

# 'Hemos visto un mal tan fiero': Sexual Ambiguity in Lope de Vega's *El gallardo catalán* (1599–1603)



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*Abstract: This article analyzes the reference to Ganymede in Lope de Vega's El gallardo catalán [The Gallant Catalan] (1599–1603). Through close analysis of an ambiguous event that could have taken place in between scenes, this article examines how the characters in the play marginalize Clavela and Isabela's presumed love affair. While Clavela is cross-dressed as man, the appearance of Ganymede, the cupbearer and lover of Jupiter, the text does not lose its controversial and punishable implication as both characters are sentenced to death which they inevitably escape as the truth comes out in the final scene of this Spanish comedia. Both readings of Clavela as a man or a woman leads the reader to the same conclusion: the relationship between Clavela/don Juan and Isabela would have been punishable under the sodomy laws of the seventeenth century. Despite the conventional happy ending, the potential love affair between these two characters is set within the confines of a German imperial naval ship. This article ends with an overview of the historical prominence of transgressive acts during nautical voyages across the sea. Ganymede is marginalized within Spanish early modern drama, while El gallardo catalán is a much-neglected text. This study demonstrates how this overlooked classical allusion and literary text contribute to the understanding and appreciation of early modern Spanish comedias.*

The production of Ganymede art reached its zenith between the years 1530 and 1550 as artists 'produced the greatest number of Ganymede images and most of the

significant ones were by major Italian artists', such as Michelangelo and Correggio.<sup>1</sup> For an early modern spectator and the current scholar, Jupiter's kidnapping of and subsequent love affair with Ganymede are linked to illicit acts including pederasty and sodomy.<sup>2</sup> There was an eventual decline of this artistic motif, possibly due to the Council of Trent's (1545–1563) censorship of 'nudity and lasciviousness' depicted in pagan themes.<sup>3</sup> James Saslow highlights a shift in the ways in which artists portrayed Ganymede in their works at this point. Jupiter's 'rape' of the young boy was first interpreted artistically as a consensual union through its pictorial representation. In the early fifteenth century, for example, Leon Battista Alberti urged others to paint the cupbearer sensually 'with a smooth brow and soft, beautiful thighs'.<sup>4</sup> In fact, Alberti argues that art should show Ganymede as a self-identifying catamite.<sup>5</sup> In Spain, specifically, one is able to observe the abduction of Ganymede in a room at the *Casa de los Pilatos* in Seville, constructed in the first half of the sixteenth century. By the seventeenth century, however, Rembrandt had transformed Ganymede into a pained and bleeding figure whose limbs appear to be pulled apart. In Rembrandt's *Rape of Ganymede* (1635), this mythical child unsuccessfully attempts to set himself free from the claws of a metamorphosed Jupiter, perhaps interpreted as a forewarning not to do as kings do.

Despite the plentiful artistic renditions of this one scene, peninsular scholars have been largely silent on Ganymede's significance in Spanish early modern

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<sup>1</sup> James M. Saslow, *Ganymede in the Renaissance: Homosexuality in Art and Society* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 1–2.

<sup>2</sup> According to the law, sodomy was a forbidden sexual act that ran the gamut from anal sex to bestiality. Indeed, as Michel Foucault notes, sodomy was 'a category of forbidden acts' that was 'defined by ancient or canonical codes'; see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), p. 43. A sodomite, then, was not just someone who gave in to their desire for the same sex. However, Robert Mills prefers to use 'queer' as 'a third term, beyond the gender/sexuality opposition; compared with categories such as lesbian, gay, or transgender, it is not strongly marked as a category of selfhood, nor is it institutionalized as such'; see Robert Mills, *Seeing Sodomy in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 21. I make use of the term same-sex and same-sex desires, along with transgressive, illicit, and prohibited acts (or a combination of these) to avoid anachronism. I understand that these terms, as outlined in Mills, carry with them their own problems but find them to be the most appropriate.

<sup>3</sup> Saslow, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, *De pictura*, paraphrased in Saslow, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> The Latin *catamitus* (catamite in English) originally derives from the Greek *Ganymēdēs* which was used to describe a boy who was sexually exposed to older men.

literature until recently.<sup>6</sup> Frederick A. De Armas has studied the use of mythological gods and heroes, including Jupiter and Ganymede, in Luis de Gongora's *Soledades* (1613) and reasons that these references 'point to the intolerance towards this ancient practice in Counter-Reformation Spain'.<sup>7</sup> I have examined the comparison of Ganymede to Ismael, an effeminate and cowardly Jewish doctor, in Tirso de Molina's *La prudencia de la mujer* [Prudence in Woman] (1634) to affirm the seventeenth-century Spanish belief that 'the Jewish and Islamic people were a community of sodomites who should be banned from reentering the Iberian Peninsula'.<sup>8</sup> Finally, Jordi Bermejo Gregorio contends that Pedro de Fomperosa employs Ganymede to legitimize the reign of the young Charles II of Spain. He argues that 'Charles II in 1671 is a Ganymede, a Trojan prince, a divine cupbearer who, despite his age, is perfectly capable of upholding his duty'.<sup>9</sup> This current study, however, will shed some light on female same-sex desire in Lope de Vega's *El gallardo catalán* [*The Gallant Catalan*] (1599–1603).<sup>10</sup> The purpose of this investigation is two-fold. Firstly, this article will highlight

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<sup>6</sup> With the exception of Frederick A. De Armas, Jordi Bermejo Gregorio, and myself, no other critic has demonstrated any interest in this mythological youth. Rafael Carrasco studies Spanish sodomites 'por situarse fuera de la norma o ley' ['because they are placed outside the norm or law']; see Rafael Carrasco, *Inquisición y represión sexual en Valencia: Historia de los sodomitas (1565–1785)* (Barcelona: Laertes, 1985), p. 9. Translation my own. See also Guy Lazure, "'Hermanos del cielo". Figuras de vuelo en la poesía y la pintura sevillana de Fernando de Herrera a Juan de Arguijo (con Francisco Pacheco de por medio)', *e-Spania*, 35 (2020) <<https://doi.org/10.4000/e-spania.33455>>.

<sup>7</sup> See Frederick A. De Armas, 'Embracing Hercules/Enjoying Ganymede: The Homoerotics of Humanism in Góngora's *Soledad Primera*', *Calíope: Journal of the Society for Renaissance and Baroque Hispanic Poetry*, 8.1 (2002), 125–140 (p. 127). Also see Frederick A. De Armas, 'Deflecting Desire: The Portrayal of Ganymede in Arguijo's *Art and Poetry*', in *Lesbianism and Homosexuality in Early Modern Spain*, ed. by María José Delgado and Alain Saint-Saens (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2000), pp. 234–56; Frederick A. De Armas, 'Numancia as Ganymede: Conquest and Continence in Giulio Roman, Cervantes, and Rojas Zorrilla', in *Echoes and Inscriptions: Comparative Approaches to Early Modern Spanish Literatures*, ed. by Barbara A. Simerka and Christopher B. Weimer (Lewissburg: Bucknell University Press, 2000), pp. 250–70; and Frederick A. De Armas, 'From Mantua to Madrid: The License of Desire in Giulio Romano, Correggio and Lope de Vega's *El castigo sin venganza*', *Bulletin of the Comediantes*, 59.2 (2008), 233–265.

<sup>8</sup> See Felipe E. Rojas, 'Representing An-"Other" Ganymede: The Multi-Religious Character of Ismael in Tirso de Molina's *La prudencia en la mujer* (1634)', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 91.4 (2014), 347–64 (p. 348).

<sup>9</sup> 'Carlos II en 1671 es un Ganimedes, un príncipe de Troya, un copero divino que, aunque muy joven, se le presupone perfectamente capacitado para tal cargo'; see Jordi Bermejo Gregorio, 'Ganimedes en palacio: la loa de *El Gran duque de Gandía*, de Pedro de Fomperosa', in *Sobremesas literarias: en torno a la gastronomía en las letra hispánicas*, ed. by Laura Peña and Jesús Murillo (Madrid: Aleph, 2015), pp. 183–92 (p. 189). Translation my own.

<sup>10</sup> This theatrical work is believed to be written between 1599 and 1603 as there are copious allusions to the wedding celebrations of Philip III and Margaret of Austria, whose nuptials took place prior to the turn of the century; see Sylvanus G. Morley and Courtney Brueton, *Cronología de las comedias de Lope de Vega. Con un examen de las atribuciones dudosas, basado todo ello en un estudio de su versificación estrófica*, ed. by M.R. Cartes (Madrid: Fredos, 1968), p. 362. On the dating of *El gallardo catalán*, see Joaquín de Entrambasaguas, *Lope de Vega en las justas poéticas toledanas de 1605 y 1608* (Madrid: Consejo Superior

the possible double meaning of the Ganymede reference. Secondly, it will make the claim that this nautical journey becomes the ideal device for the appearance of Ganymede and same-sex activities. Through textual analysis and historical context, I will contend that these acts *contra naturam* were more suitable within the confines of an imperial ship. As I will reveal, Ganymede's abduction to the heavens and Clavela's voyage to Germany both relate to the misuse, sexualization, and marginalization of the body.

This *comedia* [Spanish play] has been vastly overlooked by literary critics when compared to Lope's others. It is a relatively unknown and minor piece which makes this study even more indispensable. Enrique Turpin downplays its value as one of many in which love manages to conquer supposedly insurmountable obstacles and the characters' honor is ultimately restored.<sup>11</sup> Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano asserts that in this work the playwright combines many of the motifs from different honor plays, including 'the unmarried woman who cross-dresses to pursue her recalcitrant lover, the falsely accused queen, and elements of the plot featuring a higher-ranked rival'.<sup>12</sup> While praising Lope de Vega for such things as his versification and style, Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo does protest that the structure of the fable, while ingenious, is excessively complicated when compared to the ending which seems half-heartedly

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de Investigaciones Científicas, 1969), pp. 70–1 (n. 132); and, Enrique Turpin, 'Prólogo', in *El gallardo catalán. Comedias de Lope de Vega. Parte II*, 3 vols (Lleida: Editorial Milenio; Departamento de Filología Espanyola de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2008), I, pp. 399–420 (p. 400). Turpin also believes that the first documented performance of this *comedia* was on May 22 1605 in Toledo and went by the name *El catalán valeroso*; see Turpin, 'Prólogo', I, p. 400. More recently, however, Teresa Ferrer Valls et al. have documented several performances of the *comedia* in 1604 which do not alter the allusions in the play back to the royal wedding; see Teresa Ferrer Valls et al., *Base de datos de comedias mencionadas en la documentación teatral (1540–1700)* CATCOM <<http://catcom.uv.es/consulta/browse-record.php?id=1949&mode=indice&letter=g>> [accessed 3 August 2020].

<sup>11</sup> Turpin, 'Prólogo', I, p. 399. *El gallardo catalán* would fall under the third group in Donald R. Larson's category of honor plays that 'incarnates the common chilvaresque motif of the calumniated queen'; see Donald R. Larson, *The Honor Plays of Lope de Vega* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 170. In this case, Clavela is not a queen yet the same rules apply to her. 'These works, in other words, are the obverse of honor plays: whereas honor plays focus upon, and extol, the masculine value of honor, these focus upon, and extol, the corresponding feminine value of *vergüenza*'; see Larson, pp. 170–71.

<sup>12</sup> Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, *Feminism and the Honor Plays of Lope de Vega* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1994), p. 107. For a plot summary of *El gallardo catalán*, see Yarbro-Bejarano, p. 109.

constructed.<sup>13</sup> Since few critics have shown interest in this *comedia*, this study intervenes in order to interpret the Ganymede reference and elucidate the *comedia*'s importance to Spanish early modern drama.

*El gallardo catalán* is a historical *comedia* based on a legend popularized in several fourteenth-century Catalan chronicles.<sup>14</sup> Clavela and don Remón de Moncada, Count of Barcelona, quarrel over Remón's lasciviousness towards Isabela, princess of England. Isabela, however, is unable to reciprocate the count's love as she chooses to marry Enrique, King of Bohemia. After the marriage, Isabela abruptly becomes a widow, which ignites hope in Remón for a reconciliation, so he leaves Clavela to head for England. Unfortunately, Remón is captured by Turks and taken prisoner to France. Clavela, feeling disregarded and unwilling to let her lover dishonor her once more, resolves to take up the *disfraz varonil* [male attire], becomes don Juan, and makes the seafaring voyage from Barcelona to England.<sup>15</sup> Incognito, don Juan/Clavela negotiates

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<sup>13</sup> Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, *Estudios sobre el teatro de Lope de Vega*, ed. by Adolfo Bonilla y San Martín, 4 vols (Madrid: Victoriano Suárez, 1921), IV Menéndez y Pelayo, p. 68. He believes that the play is not so much a historical drama but more so a fantastical one. Lope gives the last name of Moncada to Ramón Berenguer who was very well respected in Catalonia, but he was never part of the noble houses of the Dukes of Barcelona; see Menéndez y Pelayo, pp. 67–68. This is explained by Lope's attempts for years to celebrate the Moncada's in order to obtain their patronage; see Marcella Trambaioli, 'Lope de Vega y la casa de Moncada', *Criticón*, 106 (2009), 5–44.

<sup>14</sup> Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo notes that Lope de Vega's *comedia* is similar to a tale in Bernardo Desclot and Pere Miquel Carbonell's *Chroniques d'Espanya*. However, it is unknown whether or not Lope took the plotline used by an anonymous author of a popular style romance, which was added to *La rosa gentil* [*The Gentle Rose*] by Juan de Timoneda; see Menéndez y Pelayo, p. 42; p. 62. Turpin adds that the subject of the play comes from the legend of the German empress who was defended by a Count of Barcelona after being accused of adultery; see Turpin, 'Prólogo', I, p. 403. Even though the play may be based on a legend, it is constructed much more as a fantasy play or, more specifically, as a 'comedia palatina' [palatial play] ('exotic' location, identity changes, happy ending, etc.). The database Artelope classifies it as such ['GALLARDO CATALÁN, Comedia famosa de, EL', <<http://artelope.uv.es/basededatos/browserecord.php?action=browse&recid=148#caracterizaciones>> (accessed 4 August 2020)]. It also falls in line with other Lope plays that take place in England; see Robert S. Stone, "'Con arte se vence todo": Images of the English in Lope de Vega', *Bulletin of the Comediantes*, 54.2 (2002), 249–69; Alejandro García Reidy, 'La construcción histórico-poética de Inglaterra en el teatro de Lope', in *Europa (historia y mito) en la comedia española. Actas de las XXXIII jornadas de teatro clásico de Almagro*, ed. by Felipe B. Pedraza Jiménez, Rafael González Cañal and Elena E. Marcello (Cuenca: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2012), pp. 67–80. This offers more 'freedom' to the poet to 'play' with the characters, their situations, and the themes that are presented. Thus, an accusation of a (foreign) queen's infidelity can be acceptable and decorous which would not be in the case of a play perceived as historical by the target audience, since this accusation may have been subject to censorship in order for the play to be performed. I would like to thank my peer-reviewers for sharing their expertise in developing this particular footnote.

<sup>15</sup> For a further analysis of the motif of the female character *disfraz varonil*, see Jaime Homero Arjona who reveals that almost a quarter of Lope's studied and discovered works (113 of 470 *comedias*) employ a female character with the *disfraz varonil*; see Jaime Homero Arjona, 'El disfraz varonil en Lope de Vega', *Bulletin Hispanique*, 39 (1937), 120–45 (p. 121). In his poetic treatise in defense of his own particular playwriting techniques, Lope de Vega justifies the importance of the cross-dressed woman

Remón's freedom and request that he should wait for them in Plymouth to send him clothes and money from London.<sup>16</sup> They do not keep this promise and, instead, befriend Isabela who is told by don Juan that Remón has been captured by the Turks. This leads Isabela to marry Enrique, Emperor of Germany. Isabela asks don Juan/Clavela to accompany her to Germany making them her cupbearer because of their ties to Remón. Lotario and Rodulfo, who escort Isabela and her company to Germany, believe that during the travels the relationship between the future empress and her male servant becomes too intimate and sexual. They inform Enrique of this illicit activity who witnesses a platonic embrace between Isabela and don Juan/Clavela before they return to Barcelona. Enraged by this sight, the emperor decides to have his new wife poisoned and don Juan murdered. Fortunately for the two female protagonists, they are both saved.<sup>17</sup> Conflicts are resolved as Clavela reveals her true identity and finally marries Remón while Isabela and Enrique agree to renew their vows.

Before diving into the explicit Ganymede reference, there are a couple of allusions strategically placed beforehand that prepare the audience for the appearance of the youth. At the beginning of Act 2 as Isabela goes to the port to embark on her journey to Germany, the 'English Admiral'<sup>18</sup> describes the sea and ship and reveals to her that 'the imperial Jupiter | takes you, in which person | shines the crown | that

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in theatre; see Fenix Lope de Vega, *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*, ed. by Enrique García Santo-Tomás (Madrid: Cátedra, 2006), vv. 280–83. Moralists also considered cross-dressing to be quite controversial and immoral. For a classic study on the *mujer varonil* [manly woman], see Melveena McKendrick, *Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age: A Study of the Mujer Varonil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974). The first written documents that give proof of the appearance of actresses on stage, prerequisite for the usage of female-to-male cross-dressing, are dated as late as 1587; see Kenji Inamoto, 'La mujer vestida de hombre en el teatro de Cervantes', *Cervantes: Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America*, 12.2 (1992), 137–43 (p. 138).

<sup>16</sup> I use the derivative form of the singular 'they' here and throughout the article in order to create a gender-neutral alternative for when Clavela is cross-dressed as don Juan.

<sup>17</sup> Isabela is rescued by Duke Carlos, who informs her of Enrique's plan, and the Admiral of England, her cousin, who forbids her from going through with the poisoning; and, Clavela by Remón and Rocabruna, his servant, who, after being swept by the winds, miraculously land in Germany instead of Spain. Menéndez y Pelayo argues that the name Rocabruna, which is found in chronicles by Descot and Carbonell, indirectly proves that Lope had in his possession one of two Catalan chronicles; see Menéndez y Pelayo, p. 66.

<sup>18</sup> This character is known as 'Almirante de Inglaterra' in the original Spanish *dramatis personae*; see Fenix Lope de Vega, *El gallardo catalán*, in *Comedias de Lope de Vega. Parte II*, ed. by Enrique Turpin, 3 vols (Lleida: Editorial Milenio; Departamento de Filología Espanyola de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2008), I, 412–528 (p. 421).

will make you immortal'.<sup>19</sup> This becomes a veiled reference to the myth of Ganymede. This 'imperial Jupiter' is, of course, Emperor Enrique IV of Germany. If he is Jupiter, then Isabela should be one of his copious lovers, perhaps even Ganymede. Through marriage, she is transformed into Jupiter vis-à-vis the immortality of the crown that is shortly to be hers. Previously, when convincing don Juan to travel with her to Germany, Isabela asserts that she embodies Jupiter and don Juan is her adoptive Ganymede. She requests that her new companion perform the function of a cupbearer: 'you can serve me the cup when I eat'.<sup>20</sup> Isabela understands that her upcoming nuptials are mere formalities and that by agreeing to the marriage she serves as Jupiter. She can be seen as a *Júpiter raptora* ['Jupiter abductor'] of her own Ganymede (don Juan) as she removes them from England to Germany and has them service her drinks during meals. These covert references lead Lotario and Rodolfo to equate don Juan to the Greek youth after the voyage. This association then ushers in the main conflict of the *comedia* as the characters perpetuate the belief that Isabela acted in a way inappropriate for the next German empress. In other words, her behavior towards don Juan elicits the correlation to illicit and prohibited sexual desires.

Lope de Vega has used the Ganymede motif on more than one occasion in his *comedias* to point to prohibited acts between members of the opposite sex.<sup>21</sup> In *El castigo sin venganza* [*Punishment Without Revenge*] (1631), Lope de Vega presents his audience with a reference that mirrors that in *El gallardo catalán*. In this case, however, the protagonist accused of being Ganymede is a woman and her Jupiter is her stepchild. This *comedia* is the tragic love triangle between the Duke, his illegitimate son, Federico, and the Duke's bride-to-be, Casandra. Federico and Casandra meet before they realize the other's identity and fall in love. Sadly, after the Duke and Casandra marry, the

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<sup>19</sup> 'el Júpiter imperial | te lleva, en cuya persona | resplandece la corona | que te ha de hacer inmortal'. Fenix Lope de Vega, *El gallardo catalán*, I, vv. 1520–23.

<sup>20</sup> 'podrásme dar la copa cuando coma'. Fenix Lope de Vega, *El gallardo catalán*, I, v. 1056.

<sup>21</sup> Although Lope does not use Ganymede as a major leitmotif in his work, he does use the mythological youth in a few of his *comedias*: he plays a part in the mythological *Adonis y Venus* [*Adonis and Venus*] (1597–1603) and *Las mujeres sin hombres* [*Women Without Men*] (1613–18). There are also minor references in *La escolástica celosa* [*The Jealous Schoolwoman*] (1604), *La amistad pagada* [*The Paid Friendship*] (1604) and *La mayor victoria* [*The Greatest Victory*] (1635).

love affair between stepmother and stepson continues. When they are discovered, the Duke has no alternative but to have them both killed. Even after realizing that Casandra had become his stepmother, Federico wishes to become Jupiter in order to sweep down and take her, or Ganymede, up to the heavens.<sup>22</sup> Federico professes that he, as a transformed eagle, would like to devour his own stepmother. According to Frederick A. De Armas, 'Federico, then, is speaking of his forbidden love for his stepmother, using as an image a pagan practice forbidden during the Christian era. His "incestuous" desire is transformed, in an Ovidian metamorphosis, into Jupiter's passion for Ganymede'.<sup>23</sup> It becomes apparent that the love between a stepmother and stepchild was considered illicit and unlawful. In other words, two people of the opposite sex could be disciplined under sodomy laws: it was not solely a crime committed by people of the same sex. Lope de Vega uses the figure of Ganymede mindfully in both *El castigo sin venganza* and, as we will now see, *El gallardo catalán*.

In the second act, both Lotario and Rodolfo grow wary of the fondness between the disguised Clavela and Isabela and believe that 'he must be more | than her house's cupbearer'.<sup>24</sup> They agree that, if either of them were to see Isabela act dishonorably, they would immediately speak with the Emperor and inform him of his new wife's inappropriate behavior.<sup>25</sup> Once they have docked and all formal introductions have been made, the marriage ceremony takes place. Enrique IV of Germany speaks with Lotario and expresses his joy of his virtuous and beautiful wife. He notices, however, that Lotario does not rejoice in his sovereign's delight and demands answers. In a conversation between the two, Lotario begrudgingly notifies Enrique that

LOTARIO:           Isabela is a woman,  
                          And she is not an honest one.

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<sup>22</sup> 'yo quisiera | ser un Júpiter' [I would like | to be a Jupiter]. Fenix Lope de Vega, *El castigo sin venganza*, ed. by Antonio Carreño (Madrid: Cátedra, 2010), vv. 561–62.

<sup>23</sup> Frederick De Armas, 'From Mantua to Madrid', pp. 241–2.

<sup>24</sup> 'algo más debe de ser | que el copero de su casa'. Fenix Lope de Vega, *El gallardo catalán*, I, vv. 1342–3.

<sup>25</sup> Fenix Lope de Vega, *El gallardo catalán*, I, vv. 1433–45.

ENRIQUE: How so?

LOTARIO: In the sea, by God,  
we have seen a fierce evil.

ENRIQUE: With whom?

LOTARIO: With that cupbearer  
Ganymede to her liking.

ENRIQUE: Did you see it with your eyes?

LOTARIO: That  
is never seen with the eyes;  
it is discovered through the yearnings,  
and it is evident after the fact.  
It should be enough, that I have arrived  
to tell you of her malice,  
in order to understand that it is true,  
and that some have noticed it.<sup>26</sup>

Lotario perceives the illegitimate relationship between Isabela and don Juan as unfaithful since the English princess consented to marry the German emperor and is therefore breaking her promise. Don Juan is effectively a Ganymede by name *because* they performed the duty of the cupbearer who serves their master wine or sweet nectar. Clavela as don Juan is also metaphorically a Ganymede because they are believed to have had sexual contact with the newly crowned empress during their

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<sup>26</sup> Fenix Lope de Vega, *El gallardo catalán*, I, vv. 2245–58.

LOTARIO: Isabela es mujer,  
y que no es mujer honesta.

ENRIQUE: ¡Como!

LOTARIO: En la mar, ¡cielo injusto!,  
hemos visto un mal tan fiero.

ENRIQUE: ¿Con quién?

LOTARIO: Con ese copero  
Ganímedes de su gusto.

ENRIQUE: ¿Visto con los ojos?

LOTARIO: Eso  
nunca se ve con los ojos;  
conócese en los antojos,  
y adviértese en el suceso.  
Basta que, pues yo he llegado  
a decirte su maldad,  
para entender que es verdad,  
y que algunos lo han notado.

naval voyage to Germany. As aforementioned, there are several references to Germany as an eagle in the text which provides the audience another link between Germany/Jupiter and Clavela/Ganymede.<sup>27</sup> Clavela, in her *disfraz varonil*, takes up the role of Ganymede as cupbearer, while Isabela becomes Jupiter disguised as an eagle through her marriage to the German emperor. As outlined, the figure of Ganymede has become synonymous with same-sex desires and the crime of sodomy. Yet, during the second act, the characters are not cognizant of Clavela's true identity. Referring to the Middle Ages, Glenn W. Olsen establishes that sodomy

could refer either to something very specific, anal intercourse; to a 'short list' typically including masturbation, intercrural [...] or femoral intercourse, and anal intercourse; or to a variety of usually unspecified 'sins against nature.' These usages generally shared the idea of 'waste of semen': with time 'sodomy' could also designate a political or religious crime. [...] In the Renaissance, as earlier, any union 'against nature' could be described as sodomy.<sup>28</sup>

Isabela and Clavela/don Juan are accused of performing sodomitic acts for two reasons: firstly, there is a cupbearer and an eagle making the reference literal, and, secondly, politically speaking, the wife of any ruler must remain chaste to any man aside from her own husband. In effect, sexual acts that did not lead to conception were encompassed in this criminal act. Francisco Tomás y Valiente affirms that sodomy was one of the most scandalous crimes to fixate the Spanish monarchy during the Renaissance.<sup>29</sup> Fray Bartolomé de Medina went so far as to suggest that a man lying on his back while a woman found herself in the superior position was a *pecado contra*

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<sup>27</sup> 'la águilas del imperio' ['the eagles of empire']. Fenix Lope de Vega, *El gallardo catalán*, I, v. 1234.

<sup>28</sup> Glenn W. Olsen, *Of Sodomites, Effeminate, Hermaphrodites and Androgynes: Sodomy in the Age of Peter Damian* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2011), pp. 14–5.

<sup>29</sup> Francisco Tomás y Valiente, *El derecho penal de la monarquía absoluta (siglos XVI, XVII, XVIII)* (Madrid: Tecnos, 1992), p. 255.

*natura* [sin against nature] as the position was 'anti-natural and disorderly'.<sup>30</sup> This is also noted throughout the literature of early modern Spain.<sup>31</sup>

The reference to Ganymede suggests the possibility of an off-stage sodomitic relationship between Clavela and Isabela. Lotario and Rodulfo were not privy to the act in question but they nonetheless claim it took place during the naval voyage. These characters believe that don Juan and Isabela committed a sexual crime (possibly adultery) despite the lack of visual and possibly physical evidence. As we will see, female same-sex desire was not a high priority for lawmakers as it was deemed inconsequential in most circumstances. Nevertheless, Lope de Vega could be signaling to the audience that they should question the relationship between Clavela and Isabela. For Ted L. L. Bergman, Lotario's and Rodulfo's lack of clear evidence can be excused 'because of its unspeakable nature, the act [sodomy] is rarely discussed in any detail'.<sup>32</sup> It was inconceivable for playwrights to write or describe these incidents as the long arm of the Inquisition would have admonished the work and reproached the authors. In order to avoid suspicion, writers of the time would instead make use of a 'voyeur or watcher, who relates the information to members of the audience and allows them to use their own imagination'.<sup>33</sup> In fact, it was unnecessary for an eyewitness to be present to observe the prohibited acts, especially since the crime

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<sup>30</sup> Fray Bartolomé de Medina, quoted in Federico Garza Carvajal, *Butterflies Will Burn: Prosecuting Sodomites in Early Modern Spain and Mexico* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 2003), p. 53.

<sup>31</sup> J. Ignacio Díez Fernández dedicates his fifth chapter to images of sodomy in Francisco de Quevedo's poetry; *La poesía erótica de los Siglos de Oro* (Madrid: Ediciones del Laberinto, 2003), pp. 247–50. In early modern Spain, sodomy was an accusation normally associated with 'moors', or northern Africans, and Turks. See, for example, Miguel de Cervantes and the episode of Ana Félix at the end of part 2 of *Don Quixote* (Chapter LXIII) where she states 'among those barbaric Turks a handsome boy or youth is much more highly prized than any woman'; *Don Quixote*, trans. by John Rutherford (New York: Penguin, 2001), p. 922. It is noteworthy that this episode includes a cross-dressed don Pedro Gregorio. In addition, Mateo Alemán, in his *Guzmán de Alfarache*, records that sodomy was abundant in Italy; see Mateo Alemán, *Guzmán de Alfarache*, ed. by José María Micó, 2 vols (Madrid: Cátedra, 2003), I, p. 142. That Italians were prone to homosexuality was a nationalistic cliché at the time that can be found in many early modern Spanish writers. Quevedo has a series of poems whose protagonists are Italian sodomites; see Adrienne L. Martin, 'Sodomitas, putos, doncellos y maricotes en algunos textos de Quevedo', *La Perinola*, 12 (2008), 107–22 (p. 110).

<sup>32</sup> Ted. L. L. Bergman, 'Voyeurism, Genre, and "Unspeakable Acts": Two Different Views of the *Pecado Nefando*', *Gestos*, 44 (2007), 13–26 (p. 13).

<sup>33</sup> Bergman, p. 13.

would have been too difficult to prove.<sup>34</sup> In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council made the prosecution of sexual crimes simpler by not requiring a public accuser. An ecclesiastical judge could initiate an inquiry even if the accusations were mere rumors without tangible evidence. Even with such statutes that theoretically could have made anyone a suspect of committing sexual crimes, the prosecution for female sodomy was still very rare.<sup>35</sup> Lotario and Rodulfo are thus within their rights to suggest that something lascivious occurred in that naval ship: 'That I is never seen with the eyes'.<sup>36</sup> Transgressive acts appear to be those that are unspoken, concealed, and without witness.

Although the characters do not know don Juan's identity, there is a covert Ganymedeian interpretation. Unlike the actors on stage, the audience is quite aware that a cloaked Clavela is Isabela's cupbearer which additionally led to heightened interest in the appearance of a woman in male clothing. Teresa Ferrer Valls suggests that a cross-dressed woman on stage had an erotic appeal for the masculine audience of the time: 'the woman dressed in male breeches — a stocking, sewed up with a short undergarment, that according to fashion was either above or below the knee—, offered the masculine audience a pleasing erotic image'.<sup>37</sup> For that reason, Lope could be using pagan symbolism in two complementary ways. As stated, sodomy was a term used to express forbidden and criminalized sexual acts between same- or opposite-sex individuals. This act in itself could lead to lawful corporal punishment including death. Lotario and Rodulfo believe that don Juan and Isabela have become

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<sup>34</sup> James A. Brundage, 'Playing by the Rules: Sexual Behavior and Legal Norms in Medieval Europe', in *Desire and Discipline: Sex and Sexuality in the Premodern West*, ed. by Jacqueline Murray and Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 23–41 (p. 27).

<sup>35</sup> Edith Benkov, 'The Erased Lesbian: Sodomy and the Legal Tradition in Medieval Europe', in *Same Sex Love and Desire Among Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Francesca Canadé Sautman and Pamela Sheingorn (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 101–22 (p. 111).

<sup>36</sup> 'Eso I nunca se ve con los ojos'. Fenix Lope de Vega, *El gallardo catalán*, I, vv. 2251–52.

<sup>37</sup> 'La mujer vestida con las calzas varoniles —a manera de medias, rematadas con un calzón corto, que según la moda subía o bajaba de la rodilla—, ofrecía para un público masculino una imagen erótica atractiva'; see Teresa Ferrer Valls, 'Damas enamoran damas, o el galán fingido en la comedia de Lope de Vega', in *Amor y erotismo en el teatro de Lope de Vega, Actas de las XXV jornadas de teatro clásico de Almagro (Almagro, 9–11 julio 2002)*, ed. by Felipe B. Pedraza, Rafael González Cañal and Elena Marcello (Almagro: Festival de Almagro-Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2003), pp. 191–212 (p. 194). Translation my own.

illicitly involved and their reaction is warranted and 'legal' in the context of seventeenth-century Spain. Yet, the other possible reading suggests that Lope de Vega could be using the reference to solicit a different reaction from his audience which opposed those of his actors on stage. The playwright could, for example, be introducing same-sex desires between two women which would also be expressly forbidden under the definition of sodomy.<sup>38</sup>

There are several examples that in the seventeenth century Ganymede began to exhibit feminine features. Peter Paul Ruben's *The Abduction of Ganymede* (1611-12) depicts this new characteristic: 'The joyously heterosexual Rubens, asked to paint a *Ganymede*, makes Jove's minion into a plump youth who is as much like a woman as possible'.<sup>39</sup> In this painting, Ganymede is shown to take the passive and feminine role similar to most of his other pictorial representations. In this case, however, the painter represents this youth as akin to a woman.

Rubens did not solely portray representations of male homoeroticism: he was equally gifted in portraying the goddess Diana and her nymphs with clear lesbian overtones. None of these paintings, however, are as deliberate as his *Jupiter and Callisto* (1611). The myth narrates Jupiter's transformation into Diana to get closer to Callisto, one of the goddess' followers. The sole reference to Jupiter in the painting appears through the eagle in the background.<sup>40</sup> Similarly in *El gallardo catalán*, only the audience understands Clavela's true identity hidden behind the cloak of a man and Isabela's connection to the eagle through her German betrothal. It is for this reason that both art and literature are crucial in sensing early modern belief and thought surrounding same-sex desires. What is evident for art enthusiasts of the seventeenth century is that the depiction of female same-sex encounters gained significant

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<sup>38</sup> For a study that focuses on Lope de Vega's plays where female characters fall in love with other female characters disguised as men, see Teresa Ferrer Valls, 'Damas enamoran damas'. This paper offers a framework of how audiences reacted to these images (and the 'pleasure' or 'curiosity' associated with sexuality among women) and how female attraction to other female characters (though disguised) became a theatrical resource that Lope developed and used in a variety of plays including *El gallardo catalán*.

<sup>39</sup> Edward Lucie-Smith, *Sexuality in Western Art* (London: Thames and Hudson 1991), p. 87.

<sup>40</sup> Lucie-Smith, pp. 203–04.

popularity. Edward Lucie-Smith contends that there are two specific explanations for this prevalence:

First, since erotic art for the most part addresses itself to males, there is the attempt to satisfy male curiosity about what females do when they are alone together. Secondly, Freudian theory inclines to the hypothesis that a voyeuristic interest in lesbianism is directly linked to the voyeur's own castration fear. A woman who acts as if she already possessed a penis is, for the watcher, a reassuring spectacle, in that she is less likely to try and rob him of his own.<sup>41</sup>

For this critic, lesbian desires are less threatening to male viewers because there is no risk of losing their sexual organ. In other words, female same-sex desires are increasingly at the margins and ignored by playwrights, law enforcement and audience members. A male spectator can become more aware of the relationship between two women and also not be afraid of being replaced. Eva Catarella insists that Roman men thought lesbianism was a woman's attempt to inadequately mimic heterosexual intercourse with another woman.<sup>42</sup> While 'unnatural', female same-sex desire was nothing but uncharted territory for most early modern societies. Louis Crompton has pointed out that, despite the appearance of a few texts, '[l]ittle has been written about lesbianism and the law from a historical point of view'.<sup>43</sup> Even for modern societies looking back at the seventeenth century, lesbianism is something of a mystery.

This kind of phallocentric attitude towards lesbianism is a perfect example of how Europeans found it difficult to understand female same-sex attraction.<sup>44</sup> Guido

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<sup>41</sup> Lucie-Smith, p. 203.

<sup>42</sup> Eva Catarella, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World*, trans. by Cormac Ó. Cuilleánáin, 2nd edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 170.

<sup>43</sup> Louis Crompton, 'The Myth of Lesbian Impurity: Capital Laws from 1270–1791', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 6 (1980–81), 11–25 (p. 11). For a Spanish case study and judicial proceedings of a seventeenth-century same-sex female couple, Inés de Santa Cruz and Catalina Ledesma, in Valladolid; see *Las Cañitas: un proceso por lesbianismo en Valladolid en el siglo XVIII*, ed. by Federico Garza Carvajal (Palencia: Simancas Ediciones, 2012).

<sup>44</sup> Judith Brown, *Immodest Acts: The Life of a Lesbian Nun in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 6.

Ruggiero stresses that lesbianism was mostly unpunished under the law because it did not threaten the production of a family and it did not bring about the birth of illegitimate children.<sup>45</sup> Female same-sex desire was thought to be less menacing to Christian values since a woman, generally speaking, was never thought to be dishonored by another woman: her virginity was always kept intact. When a woman was caught inserting an 'object', in whatever form that took, that pierced through another woman's virginity, the law would enter and harshly punish the perpetrator:

In Europe before the French revolution, however, notably in such countries as France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Switzerland, lesbian acts were regarded as legally equivalent to acts of male sodomy and were, like them, punishable by the death penalty. On occasion, executions of women were carried out.<sup>46</sup>

Similar to sexual relationships between two men, women were eventually murdered for committing transgressive same-sex activities.

Female same-sex desire in *El gallardo catalán* would suggest that some kind of criminal sexual act may have occurred between these two women inside the ship. This would go beyond anything platonic and signal the possible dishonoring of the emperor's consort. Using both interpretations of Clavela as don Juan and as herself, this character's unseen and unwritten sexual actions punishable, were they to be found guilty. The laws at the time made Lotario's accusation very incriminating despite the lack of credible evidence to substantiate his allegation. The emperor is convinced of his wife's infidelity as he attempts to murder a disguised Clavela and have Isabela commit suicide: both sentences to death were permissible under sodomy laws. Subsequently, Lotario and Rodolfo are murdered for their slanderous misinformation and Clavela and Isabela are found to be innocent. To reiterate, it is thought to be almost impossible for two women to commit a sexual crime with each

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<sup>45</sup> Guido Ruggiero, *The Boundaries of Eros: Sex Crime and Sexuality in Renaissance Venice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 189–90 (n. 21).

<sup>46</sup> Crompton, p. 11.

other, so the denouement is predictable. When Clavela unveils her true identity, the characters are quick to discount the charges brought against her and the new German empress. Nevertheless, Lope de Vega's ambiguity allows for these possible interpretations of illicit sexual acts to coexist when Lotario refers to Clavela/don Juan as a Ganymede: that is, as two individuals of the opposite sex or two same-sex partners willfully participating in forbidden sexual acts.

The audience is left with an unsolvable problem that recognizes these double interpretations of Ganymede. The playwright may be contending that, regardless of whether Clavela were a man or a woman, her relationship with Isabela could be considered sodomitic. Both are criminally punishable under the law.

One historical issue, however, still remains to be examined. Lotario states that Isabela lost her virtue 'in the sea'.<sup>47</sup> The sea appears to be a central location for these acts *contra natura* [against nature] to take place. By comparing Clavela/don Juan to Ganymede, Lotario is quick to point to illegal sexual acts. Yet the characters are confined to an imperial ship and in an unclaimed aquatic territory – it is a marginalized territory as it is not fixed but instead is fluid and active. In between scenes in Act 2, Lope de Vega takes his audience from England to Germany, omitting any voyage scene. The only allusion of any importance comes from Lotario and Rodolfo who report that Isabela and don Juan have supposedly committed a proscribed sexual act. Lope de Vega did not narrate what took place in between his scenes in order to preserve a mysterious aura and possible suspicion of the love affair between Clavela or don Juan and Isabela.

In fact, acts of sodomy during nautical voyages were quite prevalent in seventeenth-century Spain. At first, one might believe that, as N. A. M. Rodger has avowed, 'a ship at sea was about the most difficult possible place to commit sodomy [...] It is difficult to believe that there can have been any serious problem with a crime

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<sup>47</sup> 'en la mar'. Fenix Lope de Vega, *El gallardo catalán*, I, v. 2247.

so much detested, but so seldom mentioned'.<sup>48</sup> Federico Garza Carvajal has studied approximately three hundred sodomy cases that were tried in the Spanish Empire between 1561 and 1699, specifically in Seville, Cádiz, Granada, and Mexico City. Most of the cases that were prosecuted occurred in ships that were either docked in Spain or going to and from the Spanish Indies.<sup>49</sup> In other words, sodomy took place both on Spanish soil and on imperial vessels.<sup>50</sup> However, it was not necessarily difficult to commit a sexual crime inside a ship – it just may have been more challenging. In fact, while not as prominent as other crimes, desires for same-sex activities boarded Spanish vessels and immigrated to the New World. The danger of this unlawful act, for moralist and for the monarchy itself, was that they could not control this exportation of a sexual sin. This aquatic vessel, which was the quintessential symbol of Spanish expansion, may have unintentionally become the vehicle for other same-sex encounters to partake in their preferred activity. Garza Carvajal explains the importance of a ship:

the ship itself as metaphor epitomized the height of early modernity. The ship as metaphor represented a piece of land belonging to the empire, and within its hull and decks it transported to the Indies an ethos that Spain deemed appropriate for export—its form of civilization, its technological advances, its new Vir, and its Catholic dogma.<sup>51</sup>

Spanish ships, however, not only carried moral civilization but also the vices of their population. Illicit same-sex acts were no exception to this unintentional imperial influence and trade.

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<sup>48</sup> N. A. M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (New York: Norton, 1986), pp. 80–1.

<sup>49</sup> Garza Carvajal, pp. 7–8.

<sup>50</sup> One could undoubtedly argue that there may have been instances where the sexual act was not caught and the 'criminals' either gave their consent or were never discovered. For B.R. Burg, one of the most prominent features of nautical sodomy cases was that officers regularly sexually forced themselves on younger boys as opposed to sailors and midshipmen who found partners among their peers; see B. R. Burg, *Boys at Sea: Sodomy, Indecency, and Courts Martial in Nelson's Navy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. xi–xii.

<sup>51</sup> Garza Carvajal, p. 84.

This may paint a fuller and more accurate portrait of the reality referenced in Lope de Vega's *El gallardo catalán*. When Lotario confesses that 'In the sea, by God I we have seen a fierce evil',<sup>52</sup> his own words become the evidence needed to argue that this crime was committed within the confines of the ship that transports Isabela and her cupbearer to Germany. Lope de Vega may be playing with the preconceived understanding his audience had on what took place inside naval vessels.<sup>53</sup> Both moralists and lawmakers were cognizant of and adamantly opposed to the crime of sodomy. The voyage, in Lope's *comedia*, can be interpreted as a voyage of sin. By simply alluding to Ganymede, Lope de Vega uses the ship as a tool to carry illicit and sinful desires from England to Germany. He uses the sea as a metaphor for what took place in Spanish vessels, acknowledging that it would have been extremely improper to set this act in Spanish waters.

In his *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* [*New Rules for Writing Play at this Time*] (1609), Lope suggests that, to satisfy his audience, a playwright may break with the union of time as long as no one is overly offended by this action.<sup>54</sup> By not including the journey in a previous scene, the playwright chooses to bypass what would have been a very fruitful depiction of life on a ship. This was not, however, the purpose or focal point of the *comedia*. He eschews the action of the voyage because the implied accusation of an affair was enough to trigger the conflict between characters that engulfs *El gallardo catalán*. At the same time, by having two characters discuss what took place off stage, the audience is able to reflect on the validity and the plausibility of those unlawful actions.

Yet these acts were never performed since as far as the audience can ascertain: firstly, Isabela had no intention in dishonoring her new husband; and secondly,

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<sup>52</sup> 'En la mar, ¡cielo injusto! | hemos visto un mal tan fiero'. Fenix Lope de Vega, *El gallardo catalán*, I, vv. 2248–49.

<sup>53</sup> One contemporary example is the case of Catalina de Erauso (1592–1650), also known as the *monja alférez* or lieutenant nun, who demonstrated the power of and visual deception that cross-dressing had over the viewer. In her autobiography she retells her escape from a Spanish convent and adventures in the New World (where she took many trips via navy ship); see Catalina de Erauso, *Historia de la Monja Alférez, Catalina de Erauso, escrita por ella misma*, ed. by Angel Estaban (Madrid: Cátedra, 2002).

<sup>54</sup> Fenix Lope de Vega, *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*, vv. 180–210.

Clavela was ensuring the marriage between Isabela and Enrique so that she could wed Remón. However, the characters in the *comedia* do not have this information, and Clavela's disguise remains convincing until the end. The emperor's negative reaction is quite genuine as he decides to withdrawal from his supposedly dishonorable wife in the third act. Isabela is saddened by her husband's lack of attention towards her and confides in one of her ladies-in-waiting that 'Enrique flees from me'<sup>55</sup> and is worried that 'a marriage without a bed | is like a body without life'.<sup>56</sup> The emperor, as head-of-state, is quite within his jurisdiction to sentence his wife and her cupbearer to death and attempts to do so due to the unsubstantiated crimes brought forth against them. Enrique does not require concrete proof of this act, but he does see Isabela and don Juan embrace as they take leave of each other, which in itself becomes sufficient evidence.<sup>57</sup> Even though the aquatic trip is only mentioned in passing, it is clear that Lope de Vega makes use of all allusions to crimes in order to penalize don Juan/Clavela and Isabela.

In the end, Lope de Vega exploits the indescribable nautical voyage to reference Ganymede and desires for same-sex activities. There were ample contemporary examples available to his audience to legitimize this 'hidden' scene. Once given the title of *copero* [cupbearer], Clavela was destined to be compared to Ganymede. Isabela, as Empress of Germany, becomes Jupiter through her marriage into the German empire which is symbolized by the eagle. For his part, the emperor must follow protocol and try to regain his honor through the execution of both Isabela and don Juan. By having Clavela cross-dress as don Juan, the playwright is able to point to other examples of prohibited acts not strictly defined as same-sex desires, as established by Glenn W. Olsen. Don Juan usurps his own position in society by being accused of having a sexual relationship with a queen. On the other hand, Lope de Vega could still be claiming that Clavela as a woman is Ganymede. In both cases these

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<sup>55</sup> 'huye Enrique de mí'. Fenix Lope de Vega, *El gallardo catalán*, I, v. 2326

<sup>56</sup> 'un matrimonio sin cama | es como un cuerpo sin vida'. Fenix Lope de Vega, *El gallardo catalán*, I, vv. 2348–49.

<sup>57</sup> Fenix Lope de Vega, *El gallardo catalán*, I, vv. 2462–3.

actions were considered to be *contra natura* and punishable under law. Fortunately for all the characters, everything is resolved in the end (as is customary in many of Lope de Vega's *comedias*). However, the nautical journey from England to Germany remains a voyage of potential illicit desires. In *El gallardo catalán*, Lope de Vega creates a Ganymede that is not an innocent bystander but a sexually and physically marginalized guest.

Rojas, Felipe E. “‘Hemos visto un mal tan fiero’: Sexual Ambiguity in Lope de Vega’s *El gallardo catalán* (1599–1603), *Ceræ: An Australasian Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 7 (2020), 3–22.



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