on hunting noble women as a practice of noble men, see Rogers.

hunted, usually a woman, is always the object. A successful hunt, the capturing of an object, is a means to subjecthood through agency, or action. But here, the woman is also an agent and the hunted object will be the male. This inversion is more than simple cross-dressing; it is the inversion of the usual subject with the object, the passive role with the active.

Additionally, the weapons she is carrying and the way she is hunting appear to hint at a lack of development or civilization. Returning to the idea that what is controlled is civilized, the opening of the ballad presents us with an unconstrained woman who is hunting with a sling in a short skirt. She is not, as a knight errant would be, mounted on a horse, in armor with a sword, a bow, or a falcon, masculine images that would connote civilization. Rather she is desribed as savage: "Las descripciones de sus rasgos físicos se completa con otros elementos que indican su condición de mujer salvaje: <<con su trabuco en la mano>>, <<con su escopetita al hombro>>, <<la piedra en la faldiquera>>, <<guardando—en actitud hostil—la suya cueva>>" (Piñero 407). Her dress connotes the image of the uncivilized frontier, an unknown space with a cross-dressing female operating outside the known and controlled hierarchy of civilization. This man has wandered outside the realm of civilization and has run across a savage who inhabits a wild, verdant space.

To elaborate on the threat of the uncivilized and women's connection to it, moralists and theologians argued, that women were threatening because they were not the tame and logical sex that males were. Humanist thought in this era also championed marriage, and demonized the female as much, if not more, than the Church had. Martínez Góngora notes that in *Enchiridión*, which was published in 1525, "La identificación entre

la carne y lo femenino, no sólo va a resultar un impedimento a la hora de construir una visión positiva de la función social de la mujer, sino que representarán para Erasmo la negatividad esencial que el hombre debe vencer mediante la labor civilizadora de la educación" (Martínez Góngora 10). Of course, this was nothing new, as the long tradition of associating women with the flesh and men with the spirit started with Augustine, if not before (21). In the "Serrana" ballad, the potential failure of the enterprise is dramatized.

The setting of the text is significant to the story and what it says about gender and relationships between men and women. Some versions of this *romance* locate the action in Extremadura, but the location has often been mistakenly pronounced or spelled.[46] Additionally, many *romances* that simply name unspecific zones:

> El romance puede comenzar con una imprecisión local, utilizando una formula especial propia del etilo romancístico: <<Allá arriba en aquel alto>>, <<En aquellas altas sierras>>, <<En cierta tierra de España>>, etc., cuando no lo hacen con la indicación precisa del lugar, Garganta la Olla, en la Vera de Plasencia, como ocurre, sobre todo en los texto extremeños y en las zonas colindantes. Hay unas versiones, las menos, que sitúan la acción en otro lugar de España. De todas formas, nuestros textos han conservado la ubicación de la fábula en un terreno abrupto, difícil y apartado. (Piñero 406)

[46] As explained above, the *romances* we have archived have been collected from *Romanceros* or collections published starting around 1600 or were collected from live informants starting at the turn of the last century.

In any case, the action of the ballad takes place in a symbolic space that is significantly separated from civilization. That the name Extremadura would signify this for any listener or reader of the time is evidenced in the various changes the setting has undergone in different versions of the ballad.

The fact that the untamed woman is off living in the ends of the earth is significant and to understand her function in the text, we must consider the spaces within the text. In this poem, there are two: the off-stage civilized realm and the wild, as yet untamed area of the poem. According to the social model established in both the literature of the time and the law, women should be enclosed and closed off. Men are safe and unthreatened in their domains, that is, where men have dominion and power. In her book on the Lope plays, Yarbro-Bejarano calls women who transgress these spaces outlaws, women who have escaped male control over their sexuality, thereby upsetting the relationship between men. They are outside of the law, outside the spaces governed by social laws that would enclose them. Tamed and tamable women live within masculine domains, while unruly women interface with men in the untamed outer realms, at least in the imagined world of the ballad.

Unruly women belong outside the realms of the civilized world, as Melveena McKendrick argues, "Their behavior is an illustration of the alienation principle. They feel alienated from the whole of society and therefore free of society's rules" (132)—that is, outside the realm of hierarchical control. In almost all early modern literature in which a woman and her sexual partner transgress gender boundaries, the accepted social order of male dominion over women, expressed through both intra- and interfamilial hierarchy, is reestablished by a plot resolution that results in marriage, even in cases of rape. In

contrast, in many of the *romances* dealing with monstrous women, the eventual resolution does not lead to the reintegration of the social transgressor but often leaves the plot at a climactic moment rather than coming to a conclusion. In the outer spaces that are not enclosed, that are unsafe, a man cannot hope to enforce his dominion. This clearly has a parallel in the *romance* as a genre, known for its plot ambiguity (Smith 7).

The untamed space in which the *serrana* roams parallels her character[47]. The *serrana* thus poses a figurative and literal threat to the poetic *yo*, the everyman subject, because she is uncontained and in an untamed space that men should dominate. As Rayna Reiter notes, anthropological studies of Mediterranean societies have identified specifically gendered spheres: "Throughout the Mediterranean area, a distinction is often made between private and public spheres. Public places like the village square, the cafes and the mayor's office are the domain of men, while private places such as houses and the back streets that connect them into residential neighborhoods belong to women" (256). The first image of the *serrana* as a woman leaping about the countryside like an animal is not only of a woman outside of civilization and hunting like a man, but also one in the fields, the man's potential domain. Edith Rodgers argues that hunting is associated in the ballads with death (149) or other threatening and unknown elements (158). The *serrana* and the poetic *yo* interact in both a gendered and spatial context. As a female, the *serrana*'s place within the patriarchal domain is enclosed. But here she is wandering in spaces that are meant to be tamed by men; she is unleashed, in a sense. Here, the setting

[47] The untamed *serrana* also figures in the *Libro de buen amor* and the Marquez de Santillana's poetry.

and the characterization quickly establish a potential threat to the poetic *yo*'s socially dominant, and therefore acceptable, masculinity.

Given this foreshadowing of threat, it is no surprise that the *serrana* quickly dominates the protagonist physically without any struggle and takes him to her cave or lair: "Tomárame por la mano y me llevara a su cueva" (7). The narration is not very detailed, but we do learn that he fears her at some level, indicated by the verb *atreverse* in the next line. They pass by a number of crosses, and the protagonist asks after the graves: "Atrevíme y pregúntele qué cruces eran aquéllas, / y me respondió diciendo que de hombres que muerto hubiera" (9-10). This line has an interesting syntax: not only does it fit the rhyme scheme with *viera* and *encendiera*, but also places the agency of the action at the end of the line, emphasizing the action on the part of the *serrana* (*hubiera*) rather than the state of the men (*muerto*). Of course, both verbs are conjugated for the *serrana*, but emphasizing the *hubiera* by putting it at the end of the line rather than before *muerto* places more emphasis on her as an agent. We also learn that the male protagonist also will be a victim of her bloodthirsty and sexual appetite. He fears her because she is the subject; she is in charge. His lack of control or dominion, especially in this era, constitutes a lack of masculinity, or, in effect, social castration.

To better understand the *serrana* in this ballad, we might compare the role of women and men in other texts of the time. Despite their important role in the plots of these works as the vessels through which male dominance is decided, women are rarely the primary subjects of the narration. For example, Yarbro-Bejarano points out that in Lope's honor plays, which "entail at least the suspicion that the wife is unfaithful, the falsely accused woman who initially represents 'lawless sexuality' in the imagination of

the male subject is 'redeemed' by the end in such a way as to reassure the male subject of his power and control over her" (23). Yarbro-Bejarano explains that Rachel Blau DuPlessis claims a traditional, and socially acceptable romantic plot inevitably ends in one of two ways: either the female is married or the marriage is saved, thereby initiating the "successful integration of woman into society," or she dies, which means "sexual and social failure" (23). In other words, there is no resolution between her gender and the social structure (kinship) if she does not marry. But either result means the woman will never be the subject. In the logic of the patriarchy, a woman cannot be a subject, for if she is a subject, she is no longer the object that enables men to prove masculinity. Rather, she is "woman represented as Other, as not male, as that which delimits and defines what it means to be male" (Yarbro-Bejarano 24). In other words, in works contemporary to this version of the ballad, which was so popular that it inspired *comedias* with the same plot, Rubin's theory, in which men's identity and relationship with other men are validated by means of female objectification, is found to hold true. "La serrana de la Vera," however, seems to rely on and simultaneously challenge this pattern.

In contrast to the comedias, however, the plot resolution of the *romance* does not result in the marriage of the protagonists, and in fact, the male protagonist barely escapes with his life. These above examples in which the male's masculine identity is threatened occur in the known realm of controlled honor in which the "normal" order, i.e. patriarchy, must be restored. As I argue above, this ballad appears to take place outside the physical domain of patriarchy. It unfolds on the extreme edge of the Spanish state, in Extremadura, a symbolic space in its own right, and from the start both the landscape and the female character encountered by the male subject are located on the edges, outside the

control of hierarchical society. Inside that society, the male can predict that he will either dominate a woman or be dominated by another man. This small poem challenges the gender order differently than in the *comedias*. In the latter, although the world might go topsy-turvy for a few acts, in the end, heterosexual marriage resolves any deviations from the gender norms. In this ballad, however, the *serrana*, controls her own sexuality and the male protagonist's sexuality (not the other way around) and then will kill him. What is more, she threatens him in both a female and a male mode. That is, she represents a sexual threat, by tempting him, but also a physical threat, a woman that seizes him and threatens to raping and kill him: "—Y así haré de ti, cuitado, cuando mi voluntad sea"—(11).

The gender bending continues in her lair, where she prepares his last supper of wild animals, underscoring once again that she has hunted the game like she hunted him and filling the male role of provider in this scenario. Although she also is the one who prepares the food, he prepares the meal with her and lights the fire, seemingly connecting him to the hearth and the feminine realm. Though the descriptions of the man do not suggest effeminacy, this connection to a female activity possibly underscores the potential feminization he faces. Whether this is read as a typically female activity (preparing the home hearth) or a masculine one (providing fire), it would seem in either case to suggest that they are equal rivals for control. In any case, they eat rabbit and partridge, which, while traditional Spanish fare, are also associated with lust and fertility (Piñero 412). The sexual images and symbols in this passage only highlight the struggle between the *serrana* and the male protagonist and their conflicting gender roles or break from them. Sexuality is what establishes their gender in relation to each other, as he will

define and reinforce his status as a hegemonic male if he can control her sexuality by seducing or marrying her.

Next, the *serrana* orders the poetic I of the ballad to close the door, and they undress and have sex. Although it might appear anachronistic to call it rape, the line clearly communicates force on her part and a lack of desire on his: "desnudóse y desnúdeme y me hace acostar con ella" (18), inverting the normative gender roles. Then she sleeps soundly enough to not be awakened by any movement on his part. Here it is helpful to discuss the relationship of lust to gender. His lack of desire might be seen as an implication of her dominance or a communication of his masculinity. Despite the current association of men and masculinity with lust, the opposite was true of the Middle Ages and early modern era, when men who could not control their desire were seen as effeminate. A man was supposed to be able to control his passion and desire, while a woman, who was weaker willed, presumably could not (Yarbro-Bejarano 130). Other versions provide more of a seduction scene, including more descriptions of gluttony, although, "en todos estos ejemplos el galán se mantiente vigilante, mientras que la serrana se entrega sin freno a las consecuencias de este juego erótico" (Piñero 411). So, although this woman was not under the control of any man, she still appeared very feminine in her inability to control her desire. Meanwhile, her captive was not weak-willed, but resisted being lulled into sleep after being satiated. Rather, he maintained his wits and took the opportunity of her slumber to escape.

Another noteworthy element of the sexual act portrayed in the poem is that the seduction role is reversed. Although we have come to associate seduction and hunting with male sexual appetite, the sex seemed to be more about control during the early

modern period. One of the ways in which an individual was defined as masculine, and therefore as a subject, was through physical conquest. In McKendrick's analysis of Guillén de Castro's *La fuerza de la costumbre*, for instance, she outlines the transformation of the masculine woman into a feminine heroine. The protagonist in this work unlearns her manly ways and becomes more feminine, but not until she falls in love is the transformation complete. Significantly, though, her transformation is caused first when Don Luis manipulates her into being jealous, by showing another woman attention, and then when he seduces her, telling her he is making love to her so that she can see she is a woman (101). In the *serrana romance*, however, it is clear that the *serrana* is the seducer, while the wanderer is not completely seduced or subordinated. Here subordination would mean being killed, but he escapes. The text, though, offers a vague and indecisive conclusion, as is common for a ballad. The *serrana* is not simply a woman taking on a male role. The seducer of the *comedia* is in control; the sex is not about his desire, but about domination. But for the *serrana*, the sex is about desire, over which she does not have control. If hegemonic masculine sexuality is about control and dominion, the *serrana* is not successfully masculine.[48] At the same time, she is not all together feminine. She is neither a hegemonic male nor an ideal female.

But the way in which the gender of both protagonists is characterized is complex. A large part of the poem describes the way in which the male protagonist escapes, which differs from version to version. In some versions, the male protagonist moves a large

[48] I make this distinction because there are documented cases in the Spanish early modern period of women who were "successful" men, filling normative, masculine roles, such as Catalina de Erauso (Harden).

stone covering the cave. In this version, there is no stone, but he slips out, sure to carry his shoes in his hand so she cannot sense his leaving. Treading lightly, he slowly makes his escape:

y en sintiéndola dormida, sálgome la puerta afuera.
Los zapatos en la mano llevo porque no me sienta,
Y poco a poco me salgo, y camino a la ligera.
Más de una legua había andado sin revolver la cabeza, (20-23)

This emphasis on his escape further contrasts his behavior with that of the woman and underscores the way he too is both masculine and feminine.

If we identify the masculine and feminine qualities of each, the following portraits emerge. The female protagonist is the one who takes him by force, who hunts wild game, and who rapes him, all of which might be more commonly attributed to masculinity. But she is also wild, a temptress, dimwitted, and lustful, which are more stereotypically attributed to women in the early modern period. The male protagonist does not use force to escape, rather his wits; although both intelligence and force were considered more masculine, than feminine. What is more, a manly man would not have been taken by the wrist and led to his rape and death. We have been given reason to believe that if it came down to it, he might not win a fight. He even must wait until she is asleep to make his escape. Thus the masculine trait that seems highlighted in this case is intelligence. She, a savage, cannot overpower him mentally. He does not fit the hegemonic role for males, and she does not conform to the ideal roles for females. Nor does the text portray her as masculine in an acceptable way, such as the unnamed girl of "Rico Franco," who defends herself from her rapist.

The final description of the *serrana* underscores her place outside of any definable gender roles by describing her in monstrous terms: “y en esto la vi venir

bramando como una fiera, / saltando de canto en canto, brincando de peña en peña” (25-26). When he does dare to turn his head and look back, he sees what is described as an animal bellowing and chasing after him. Her separation from the rest of civilized society is underscored further by the last exchange in the *romance*:

--Aguarda—me dice-,--aguarda; espera, mancebo, espera;
Me llevarás una carta escrita para mi tierra.
Toma, llévala a mi padre; dirásle que quedo buena.
--Enviadla vos con otro, o ser vos la mensajera. (27-30)

She wants to reach out to her family in the civilized world she once belonged to, but he refuses to be the messenger. As we have established above, the accepted feminine role in this time period was to be the object that establishes the male as subject. But no man controls this wild woman’s sexuality; rather, she kills all of the men with whom she comes into contact, barring one, the poetic I. We also learn at the end that she has fled from her father. In this *romance*, the only option for a powerful woman to control her own sexuality is to move to Extremadura and kill all the men with whom she has sex.

Oddly, despite the fact that she must have chosen her own isolation, she wants to communicate with her father, whose dominion she also resisted by fleeing. But she does not make physical contact with him; that would mean entering back into a realm where her sexuality and person become a commodity to be negotiated for between men. Despite escaping from her father’s command and establishing a space in the wild in which she is a sexual outlaw, operating outside civilization and the control of other men, she does not

fully control men either;[49] she must kill them to remain autonomous or risk being dominated once again. Her choices are limited: remain in social isolation as a violent monster, or cede control of her own body and mind and reenter the system from which she fled or was cast out. I am *not*, however, arguing that this character is an example of feminine discontent with the patriarchy, but rather that *serrana* is the personification of a general anxiety about gender and the very limited roles offered to both men and women. Essentially, the place for either a dominant female or a dominated male in the patriarchy is outside of civilization.

Her sexuality is symbolically figured in another important element to the plot: the cave. In "*La dama duende:* Spatial and Hymeneal Dialectics," María Martino Crocetti explores the symbolic connection between glass doors and the hymen in terms of the relationship between female honor and spaces. The play's positing of a glass cupboard that is continually opened and shut, and thereby penetrated by the players, represents the female body, or female honor or virtue. Martino Crocetti believes that the protagonist's control over the cupboard, or hymen, that accesses her space or vagina, which is normally controlled by a male, represents the degree of control she has over her own sexuality. The entrance to the space comes to signify the hymen, the space itself the vagina, and possession and control of that space possession and control of the woman, and to that extent control over the woman's fate as a subject or an object (56). This also places the male in the subject position whether he chooses it or not. Below I explore more at length what this subjecthood meant to a man, but I would like to explore why the speaker of "La

[49] This is reminiscent of the Amazons.

serrana" flees from it and resists a connection to the woman, the possible domination of the cave (i.e., her vagina), and a proposed connection with her father.

Among the versions of "La serrana de la Vera" available today are several elements similar to the *romance*, especially in the escape portion of the story. One detail that is always emphasized in the poem, especially in the sung versions collected this century, is the door to the cave and the effort that it takes the young man to move it. Here again, the poem plays with masculinity and femininity as well as spaces. In the versions that mention the rock that must bar the door, it is always extremely heavy:

> Un último elemento que debe reseñarse en esta secuencia y que en algunos textos pertenece a la siguiente es la piedra, siempre de tamaño descomunal, con que la serrana atranca la puerta en prevención de la huida del incauto caballero. Con ello se corrobora otro aspecto del retrato de la agreste doncella: su increíble fuerza de la que alardeaban también las serranas de nuestro Arcipreste. Esto es lo corriente, pero también en alguna versión, la 6, es el galán quien asegura la puerta por fuera con un piedra pesada cuando ha logrado escapar aprovechando el sueño profundo de la serrana. En este caso, este elemento forma parte de la secuencia siguiente. De todas formas, en numerosas versiones las piedras pesadas se mencionan para constatar la sorprendente fuerza de la mujer. (Piñero 413)

It is true that this might serve to indicate her superhuman strength or her phallic qualities. In this space, her lair on the outskirts of civilization, man is not in control of the female; in fact, it is quite the reverse. But she is not a shrew to be tamed; rather, she is a monster

to be escaped from. Furthermore, the cave and rock have other possible signifying functions.

The door to the cave also represents control over the female, a symbolic hymen that a male (her father or brother(s) and later her husband) would normally control but that in this case no man does. The poetic *yo* of the *romance* that is the focus here is able to move the door, but rather than entering it, he escapes through it. Although her space is impenetrable by man, she crosses the threshold at will, deciding herself who will enter when and how. Additionally, the space, rather than enclosing her, encloses the male. In the final scenes of the poem, the male subject is able to leave when he wishes, but at the cost of a great effort. In the printed version from the seventeenth century cited above, the great effort is to not awaken the sleeping monster. But other versions emphasize the weight of the door to the cave. In one, we learn simply that he "cogió la puerta" (Piñero 402), but in another, "'Cuando la pilló dormida, el galán cogió la puerta. / La piedra con que atrancaba más de mil arrobas pesa'" (Piñero 402). In an oral version, the informant does not remember the verse, but interrupts herself and adds in the middle of her recitation that he "atrancó la puerta con una piedra que pesaba mucho" (Piñero 404), "La piedra con que atrancaba cuatro mil arrobas pesa" (Piñero 405). What this suggests, then, is a kind of *vagina dentata*, or phallic vagina. The *serrana* becomes the primary agent of the *romance*, which seems to depict a struggle between the agency of a man and a woman with ambiguous gender markers, a double threat to masculinity.

Given that we have a threatening vagina, we might consider how the poem could be inverting the phallic symbol. Luce Irigaray, for instance, sees the vagina as the penis's inferior "Other": "Her sex organ which is not a sex organ is counted as no sex organ. It is

the negative, the opposite, the reverse, the counterpart, of the only visible and morphologically designatable sex organ (even if it does pose a few problems in its passage from erection to detumescence): the penis" (1468). This does reflect an idea of sex that existed in the early modern period. Thomas Laqueur has shown that the idea of only one sex, developed in antiquity, persisted until the eighteenth century:

> Galen, who in the second century A.D. developed the most powerful and resilient model of the structural, though not spatial, identity of the male and female reproductive organs, demonstrated at length that women were essentially men in whom a lack of vital heat—of perfection—had resulted in the retention, inside, of structures that in the male are visible without. (4)

The *vagina dentata* is indeed a phallus, but a threatening, feminine phallus capable of destruction. It is a problematic phallus that must be controlled and dominated lest the man becomes a victim, threatening hegemonic definitions of masculine superiority.

Entering the cave as a rite of passage and therefore the key to maturity is not a novel idea: "multitud de ritos iniciáticos, tan frecuentes en distintas civilizaciones, consiste en la penetración del héroe en el seno de la tierra, un *regressus ad uterum*, empresa que resulta siempre peligrosa, pero de la que sale el héroe transformado y victorioso" (Piñero 410). A symbolic space that represents the womb would result in the protagonist's rebirth. In this ballad, though, the cave is a place from which the male protagonist barely escapes with his life. This is not the vagina that gives him life, renews him or will be controlled by him (as would his sexual partner's). The fate of the men who have tried to control this cave is spelled out in the graves along the path to its entrance.

Masculinity is threatened by any cause of effeminacy, be it another male, a lack of control over a female (taken by another male), or immaturity and never growing into a man. The adolescent male had to move past the control of his mother to become a man, and the second step in this passage, in almost all "primitive" and "civilized" societies alike, especially in medieval and early modern Spain, was to take a wife, who would act as the object of and a testament to his masculinity. The vagina of the cave, then, represents both the cave from which he must be born and also the vagina he cannot control but should control as husband or seducer. Because he is not able to do this, he cannot evidence his masculinity. In other words, he is either unmanly, or he may choose to reject dominating her sexuality. According to Sedgwick,

> Women are in important senses property, but . . . property of a labile and dangerous sort . . . . There is something contagious about the ambiguities of femininity. To misunderstand the kind of property women are or the kind of transaction in which alone their value is realizable means, for a man, to endanger his own position as a subject in the relationship of exchange: to be permanently feminized or objectified in relation to other men. On the other hand, success in making this transaction requires a willingness and ability to temporarily risk, or assume, a feminized status. Only the man who can proceed through that stage, *while* remaining in cognitive control of the symbolic system that presides over sexual exchange, will be successful in achieving a relation of mastery to other men. (50-1)

The vagina/cave, in other words, is both his potential masculinity and her potential objectification. The roles that they either reject or fail to meet are incompatible with the hegemonic masculinity and ideal femininity that comprise the patriarchy. She is not the tamable shrew, but rather the threatening siren, but he does not try to woo or conquer her. Certainly, the evidence of the dead men on the path to her cave bears on his decision to escape rather than try to control her.

In charge of her own sexuality, the *serrana* does not fit into the traditional feminine roles of wife or mother. Instead, she assumes many masculine characteristics to the point that she controls others' sexuality. To view her as a proto-feminist character, however, would be to engage in a teleological and simplistic argument that fails to account for the pluralities of gender that were emerging during the medieval and early modern periods. The ballad's depiction of her provides textual evidence of negative feelings among men, and possibly women, within a system with few options for relating to the opposite sex. I am not suggesting that she is a role model but a representation of a woman that was not the ideal. I will now explore a character in another *romance* who encounters similar difficulties in her attempts to fit into narrowly defined gender roles and consider the results of this resistance. Although her male counterpart does not meet hegemonic standards of masculinity by vanquishing her, he does remain dispassionate, a hallmark of masculine control and maturity in the early modern period.

The Oak Ball and Chain: Marriage and Masculinity in "La infantina"

Like the *serrana*, the *infantina* of the *romance* of the same name depicts anxiety about masculinity by representing a socially expected masculinity that the protagonist finds threatening. In this text, I will delve more deeply into the expectations that the

marriage and family-oriented patriarchy places on men. Comparing the two works proves enlightening because although physical threats represent the social expectation in the "Serrana" ballad, in "La infantina" no physical threat exists. As a (perhaps preternaturally) feminine female, the *infantina* simply poses a threat to the male protagonist's masculinity. The role the male plays, however, challenges ideas of masculinity within and outside of the ballad.

The many changes in marriage laws throughout the medieval and early modern periods reflected political and economic struggles between the Church, powerful families and centralizing governments and had profound effects on individuals. The dominant message that young people were receiving was that they should be getting married, and the sooner the better.[50] Whether it was the Church that communicated that the only acceptable options were chastity or marriage, or their parents who sought political alliances and economic gains, or the ideological trends that stressed marriage, young people were being pushed toward this rite of passage. Although the limited choices that women faced has been explored extensively, especially in early modern texts, less work has investigated this idea of marriage in relation to masculinity. How was masculinity tied to marriage? What were the consequences of men's choosing not to marry? How did men feel about the limited options they had to relate sexually and socially to women or other men? I would like to analyze the "La infantina" in light of these questions.

The plot of "La infantina" is simple. While hunting in the forest, a young man discovers a beautiful woman tied to an oak tree. She has been bewitched and asks to be freed in return for her hand in marriage or her companionship as a lover. Faced with this

[50] This message has really not changed and is the focus of much gender theory.

decision, the young hunter explains that he must consult with his mother. His mother ridicules him for being a fool before ordering him back to save the young princess. When he arrives back at the scene, however, the *infantina* is gone, saved by *caballeros*. Distraught, the male protagonist orders his own grisly execution.

As in *"*La serrana de la Vera,*"* the setting in "La infantina" is ambiguous, depicting a realm outside civilization. There is very little physical description in the text; however, the typically terse language of the ballad conjures images of the forest. The story begins with narration of the hunt: "A cazar va el caballero, a cazar como solía; / los perros lleva cansados, el falcón perdido había" (1-2). Here, the character description begins with the male subject, who is hunting, and not for the first time. Hunting, of course, is symbolic action that is associated both with masculinity and with the role of male as provider. It is also representative of romantic and sexual love. The hunt is frequently associated with pursuing higher-class women in French, English and German medieval court literature (Gerli 71-72), and is therefore tied to his masculinity. That this is a repetitive action, as indicated both by the verb *solía* and the imperfect tense, indicates a lack of fulfillment or success. We have the first inkling here that this hunter has not found what he is looking for, and the rest of the text reaffirms this.

What is more, the ballad also tells us that his dogs are tired and he has lost his falcon. Besides these creatures' being images befitting a tired hunter, they have a second, symbolic meaning. Both animals are commonly used to represent virility, even the male member itself. The falcon is often associated with sexual love, with searching, taking, and desiring. More specifically, as Gerli observes, this animal symbolizes the sexual act itself, the "pursuit of carnal knowledge" (70-73). We might also read the falcon, a bird

whose job it is to locate and lead the hunter to his prey, as representing his lack of direction and purpose. Having lost himself, he is not even in charge of his own destiny. According to Gerli, imagery of falcons and falconry within Spanish literature "is pervasive and usually appears with pronounced tragic, or potentially menacing, overtones. Specifically, the loss of a falcon was considered particularly ominous in late medieval Castile" (73). If we measure the male protagonist's status against models of phallic masculinity, a very unmanly portrait comes into focus. We might compare these opening lines of "La infantina," where the male protagonist is wandering lost, to the "Serrana" text in which the *serrana* leads the man by the wrist. In both, we perceive an initial lack of control on the part of the male, a signal that he is not meeting his social obligations to take the lead himself or to be led by a patriarch rather than allowing himself to be led by a female. The falcon represents his masculinity and how he should be relating to women, that is, as a hunter, but in this ballad, his falcon is lost.

Comparing the *infantina*'s image to that of the *serrana*, both appear to have the same function: preparing the reader for a certain kind of plot and particular actions by the male subject's. The first description of the woman has clear psychoanalytic implications: "Arrimárase a un roble, alto es a maravilla; / en una rama más alta vira [*sic*] estar una infantina" (3-4). The oak tree symbolizes his virility, to which the *infantina* is symbolically tied. The juxtaposition of the lost falcon and tired dogs with the tall oak tree underscores the notion that his masculinity is a potential that he has not achieved yet. Furthermore, the title itself, *infantina*, immediately indicates that she is female, noble (and therefore even more bound to the hierarchy), and a damsel in distress. Taken together, these attributes would conjure intertextual echoes with tales of knightly and

courtly romance, in Spain specifically with the *libros de caballería*, contrasting sharply with the unmanly portrait of our hapless hero possesses. This provides an expectation of hegemonic masculinity, a man taking a woman and taming her. The oak tree, both a phallic symbol representing his potential virility and masculinity, is also a symbol of the sacred, that which is holy, perhaps suggesting marriage, or that which is sanctioned and expected socially. His masculinity is tied to his role as a husband, bound in holy matrimony. The only acceptable form of sexuality at this time, sanctioned by Canon Law, was within marriage to beget children (Brundage 44).

Before exploring the *infantina*'s role to his masculinity, we must further examine the implications of the oak tree, which we have previously associated with the phallus, or power. As Rubin explains, the phallus operates as a symbolic exchange of power between families:

> In the cycle of exchange manifested by the Oedipal complex, the phallus passes through the medium of women from one man to another. . . . In this sense, the phallus is more than a feature which distinguishes the sexes: it is the embodiment of the male status, to which men accede, and in which certain rights inhere—among them, the right to a woman. It is an expression of the transmission of male dominance. It passes through women and settles upon men. (191 -92)

In this case, the phallus, or simply his power (i.e. masculinity), is symbolically tied to women and conveyed through them. He experiences fear because his social standing depends upon the *infantina*. Taking the role of her husband, accepting his hegemonic

status and "right," would secure his place in society as dictated by the institutions of family, Church, and State.

There is obviously, as with most *romances,* content in this ballad that is universally appealing, which is why it has been passed on orally for generations. The text quoted here is from Paloma Díaz-Mas's collection, and her notes indicate that it does not exist in any *pliego suelto* but was included in the *Cancionero de romances* (1550) along with a pair of manuscripts. It also circulated orally within the Spanish Diaspora in Morocco, Portugal, and Catalonia, and is sometimes called "El caballero burlado.*"* The ease with which the *romance* can be analyzed psychoanalytically underscores its universality. I believe that the major theme that has interested people across the Spanish diaspora in this ballad is the anxiety over coupling as a major rite of passage.

To explore the portrayal of this anxiety in the ballad, we must consider how social pressures accompanied marriage and sexual relationships at that time. "No te espantes, caballero, ni tengas tamaña grima" (6), she implores him. The male protagonist's fear recalls Joseph Campbell's analysis of the hero's journey, including the necessity of overcoming fear (59). But this also reminiscent of the earlier point that women are frightening and have the potential to steal or confirm a man's masculinity. In the face of this challenge, the *infantina* reassures him when he feels afraid. Conquering fear brought about by his relationship to a female and by risking his status constitutes part of this trial. Her request cues the reader, or the listener, that she does not pose a simple challenge, but rather the threat of effeminization that Sedgwick describes in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (40). Her identity as the king's daughter, the *infantina*, further underscores this: "Fija soy yo del buen rey y de la reina de

Castilla" (7). She not only represents the dangerous female whose sexuality can rob him of his masculinity, but also the upper echelons of the patriarchy. Being the son-in-law of the king would carry with it a great deal of responsibility.

Fear of social roles can be found in psychoanalysis. In her article, Rubin states that "In Lacan's scheme, the Oedipal crisis occurs when a child learns of the sexual rules embedded in the terms for family and relatives. The crisis begins when the child comprehends the system and his or her place in it; the crisis is resolved when the child accepts that place and accedes to it" (Rubin 189). By terming this realization a "crisis," Rubin underscores the anxiety that is clearly present in these situations. I propose it is not that the wanderer here does not know what to do, but rather that he is scared about doing what he feels he must. The *infantina* says as much when she tells him not to be afraid. He does not leap at the chance to save her, but rather fails the test and imposes a harsh sentence upon himself. For Rubin, having the phallus amounts to choosing to be male and dominating the female, and as we shall see, to be the giver or receiver rather than the gift. Castration amounts to a choice not to enter into this social system (Rubin 191). After depicting his choice not to take the *infantina*, the poem culminates with a self-inflicted sentence of physical castration and dismemberment.

Her admonishment that he not be afraid also points to traditional markers of femininity. As his potential wife or lover, her job is to be the heart of the family. In Spanish culture, according to Harding, "A woman is emotionally, as well as physically and verbally, engaged with the concerns of others. She is the emotional center of the household, assuming the anxieties, tensions, sorrows, and joys of her charges as her own" (291-92). Thus, the *infantina*'s concern for him points toward her fitness to be his wife,

perhaps indicating to an audience his error in hesitating, or at least raising the question of why he does take her as a wife. But while she is described in appropriately feminine terms according to the contemporary ideals of the time, he is not upholding the characteristics of masculinity. Other images, such as the lost falcon, hint at danger.

A further analysis of the cultural context behind these interpretations proves revelatory. As was true for a female, a single male was expected to marry; however, he was also expected to provide for a family, children, and other dependents. As noted previously, these ballads are popular not as stories about individuals, but for their universal themes about life in Spain, or even as broadly as the human condition. The *buen rey* represents not just the hunter's potential father-in-law, but all potential fathers-in-law. Colin Smith notes that the *buen rey* is often employed ironically (15), which might also suggest fear and anxiety along with the lost falcon. It is important that the ballad specifically mentions the king, her father. Each damsel in distress is a single woman and each wandering (and wondering) potential hero is a single man. The king, then, is the potential father-in-law, the law of the father. The anxiety that in-laws produce is a thing of legends in our own culture. At the time of this *romance*, the anxiety that a potential marriage produced was very great. The bridegroom was just as responsible for the maintenance of a family's honor as a woman was, if not more so. Women were the vessels of honor, but men were the protectors of these vessels. If a man married, the responsibility for maintaining a woman's honor shifted from the males in the family (father and brothers) to him as the new husband. Although the husband now possessed this responsibility, her family would police his behavior because he was responsible for

their honor as well. A stain on the bride's honor would stain not only the husband, but the entire family (Stuard 61-62).

A new husband was also financially responsible for the wealth that his wife brought into the marriage. He was the custodian of his wife's dowry, wealth that he had to maintain and be responsible for under the threat of public shame that might be enforced by his wife's family. In the Mediterranean:

> Over three centuries, the formative influence of the law upon the understanding of a husband's role had gone some distance toward creating a new *persona* for men. The privileged position, in which husbands stood before the law, because they possessed legal capacity for themselves and their wife, had been revealed to entail a clear burden. Other features of a man's identity paled before the court-enforced obligation to perform a custodial role in the family. (Stuard 68)

The primary identity of a man in this time, in fact, was as a husband (Stuard 69). If he was not a husband, fitting the ideal model, then he was a lesser male. Hegemonic masculinity meant one had to marry, engender children, and be head of a household, taking on the financial and social responsibility of a wife, children, and possibly in-laws. Indeed, "The most common family link noted for men was that of son-in-law, followed by that of son, servant, vassal, grandson, brother-in-law, and nephew" (Stearns 869).

The relationship between marriage and the patriarchy left women and unmarried men at a clear disadvantage as far as power and prestige were concerned. It also made the rite from childhood to adulthood quite clear. In her analysis of a text written by Francesco Barbaro, an early modern Italian writer, Stuard explains that

> Propertied citizens . . . could not, in a matter of fact, escape marriage often as not because marriage signified that they had become responsible, mature adults the community demanded to shoulder the burdens of governing and overseeing the welfare of others. The dialectic of privilege and burden had become an institutionalized feature of men's lives. It comes as no surprise that when Francesco Barbaro condemned marriage he attacked it as an institution bringing unsupportable personal burdens to men. His quarrel lay with the elders rather than with women. (69)

In other words, men were being forced to undertake responsibilities that not all of them were willing to bear. During the Middle Ages, celibacy was an acceptable alternative to marriage, but changes in gender assumptions that accompanied the ideals of humanism that spread throughout Europe during the early modern period shifted the ideal of maintaining celibacy to engaging more with the world (Stuard 69). The ideals of accepting responsibility and husbanding accompanied the ideal of dignity as defined in the Renaissance. For example, Margaret Greer contends that "Woman, in the Golden Age drama, is the fragile vessel in which man's honor is contained" ("Women" 472).

The pressures exerted on men were not limited to responsibility for familial honor. Love with a woman presented other potential threats, primarily lovesickness. The *infantina* offers herself as a wife, which meant a lot of responsibility for the male protagonist. But her offer to be his lover is no less threatening. Lovesickness, a malady whose mention can be traced to antiquity, was a topic that persisted throughout the early modern period and was considered a disease that affected men and women alike, with all the requisite physical symptoms and prognoses. The idea of lovesickness entered written

medical literature through the writings of Galen and Caelius Aurelianus. Doctor proposed it was a form of madness or mania, but there was not much else in the way of consensus (Bullough 38). Nonetheless, whether an individual was male or female, experts of the time held that loving in excess was a form of womanly love, and that for a man to reassert his maleness, he had to have intercourse, thereby freeing himself from his fixation. According to Bullough, such ideas appear in Ovid's *Art of Love* and in the translations of Augustine (38). The ideal a monogamous relationship, sanctioned by the Church, but this too could cause lovesickness if one was too in love with a partner, so it was recommended men have multiple partners to prevent a fixation on one's wife from forming, thereby renewing the disease (Bullough 39). While marriage had social pressures, in other words, sexual intercourse brought its own anxieties. The *infantina'*s offer to become the male protagonist's lover was just as loaded with potential complications and threats to his existence as was her offer to become his wife. Depicting him as a ridiculous figure by noting his fear and need to consult with his mother, the *romance* portrays the anxieties and also reinforces the masculine ideal of the time period.

What is more, while love with a woman could represent a threat to men's health, through lovesickness, a sexual relationship with a woman presented yet another responsibility to her health. Men were accountable for women's sexual welfare as well as for their own and were held accountable for maintaining women's sanity. Although it is no secret that many doctors of the Victorian period recommended that men provide women with sexual stimulation on a regular basis to keep hysteria at bay, these beliefs actually date to the early modern period. Existing written accounts of women's sexual health suggest that the woman have intercourse on a consistent basis, so that her uterus

would not dry up and travel around her body, causing further ailments. It was the male's job to protect his partner from this fate. Furthermore, the belief that female orgasm was necessary to avoid hysteria and for procreation dates to the Middle Ages. According to Bullough, the male's sexual obligation was greater than simply having sex in order to engender an heir. Female pleasure was more than an ideal; it was a physical, and even socio-biological, necessity that men were responsible for maintaining (39).

Women represent a responsibility and a threat to men. By examining trends in celibacy, we might explore alternative judgments of the wanderer in the "Infantina" myth. McNamara gives a detailed description of the effects of the burden of female sexuality on men:

> The gender system required enforcers, but enforcement exposed men to the mysterious threat of female sexuality. Where did that leave the natural law of male dominance, upon which all masculinist theory rests? Male sexuality is constructed on the phallus as a symbol of power, a myth that grossly overburdens physical reality. In contrast to the phallic imagery of masculinism, the penis is rarely erect. Thus, the necessary myth of constant, uncontrollable potency has to be ritually strengthened in male gatherings through boasts and dirty jokes and occasional group aggression against women. In reaction to the implied threat of virile women, masculine behavior was defined and promoted as rough and domineering. Several biographers made special efforts to depict their male subjects as brutal toward women, as though to reinforce a common stereotype. (10)

She goes on to give examples of William the Conqueror dragging his future queen around the house by her hair in order to convince her to marry him and of Herluin of Bec being a barbaric and rough husband, well matched with his meek and gentle wife (11). In short, what might seem a fantasy proposal by the "Infantina" cues the reader to much deeper meanings when taking into consideration the relationship between masculinity and female sexuality throughout the Middle Ages and early modern era in Europe.

Indeed, the mystery of the *infantina*'s sexuality and the role the man is to play in it is amplified by more fantastical elements since she is also bewitched: "siete fadas me fadaron en brazos de una ama mía" (8). The implications of the number seven are well documented among folklorists and literary critics who consider it a magical, mystical number. For example, seven fairies, creatures that might more accurately be termed witches, bewitch the princess. Their spell is effective for seven years, of course, and the male protagonist meets the *infantina* on the seventh anniversary of the spell. We might also consider the implications of those who cast the spell being women, because like the *infantina* herself, the women are the source of uncontrollable mystery and danger, threatening the social structure and masculine power. There is no explanation as to why the spell was cast, however. At root, we have a story of a man facing a challenge and failing, the challenge being to step in and take responsibility for the woman. The incitement to act "o mañana o aquel día" (10) seems to underscore the urgency and high stakes of the situation.

What is interesting about the male character in the *infantina* is when faced with a fearful woman, he does the opposite of what men usually do, which is act aggressive, in an overtly, overly phallic manner. I would like to discuss the nature of this fear first.

Because men must avoid feminization due to social pressures, they develop a fear of femininity and women, since it is also perceived that male is the preferred gender. Men fear feminization by men or women, that is, being made a "passive, vulnerable, female" (Conway-Long 65). Kimmel, who considers this through a psychoanalytic lens, explains that when the boy identifies with the father, he is defined as heterosexual, but once he overcomes fear and stops relying on the mother for protection from the father, fear of being exposed as feminine by other men, the foundation of masculinity, results (129). Other men (the father) can both expose or witness a man's femininity. Kimmel continues, explaining that this is why "homophobia is a central organizing principle of our cultural definition of manhood" (131). But by homophobia, we are not referring to a fear of gay men or of being perceived as gay, but rather to "the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and to the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men. We are afraid to let other men see that fear. Fear makes us ashamed, because the recognition of fear in ourselves is proof to ourselves that we are not as manly as we pretend" (Kimmel 131). Returning to the text, then, we have a man faced with potential feminization by females (both the potential love interest and his mother, and, perhaps by the seven witches), the father figure of the king. His love interest can emasculate him if he does not fulfill his obligation to her; the king could emasculate him through subordination within the patriarchy, thereby making him a peer with real women; and his the relationship with his mother emasculates him simply because he does not grow up, and still looks to her for authority and support. What is more, these relationships are institutionalized, and thereby the law.

The male protagonist does not respond to the fear of feminization in socially sanctioned ways. Men's responses to this fear of feminization are often violent and aggressive, making it appear that they are masculine rather than feminine. One of the most obvious and exploited ways to prove masculinity is to exercise power. Kaufman believes that "Men exercise patriarchal power not only because we reap tangible benefits from it. The assertion of power is also a response to fear and to the wounds we have experienced in the quest for power. Paradoxically, men are wounded by the very way we have learned to embody and exercise our power" (149).

At first his answer to the *infantina*'s request might surprise the modern reader, but perhaps not the male reader contemporary to the *romance* in light of the psychological rite of passage and the threat of woman and king. After explaining the details of the spell, she appeals to save her, offering herself as a bride or a lover: "si quisieres por mujer,

si no, sea por amiga" (12). To choose to make her his lover would mean to dishonor her, to incur the wrath of the king, and to go against both the social and religious standards of the time. The offer to be his lover, then, might be a trap or a test. The seemingly obvious choice is to make her his wife. So if it is so obvious, why does he hesitate?

His hesitation might lie in the threat of the potential gift and relationship coming from the most powerful man in the land, the patriarch, the king. Rubin explains how gifts can represent permanent ties and even a power struggle:

> The significance of gift giving is that it expresses, affirms, or creates a social link between the partners of an exchange. Gift giving confers upon its participants a special relationship of trust, solidarity, and mutual aid.

> One can solicit a friendly relationship in the offer of a gift; acceptance implies a willingness to return a gift and a confirmation of the relationship. Gift exchange may also be the idiom of competition and rivalry. There are many examples in which one person humiliates another by giving more than can be reciprocated . . . [the giver] gets his return in political prestige. (Rubin 172)

The *infantina* is the complex, threatening gift that would tie him to a complex system of honor and responsibility as a man.

If we analyze this ballad in terms of psychoanalysis or the social implications, we can term this decision his deliberate refusal to mature, or voluntary castration. It is significant then, that he turns back to his mother rather than facing a/the father or becoming a father himself. He cannot make the decision alone and defers to his mother: "—Esperéisme vos, señora, fasta mañana aquel día. / Iré yo tomar consejo de una madre que tenía" (13-14). This answer does not please her and she quickly derides him for his decision to leave her alone: "--¡Oh, malhaya el caballero que sola deja la niña!--" (16). His decision, then, is bad for two reasons. First, he is shirking his responsibility to the female, more specifically to her sexuality. As a masculine or phallic male, it would be his social responsibility to control a woman's sexuality. Second, because he defers to his mother, a woman, he is clearly not an adult male worthy of the marrying the *infantina*. In the social hierarchy, males are to defer to other males, but not females. If he is not meeting that responsibility, he is not a father or a male figure, even in his own realm. The relationship that the *caballero* has with his potential father-in-law is important even though he does not actually appear in the story. The *caballero* fails the lady, and

therefore fails the patriarchy and masculine ideals. He is refusing to enter the system out of fear, and the result is that he does not reinforce it.

His mother suggests that he take her as a lover—"Aconsejóle su madre que la tomase por amiga" (18)—which is the wrong decision, it would seem, given she is the daughter of the king. Whether his error is asking his mother for advice or the advice she gives him, we know he has made the wrong choice: "Cuando volvió el caballero no hallárala en la montiña; / vídola que la llevaba con muy gran caballería" (19-20). His lost opportunity is another man's gain, and not just any man: she was carried off with "gran caballería," indicating a social ideal but also masculine prowess, and thus she was carried off by the phallic male, or males. While the protagonist was asking his mother, another was able to "be a man" and rescue the *infantina*, in turn winning her and proving his masculinity through power, meeting the social standards of masculinity.

The short poem tells the story of a specific *caballero* in a mythical, fictional scenario who rejects marriage out of fear; however, it could also reflect the realities marriage and the relationships and responsibilities that any young man would have upon entering into marriage at this time: his responsibility to his wife is to respect and protect her honor and person; his responsibility to his in-laws is to do right by their honor vis-à-vis the relationship he has with their daughter; and finally, his responsibility to his own parents, especially his mother, is basically to mature and make his own decisions, terminating his reliance on her. However, not all young men of the time period were making the decision to adapt to the mold of the phallic male, to accept hegemonic masculinity, to take responsibility for a female's sexuality and marry her. Although the

caballero's voice is silenced he does reflect resistance to social norms and ideals. The ballad illustrates ideals of masculinity through a negative example.

While the *caballero* sentences himself to death as a punishment for his bad decision[51], there is evidence in Renaissance Europe of alternative, non-hegemonic masculine roles, besides entering the clergy. Interestingly, these men also fit within the hierarchy, albeit in lesser roles than their married counterparts. In early modern Venice, for example, almost half of all men went unmarried. Chojnacki sheds light on this subject, writing that "There are many possible reasons for this including death or sexual inclination, but some simply chose not to marry" (78). There were financial reasons for limiting the number of marriages in one nuclear family since both dowries and marriages of sons resulted in the splitting up of the family wealth, an end that did not further the social and political status of a family (Chojnacki 79). These unmarried sons remained in the Venetian government holding offices and positions. Rather than forming new familial alliances, they could serve the political ends of any given kin group, voting and wielding power in the name of the family while overseen by fathers and married brothers (Chojnacki 81). To any father, the unmarried brothers of his daughter's fiancé constituted potential political allies just as much as his future son-in-law. To this end, they were still serving the purpose that marriage would.

These bachelors held a higher position in the hierarchy than women, but they were also subordinate to many men and had no potential to reach the highest levels of power. But while those unmarried brothers might have held political offices or power, there was a striking disparity in the number of bachelors in higher offices. They were

[51] In some versions, the poem ends with a self-curse.

allowed to man posts and to cast votes, but not to hold the highest offices (Chojnacki 82). The majority of men who opted out of traditional roles within the patriarchy could have done so for a variety of reasons and in a variety of manners, but the repercussions would be similar. "More than for the husbands who realized, and were defined by, the patriarchal ideal in domestic and public spheres, for bachelors the denial (or rejection) of patriarchy could loosen the tethers of conformity to the requirements of mainstream patrician manhood in the same degree that it closed off the highest rewards that the culture reserved for men" (Chojnacki 83). Bachelors, in this society, then, like women were in a perpetual "liminal status," yet were fundamental contributing members of the socio-political and socio-cultural systems of a patriarchal society (Chojnacki 84).

The resolution of the *romance* is graphic and severe. As Paloma Díaz-Mas points out in her edition, the self-sentencing is a ballad formula; however, it also highlights the remorse and regret that the protagonist feels. Not only does he faint, but he pronounces "—Caballero que tal pierde muy gran pena merecía / yo mesmo seré el alcalde,

yo me seré la justicia: / que le corten pies y manos y lo arrastren por la villa" (23-24). The graphic physical consequences described here represent the social impotence that a man must face if he does not fulfill his role in society. It is significant that the denouement is cast as a civic punishment. He has rejected the institutional choice that is increasingly legalized and controlled by the state. During the early modern period, personal choices were less and less made by the individual and increasingly institutionalized through the legal system. As Behrend-Martínez observes, "Being a 'man,' however, was not only defined by reference to expressions, rituals, and traditions; during the early modern period judicial institutions took an increasingly prominent role in

determining who was and was not a man" (1073). What is more, public shame brought on by public punishment was more powerful a method of control than financial sanctions (Behrend-Martínez 1084).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the possible dissenting voices of masculinity in two examples of ballads in which a man and a woman choose to separate themselves from the patriarchy and the hegemonic roles within it. As we have seen, the male characters in both of these ballads are confronted with stereotypically dangerous women who threaten their masculinity. Far from resolutions that confirm the hierarchical order, however, the ballads provide surprising plot developments that might reflect dissenting voices, both male and female, confronted with these imposed gender roles.

Hegemonic masculine values in literature and other writing of the medieval and early modern period stress the necessity of controlling females, specifically female sexuality, be it through rigid social codes in the name of honor or through violent domination in the form of rape or abduction, has persisted for hundreds of years and provides definitions of how males and females "should" interact. We are, in fact, still living with this legacy as evidenced in the popularity of two current box office movies with plots modeled on *The Taming of the Shrew*. The expectations within the patriarchy for both men and women were, and still can be, brutal and unyielding. As this analysis demonstrates, even during the time of these ballads there were individuals who wanted no part of the prescribed roles that they were offered: controller or dominated. As I have argued above, to see unruly women as proto-feminists is a teleological argument. Rather, I would argue that the conflicting messages we might infer from these ballads about

gender and gender roles reflect equally fragmented opinions and positions. Opinions that diverge from those sanctioned within Spanish patriarchal society might include the father, for example, who stands to lose if his daughter does not marry well; the disgruntled daughter who resented not being in control of her own sexuality; the bitter mother who enforced patriarchal control more than her husband; the son who did not want to marry; the daughter that did; the doting uncle who taught his niece to read and write, and so on. Certainly, to an extent, these expectations took their toll on everyone. Much literature that is contemporary to this time, often written for official audiences, featured plot resolutions that reinforced the patriarchy. In patriarchal societies, the hierarchy is maintained through radical exclusion of any elements that can threaten that structure. Lees explains that to maintain this hierarchy, men must continually prove their potency or be expunged as the character in the "Infantina" ballad. "The burden of masculine potency (symbolic or real), shadowed by impotence, exacts a heavy price" (Lees xxii). It seems that the ballads reflect both patriarchal ideals and this "heavy price" hegemonic masculinity exacted from the characters and audience.

CONCLUSION

My central contention in this dissertation is that the ballads I have examined were popular during the early modern period because the themes they explore addressed questions about gender that early modern readers were asking. While the ballads published in the *romanceros* included medieval themes, their popularity reflected anxiety about masculinity in the politically difficult early modern period that made those medieval themes interesting to readers of that time. As these chapters have shown, Bernardo represents a manly hero from an era when the power hierarchy for a king's vassal was more flexible, and the "Infantina" and "La serrana de la Vera" ballads represent anxiety about traditional gender roles, especially in relation to women.

In the first chapter, I argued that the tension between Alfonso's unmanliness, figured by his sister's transgression, his chastity, and the other ways he does not embody masculinity belied his noble birth. Meanwhile, Bernardo's innate nobility is evidenced by his many princely qualities, calling into question the very grounds on which the aristocracy was based. While this tension and challenge does reflect a looser feudal system, it was also appealing to the early modern reader for two reasons. The first of these is that Bernardo represented a manly man at a time when some in elite circles felt that Spanish identity was threatened by outside forces and by changes in Spanish men. The second reason was that, given the sixteenth-century discourse of social mobility that distinguished between worthiness and noble birth and the period's shift of power away from the noble classes and toward the monarchy, stories of a rebellious vassal would have appealed to men who now found themselves with less power and agency.

In the second chapter, I discussed honor and masculine responsibilities, positing that the responsibilities that Alfonso has to his sister, nephew, and kingdom, and the duties Bernardo has to his king, father, and even his fellow knights and countrymen further define them as masculine and honorable or not. Alfonso does not meet his responsibilities to control his sister's sexuality, to father an heir to the throne, and to care for his subjects and family, all of which diminish his status as a man and his honor as a nobleman. Bernardo's honor is threatened, however, because he is never able to truly prove his status as a nobleman and because the king prevents him from doing his duty as a son. In the end, he is a negligent son despite being an honorable vassal. Although the ways in which a man's honor might be diminished are tied to medieval values, they are values that persisted into the early modern period, especially Alfonso's chastity, which is figured in the ballads as both sexual and moral impotence.

Although women's effect on masculinity was explored briefly in the Bernardo ballads, in the third chapter I investigate the threat of female sexuality more thoroughly through an examination of the "La serrana de la Vera" and "La infantina" ballads. As we have seen, the *serrana* is a feminine woman who has masculine traits, making her more threatening than if she were simply masculine. Rather than presenting the male protagonist with an opportunity to overpower her and therefore prove his masculinity, she sexually overpowers him. It is precisely because this ballad does not follow the typical *Taming of the Shrew* plot that it suggests a more complex picture of masculinity. Although the *serrana* is able to rape rather than seduce him, he is able to escape, in contrast to the men that had gone before him.

The *infantina* likewise presents a hazard to a man's masculine identity, in this case not because she falls outside of the typically feminine role but because she fits within it. Happening upon a beautiful woman in the forest, or in life, is not a situation devoid of anxiety for a male figure. A purely sexual relationship, a possibly effeminizing situation, is not an option for the male protagonist in the ballad, so he is faced with the decision of whether to relate to the *infantina* the only way that is sanctioned: through marriage. Throughout the Middle Ages and early modern era, however, marriage, while it conferred hegemonic masculine status, also carried with it responsibilities that were anxiety-provoking for men. Although a man who was not married and engendering children could not achieve hegemonic masculinity, this does not mean all men sought this status, or that foregoing it would be simple. In this poem, since marriage is the expectation despite the male protagonist's reservations, he inflicts the ultimate punishment on himself for not choosing to marry the *infantina*.

This study also posits that how we approach a text, especially one that appears in many different contexts, is of upmost importance when researching the Spanish ballads. My claim that we must remember the multiple contexts in which they were disseminated influenced my initial interest in the performance of the ballads. In this, I subscribe to the distinction Jerome McGann makes between the text and the poem. In *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory,* McGann differentiates between the text, which is constant—the story of Bernardo, say—and the poem, which would be any instance of that same text. During the sixteenth century, many versions of "Bernardo se entrevista con el rey" existed, including any number of broadsides, various versions in the *romanceros*, and oral versions. As McGann notes,

"different texts in the bibliographical sense embody different poems (in the aesthetic sense) despite the fact that both are linguistically identical," and therefore "the method of printing or publishing a literary work carries with it enormous cultural and aesthetic significance for the work itself" (117). When examining the ballads, I realized that because all the sources we have are from the sixteenth-century collections, I could not treat them as testaments to medieval culture alone and in fact needed to consider the early modern context in which they appeared in print.

Given the variety of versions of the Bernardo del Carpio story, and in light if this distinction between text and poem, I propose that a fruitful direction for future research would be to compare the Bernardo ballads to other texts printed at this time, such as the chronicles, and other ballad cycles, such as the Cid. Some of this work has already been done in an effort to find the "true" versions of the texts or to locate missing epics assumed to be lost, but much work remains to be done regarding what each "poem" has to say about the time it circulated or was printed.

I also argue that we should not lose sight of the fact that these texts, although mostly printed, were originally oral in nature and performed even at the time they circulated as broadsides. Performance analysis of oral narratives has become more common in recent decades, first within the social sciences and more recently among literary scholars such as John Miles Foley, who insists that

> Looking at oral poetry through the lens of literature – our ever-present if usually unnoticed filter—is much like peering through the wrong end of a telescope. Instead of enlarging the object or process on which the instrument is trained, this "backwards" perspective graphically diminishes it. . . . We are in the habit of

> understanding [oral] poetry as a species of written poetry, not the other way around. (28)

Based on this important distinction, I began this project wanting to consider the performance as I read the ballads. Although ultimately such an investigation would not fit into the scope of this dissertation, I hold that it is an important aspect of the *romances* that merits more research attention. At the very least, we must read them as potential performances, as we do plays written for the theatre. For example, if in exploring the dynamic between Bernardo and Alfonso, a ballad quotes Bernardo directly but narrates Alfonso's response through indirect quotation, the nature of the performance—in which Bernardo, but not Alfonso, has a voice—should affect our reading and understanding of that ballad.

Some might think it odd that an interest in feminism would lead to a study of masculinity, but acknowledging gender pluralities, that is, the non-binary definition of gender originally proposed by such scholars as Judith Butler, is an approach that has its own decentralizing qualities even if the object of investigation is hegemonic masculinity. Although sociologists and other social scientists have researched masculinity as part of gender theory for decades, masculinity is a relatively new avenue of investigation within Spanish literature. What is more, many studies of masculinity have focused on marginalized masculinities, so research on hegemonic masculinity remains a fruitful field for research. It is hoped that this study of (un)manly men and demonic women in the Spanish ballads has helped elucidate gender in the medieval and early modern period.

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