MANHOOD IN SPAIN: FEMININE PERSPECTIVES OF MASCULINITY IN THE
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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The question of decline in the historiography of seventeenth-century Spain originally included socio-economic analyses that determined the decline of Spain was an economic recession. Eventually, the historiographical debate shifted and began to include cultural elements of seventeenth-century Spanish society. Gender within the context of decline provides further insight into how the deterioration of the Spanish economy and the deterioration of Spanish political power in Europe affected Spanish self-perception. The prolific Spanish women writers, in addition, featured their points of view on manhood and created a model of masculinity known as virtuous masculinity. They expected Spanish men to perform their masculine duties as protectors and providers both in public and in private. Seventeenth-century decline influenced how women viewed masculinity. Their new model of masculinity was based on ideas that male writers developed, but went further by emphasizing men treating their wives well.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Dynamic, virile, intelligent, and strong male characters scattered throughout the Spanish literary canon defined Spanish manhood throughout the centuries. In a variety of ways, those definitions transcended borders, languages, and religions in Western Europe as a whole, where roles and duties shaped masculinity. Men had to perform as warriors, protectors, and providers in order to ensure the success of their families and of their countries. As Spain faced threats at home and abroad, Spanish writers questioned whether Spanish men were up to the task while others wondered whether Spanish men and their behavior were the cause of Spain’s problems. Male writers noticed men’s behavior and their lack of participation in duty when they avoided military service and preferred urban life to rural work. Women writers viewed men’s behavior within a narrower compass and criticized their treatment of women, their licentious behavior, and their cowardice. Women’s works on these issues provided insight into domestic life, relationships between men and women, and Spanish masculinity.

The women of seventeenth-century Spain produced descriptions of Spanish life, culture, and society in their literature. These works drew attention to the social structures and rules they experienced. Women authors described their society and the position of men and women in it. Primarily, ideas of domination were important as society expected men to have control over themselves, their families, and their wealth. These ideas held significance in the relationships between the monarchy and the rest of the state much like in the relationship between the head of a household and his family.
Dominance was an important part of how men related to women but, despite men’s position, women enjoyed significant freedoms. Spanish women participated in partible inheritance, entered contracts, and brought cases to court. Noblewomen especially took advantage of political, social, and economic freedoms.\textsuperscript{1} According to the scholar Cristian Breco, Spanish patriarchal society provided a social organization that centered on male roles as leaders and heads of households. Social commentators attributed masculine qualities to women of the monarchy and of high social class, such as queens and noblewomen, and described them as patriarchs because they held similar leadership roles.\textsuperscript{2}

The masculine traits of leadership are important aspects of seventeenth-century Spanish political society. Ideas of masculinity are versatile guidelines for behavior and personal traits. Studies of gender would suggest that masculinity is a complex set of ideas that governed not just behavior, but also societal structure. Joan W. Scott proposes that approaches to gender fall under two different categories, the first being gender as a replacement term for women in historical studies as feminist scholarship sought legitimacy in the 1980s. The second category she describes as a casual usage of gender by historians as a theoretical to study both men and women describes the different social ideas pertaining to the roles of men and women.\textsuperscript{3} The latter approach is more appropriate for a study of feminine perspectives of masculinity because this is not a study of women and their roles within society, but rather their literary contributions and

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{1} Cristian Breco, “Producing Patriarchy: Male Sodomy and Gender in Early Modern Spain,” \textit{Journal of the History of Sexuality} 17.3 (2008), 353. \\
\textsuperscript{2} Breco, “Male Sodomy and Gender in Early Modern Spain,” 356. \\
\textsuperscript{3} Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” \textit{American Historical Review} 91.5 (1986), 1056.
\end{flushleft}
their ideas relevant to men. Women’s views on manhood provide insight into their relationships with men; gender as a term that applies to men and women’s social roles is helpful to understanding a society’s political and social climate because gender is an important part of many cultures. For example, the attribution of leadership roles to men is not just characteristic of Spanish society, but also of Western society in general. Joan Scott’s definition of gender relies on the understanding that gender is an important part of social relationships based on physical differences between the sexes, and gender is a way to understand power relationships.\(^4\)

In the historical context of seventeenth-century Spain, one can use gender for understanding the social structures of early modern Spain during the age of decline, a period when the Spanish economy deteriorated along with Spain’s reputation abroad. However, decline also had moral, military, and social implications according to seventeenth-century writers of both fiction and non-fiction. The concept of masculinity in early modern Spain was an important aspect of Spanish culture in which it guided behavior in public as well as at home, and power relationships between king and subjects. For Scott, gender presents a way to understand politics and power dynamics. Within the context of this study, gender and masculinity provide ways for understanding the effects that decline had on society. Scott proposes that gender is partly defined by the physical differences between men and women. During decline, fashion accentuated these physical differences, which the author María de Zayas includes in her descriptions of men. Foreign influence over the changing Spanish fashions changed how men physically looked and authors like Zayas proposed that these changes brought

\(^4\) Scott, “Gender” 1067.
effeminization. Scott’s ideas of gender as a way to analyze politics are relevant to Spanish decline because as Spanish authors concerned themselves with effeminization, they did so within the context of the decline of politics and economics. Particularly, the author María de Guevara emphasized politics and economics in her treatises about women, men, and government. Women’s participation in the debate about decline shows its widespread effects and the uncertainty and uneasiness of Spanish society about the future.

In seventeenth-century Spain, religion influenced masculinity; for example, Edward Behrend-Martínez describes the Spanish church’s campaign to redefine St. Joseph’s image as the Virgin Mary’s husband. The church emphasized his “chaste virility, strength, fidelity, and lack of suspicion and jealousy” to create an ideal definition of Spanish masculinity. Instead of recommending that husbands and fathers reinforce their dominance over the women in their families, especially over their wives, the church recommended that men provide protection and affection. Society expected men to dress in conservative garb. More importantly, however, society judged men by their ability to perform sexually; furthermore, the physical act of sex within the confines of a marriage elevated a man to full-fledged manliness. In the context of community, honor, which depended on a man’s ability to defend himself, his family, and reputation, was an important aspect of Spanish masculinity. Behrend-Martínez presents a view of Spanish masculinity in the context of physical differences and expectations, like sexual

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virility and performance. In addition to those expectations, the male honor code viewed a man’s ability to defend his reputation and household as an extension of a man’s duty to perform in a military capacity. According to Scott Taylor, a man’s honor in Golden Age Spain depended on the sexual purity of women.\(^8\) Taylor explains that in Golden Age honor plays, dramas that portrayed situations about honor and dishonor, male characters took offense to rumors and actions that had to do with their wives and daughters, which led to male characters pursuing violent retribution. Taylor also analyses court cases that concerned violent crimes and finds examples of violent behavior that was influenced by the need to preserve honor. Honor depended on public performance of masculine duties, such as the protection of home and family, and on public reputation. When Spanish men chose to defend the honor of their family and violently challenged dishonor in public, men exercised their need to keep up appearances.\(^9\) A man’s need to protect his family, both physically and in reputation, was an important standard of masculinity in early modern Spain. Certainly, women wanted men to protect them from emotional and physical harm, but women writers wanted more from men.

The literature that María de Zayas, Ana Caro, María de Guevara, and Luisa de Padilla produced shows examples of ideal and unwanted male behavior. Women authors of Golden Age fiction as well as non-fiction treatises took a variety of approaches to presenting male behavior. As women, these authors portrayed male behavior in both the ideal and non-ideal sense to give their own perspectives on

\(^9\) Taylor, *Honor and Violence*, 104.
masculinity. Seventeenth-century Spanish masculinity in women’s eyes was flawed. While a man’s duties to protect, provide, and perform were important parts of these authors’ views of masculinity, the treatment of women was also an important element of masculinity because a man was meant to protect a woman from other men as well as from himself. In the seventeenth century, women authors proposed that the men of Spain had to return to a state of virtuous masculinity, which included courage, religious piety, and the better treatment of women. Virtuous masculinity is a product of the nostalgic attitudes that were prevalent in seventeenth-century Spain. As decline set in, many Spaniards chose to look to past examples of success to shape their futures. Women authors defined masculinity in many of the same ways that men did, but emphasized that men’s treatment of wives was just as important as any other requirements. Women writers viewed decline as much more than just an economic depression. Decline had moral and religious implications as well, which female authors addressed with the idea of virtuous masculinity.

In María de Zayas’s short stories, the *Disenchantments* (1647), there were a multitude of cases of violence against women perpetrated by their husbands and/or suitors. One can apply the concept of hegemonic masculinity to the male behavior that Zayas displayed as men used physical and psychological violence against the women whom they desired. The application of hegemonic masculinity is also appropriate within the context of comparing the relationships between husband and wife and between monarch and subjects. As R.W. Connell and James Messerschmidt suggest, men’s collective dominance over others, especially women, is a distinguishing part of the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Men’s dominance in the context of hegemonic
masculinity allows men to indulge in “toxic behavior.” However, physical violence, aggression, and selfishness are not the only aspects of hegemonic masculinity because masculine traits, such as providing an income, maintaining a sexual relationship, and becoming a father also have importance for being a man. Although positive features of hegemonic masculinity exist, the negative aspects of dominance are prevalent as well. Zayas and other female authors challenged this dominance by portraying men’s negative dominant behavior; but instead of glorifying hegemonic masculinity, these female authors presented an alternative form of virtuous masculinity. Virtuous masculinity emphasized the importance of men as providers and protectors rather than men as dominators of women and was at its most pure when men treated women with respect. In terms of gender, Spanish masculinity had chivalric attributes that were important only in terms of public performance rather than in private practice. Women writers argued for virtuous masculinity, which for them included those chivalric values, but also emphasized their private exercise through the good treatment of women. Despite hegemonic masculinity being the institutional domination of women, women writers were far more concerned with men’s behavior toward them rather than with society’s ways of keeping them in subordinate positions. The monarch was expected to rule the kingdom just as a man was expected to rule his household. Idleness as an element of alleged effeminization was among the more significant complaints in the seventeenth century as the nobility chose to involve themselves in court culture rather

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than administering their lands or participating in military duty in the face of decline. In the household, women expected men to protect and provide, which reflected men’s public duties of contributing to support Spain’s military and economic needs.

As two of the most influential writers of the 1630s and 1640s, María de Zayas and Ana Caro exemplify how female authors incorporated their views in literature and theater by portraying men and their behavior. Therefore, their works are good sources to use because of the audience they reached and the period in which they wrote. As contemporaries, Caro and Zayas worked in the middle of a tumultuous time for the Spanish empire, when financial problems and war threatened the empire’s security. In the mid seventeenth-century, Spain’s power dwindled and paled in comparison to the kingdom’s previous successes. Luisa de Padilla commented on the nobility in the same period and her treatises on ideal noblemen provided examples of ideal masculine behavior as well. The conflicts that Spain involved itself in during the seventeenth century influenced these three women. Perhaps the most politically aware author was María de Guevara who wrote directly to the kings Philip IV and Charles II with opinions on Spain’s situation and suggestions for solutions. Guevara, for example, expressed liberal thoughts, like favoring the inclusion of women at court and in the formation of policy. Padilla, on the other hand, gave more conservative advice to the nobility, recommending that it should reinforce its religious and moral compasses by becoming more pious and traditional.

Guevara commented on the state of Spain during the 1660s in her two treatises, *Tratado y advertencias hechas por una mujer* (*Treatise and warnings written by a woman*) and *Desengaños de la corte y mujeres valerosas* (*Disenchantments of the*
court and valorous women). In these treatises, Guevara demonstrated political awareness and addressed the events and circumstances of her day by presenting historical examples of how kings and the nobility should conduct themselves. Guevara’s unique approach in her works challenged existing traditions of gender roles by suggesting the value of women in politics, but also directly addressed the country’s leadership with problems and solutions. Particularly, Guevara provided suggestions for improving government at high levels. Guevara’s suggestions had novel intentions, like placing women in government roles and proposing that men adapt themselves to having women be given more opportunities for becoming involved in civic and cultural life. Since her treatises proposed some female superiority over men, the royal court did not receive her works well. Through her suggestions of female superiority, Guevara described what kinds of roles women could have in politics and how men could escape effeminization and decline. These two sources in particular showed how decline changed Spanish society’s perception of gender relations in seventeenth-century Spain.

Writing the 1630s through the 1640s, Luisa de Padilla authored treatises about the nobility of Spain, noblemen, and their behavior. Padilla’s works had nostalgic overtones and created descriptions of an idealized nobility. Padilla also emphasized that Spanish men needed to return to the chivalric values that characterized the fifteenth-century court of Ferdinand the Catholic and Isabella II. For Padilla, the noblemen of the past served as examples of virtuous masculinity because they served their king, maintained religious piety, and treated their wives well. These sources feature the nostalgic view that parts of the Spanish nobility held regarding manhood and the institution of the nobility. Padilla’s position as a member of the nobility allowed her
to comment on the nobility’s faults that she saw firsthand. Despite this, her observations described how virtuous the nobility used to be and dwelled on visions of the past instead of the contemporary scene. As a female author, Padilla used this nostalgia to express her views of masculinity and the relationship between men and women. The women authors tended to write in abstractions and stressed nostalgic ideas of virtue and honor instead of offering specific reforms. Padilla, in particular, focused on honesty and truth as important aspects of virtue rather than complaining about aspects of society that held women back, such as the dowry. Guevara, who was perhaps the most revolutionary among the four women writers in this thesis, chose to criticize the government and the absence of women in government rather criticize the structural aspects of society, like dowry and dynastic marriage, which kept women in an inferior position.

In the first chapter, I include a historiography of the debate on the decline of Spain as well as a brief historical overview of the Spanish experience in the seventeenth century in order to contextualize the works and the authors. This thesis contributes to decline historiography by showing how decline affected culture and the way women viewed men. To illuminate the historical contexts in which the authors wrote, I draw upon a variety of historians, such as John H. Elliott, Henry Kamen, William Maltby, and John Lynch, who detail the historiographical debate on decline and the historical events of the seventeenth century. In the second chapter, I describe seventeenth-century Spanish women, particularly their political awareness, and set out how female authors presented their views of virtuous masculinity. In the third chapter, I
discuss literary themes, theater in seventeenth-century Spain, and the portrayal of male characters and theatrical views of masculinity.

The seventeenth-century crisis of masculinity in Spain produced female-authored literature that revealed the condition of women, the nature of their relationships with men, and their perceptions of male behavior. These writers determined that Spanish men lost their virtue because of their bad treatment of women. Female authors proposed that men would again find virtue by treating women with more respect. I argue that decline in seventeenth-century Spain shaped the way that women looked at the society in which they lived and their works reflected the uncertainty that Spanish society had in the midst of the seventeenth-century crisis. Particularly, women expressed these thoughts through their portrayals of men and masculinity in a literary era that heavily emphasized the man and manhood as important parts of a successful Spain.
CHAPTER 2
HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY OF DECLINE

The decline of the Spanish empire has been a source of historiographical contention. Scholars have debated what caused the Spanish to lose their standing in the world, what circumstances resulted in decline, and whether or not decline actually happened. In the seventeenth century, a group of Spanish intellectuals also debated the causes of decline, but also formulated various solutions to stop and reverse it. These intellectuals, called arbitristas, mainly considered politics and economics as the sources and solutions for decline. Elizabeth Lehfeldt suggests that these arbitristas’ political and economic analyses had gender elements in them and through these they constructed a model of ideal manhood based on nostalgia rather than on practicality, rendering their construction of ideal manhood useless.¹³ Lehfeldt focuses primarily on the ideal nobleman and the criticisms that arbitristas like Gaspar Gutierrez de Rios voiced, which suggested that decline was due to men’s laziness.¹⁴ Idleness among the nobility is a major theme in the arbitrista discussions about the economic future of Spain and it takes on a gendered definition in the works of María de Zayas, María de Guevara, and others in which idleness represented effeminization. Noblemen were considered idle when they avoided administering their lands and performing military service. Effeminization and idleness affected family life, military service, and the agricultural work in which society had previously expected noblemen to participate. The

effeminization of Spanish men was believed to be the cause of decline and many writers searched for ways to repair effeminization. The historical circumstances in which these artists lived influenced the work that they produced and the portrayals of men and women that they included. Writers in the seventeenth century produced works that were politically aware and gave insight into how decline affected Spanish society and ideas of masculinity.

The decline of Spain influenced how men and women viewed masculinity. As Lehfeldt notes, many looked to the past for ideal representations of manhood and gender roles. The rise of Spain in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries meant that the Spanish had a great deal to lose and had fostered a sense of triumphalism among the Spanish people. Spanish triumphalism, the idea that Spain’s rightful place was to be the leading imperial power in the world, helped shape the development of Spanish views of manhood. Understanding the period of Spanish imperial glory assists comprehension of seventeenth-century decline as depicted in Spanish literature, theater, and gendered discourse.

This chapter will explain how fifteenth and sixteenth-century developments influenced Spanish triumphalism, gender roles, and notions of decline. It will detail the historiography of decline, key changes in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Spain, and the history of the theater as well as women's literature. At a time when much of the literature that was dedicated to decline and masculinity focused on men, women thrived as creators of a literature by articulating their own perspectives on Spanish masculinity. Ultimately, this chapter suggests that the problems the Spanish empire faced in the
seventeenth century had roots in the legislation and policy that sixteenth-century kings created.

HAPSBURG SPAIN

The historiographical debate on the seventeenth century, for the most part, does not feature any kind of gender analysis in the study of the decline of the Spanish empire and concentrates on the politics and economics of the age. Many historians focus on the roles that economic recession, increasing debt, inflation, revolts in the Low Countries and Portugal, religious war, the rise of France, and faulty policy played in the decline of Spain. The historiography also features debate over whether decline actually happened or whether decline was just an economic downturn that seventeenth-century writers portrayed as apocalyptic. The decline of the Spanish Empire seems obvious in the negative change in the Spanish economy caused by inflation, exhaustive taxation, and a decrease in population in the areas of Spain traditionally strong economically. The population, in particular, was the most important part of Spain’s economic, military, and colonial success. Ultimately, Spain became a power that fell almost as quickly as it rose because it depended too much on the extraction and import of precious metals.

The present study depends on an understanding of the decline of the Spanish empire and its effects on Spanish society. As decline forced Spaniards into self-analysis, in which female authors joined male writers in criticizing Spanish men and their behavior, male and female authors saw breaks in tradition as reasons for Spain’s lowered status. Spanish triumphantism, the mentality that it was Spain’s destiny to spread civilization and Catholicism throughout the world, heavily influenced how authors
described masculinity in the seventeenth century. In relation to decline, Spanish triumphalism was nostalgic and provided a frame of reference for ideal masculinity that writers used to compare the men of their day to those of the past. The idea of triumphalism developed after sixteenth-century successes like conquests in the New World and the discovery of precious metals. Spain also continued to maintain military and political superiority in Europe while it expanded into the Americas. Spanish triumphalism also contained a gendered aspect as authors attributed past successes to great men and compared seventeenth-century Spaniards to those of the past within those contexts. Spanish triumphalism influenced the development of virtuous masculinity and the nostalgia with which authors, both male and female, judged Spanish men. This unexpected onset of decline led authors to seek answers as to why Spanish power was failing.

SPAIN UNDER CHARLES V

Charles V did not have a smooth ascension to the throne and received challenges to his legitimacy from the beginning. The first challenge that Charles faced as the king of Spain was the comunero revolt, the culmination of the succession crisis that emerged after Ferdinand and Isabella's death, in 1520. The circumstances that surrounded succession became increasingly complicated as Ferdinand and Isabella’s daughter, Juana, had mental problems that prevented her from inheriting the throne of Spain. Juana’s marriage to the son of the emperor Maximilian, Philip the Handsome, made their son, Charles, the likely heir. However, Charles’s position as a foreign-born heir who spoke little or no Spanish did not make him popular. When Charles arrived
with multiple Flemish advisors many in the Spanish court considered his reign tainted with Flemish greed. The demands that the *comuneros* expressed in 1520 reflected Charles’s foreign origins. The rebels’ demands included a clause regarding royal succession, which stated that women were no longer eligible to inherit the Spanish throne. Due to the controversy surrounding Juana, the sons of daughters or granddaughters would be eligible to inherit if no legitimate male heirs existed. So long as males were born and baptized in Castile they could inherit, a proposal that responded to Charles’s non-Spanish birth. Similarly, *comuneros* demanded that royal appointments must be men born and baptized in Castile in protest against Charles’s use of Flemish advisors.

Charles’s use of foreign advisors and his apparent role as an absentee ruler angered some in Castile. His election as Holy Roman Emperor was then the final cause for rebellion. The king’s absence for long periods would complicate matters if a domestic crisis occurred. His place as Holy Roman Emperor would also position Spain as a rung on the imperial ladder, threatening its autonomy by ignoring Spanish interests in favor of imperial ones to its detriment. Those who rebelled along with the *comuneros* included the minor nobility who, brought to prominence by Ferdinand and

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Isabella’s distrust of high nobility, had been rejected by Charles’s new regime.\textsuperscript{19} The rift that the revolt created between the crown and the rest of the kingdom as well as its diversity gave Charles difficulties.\textsuperscript{20} Despite the initial complications of ruling Spain, Charles managed to create an administration to rule Spain that strengthened the monarchy. Despite this, the regional \textit{cortes}, or councils, managed to maintain significant levels of power. As the monarchy attempted to centralize, Charles needed to allow the councils to maintain some of their autonomy in order to keep the essential relationship between the crown and the \textit{cortes} stable. The domestic political system in Spain required stability to function and the young king proceeded accordingly. Charles managed to convert a period of rebellion into a politically beneficial period for him and managed to show nobles his capabilities as a politician. Charles transformed Castile and Spain at large from a skeptical group of kingdoms that maneuvered to undercut each other to his base of power.\textsuperscript{21}

By the time Charles returned to Castile in 1522, the high nobility who were in favor of Charles’s ascension defeated the \textit{comunero} revolt, not Charles.\textsuperscript{22} Charles experienced a lack of credibility among members of the nobility, even among those who acted in his favor during the revolt. The crown’s relationship with the towns remained strained and towns continued to have grievances going unattended because the crown did not defeat the revolt. He also faced financial problems with a bankrupt treasury. Charles believed the town’s complaints were justified and worked to repair the damage

\textsuperscript{19} Lynch, \textit{Spain Under the Hapsburgs}, 43.
\textsuperscript{20} Lynch, \textit{Spain Under the Hapsburgs}, 43.
\textsuperscript{21} Maltby, \textit{Rise and Fall of the Spanish Empire}, 35.
\textsuperscript{22} Maltby, \textit{Reign of Charles V}, 77.
because he needed the financial and political support from local elites to enforce royal decrees.\textsuperscript{23} As Charles V continued to repair relations with the towns and regional councils by allowing them levels of self-determination, kingdoms like Aragon made sure that they paid lower taxes when the Catalan nobility and \textit{cortes} negotiated to protect the region’s traditional \textit{fueros}, or rights.\textsuperscript{24} Charles also dealt with his supporters’ desires for recompense and provided reparations with money or with positions. Charles proceeded to establish his own courts to determine proper reparations for damages to restore his own royal supremacy.\textsuperscript{25} The revolt illustrated Spanish attitudes toward foreigners in positions of power, which authors like María de Guevara denounced in her criticisms of Philip IV’s government. Guevara’s disdain for foreigners in government positions reflected the \textit{comuneros}’ fears of an absentee King and of foreign influences in government.\textsuperscript{26}

Charles’s initial difficulties prompted him to embark on various reforms with the objective of forming a strong bureaucracy that answered to the crown while restoring the confidence of the towns and the nobility in the king.\textsuperscript{27} Charles’s reforms proceeded to transform Spain from a feudal and locally governed kingdom into a centralized monarchy that depended on local government. These reforms laid the foundations for bureaucratic growth. Charles’s response to the \textit{comuneros} and his efforts to reestablish his crown’s supremacy changed the face of the Spanish monarchy from contractual

\textsuperscript{23} Maltby, \textit{Reign of Charles V}, 77.
\textsuperscript{24} Maltby, \textit{Rise and Fall of the Spanish Empire}, 38.
\textsuperscript{25} Maltby, \textit{Reign of Charles V}, 77-78.
\textsuperscript{27} Maltby, \textit{Reign of Charles V}, 78.
monarchy to absolutist monarchy. Financial, military, and ministerial reforms had repercussions through Philip II’s reign and through the seventeenth century. Of these reforms, financial and tax reforms had the most influence on the Spanish economy and society. Charles’s attempts to enact a new tax caused conflict with the cortes and the nobles never met the king in the cortes again. Charles’s failed attempts at new taxes and taxing the nobility led to financial mismanagement when, despite economic growth, Spain suffered consequences. The economic system that Charles developed through his reign was flawed and required higher levels of growth than what the Spanish economy or any of the other imperial states could have. The Spanish economy continued to enter into loans and the economy restructuring after bankruptcy in 1557 and did so in 1575, 1596, 1607, 1627, and 1647. Irresponsible borrowing continued through the seventeenth century and bankruptcies came to characterize the state of the Spanish economy under Charles’s successors.

Charles’s policies created short-term success but proved to be ineffective and failed to ensure Spain’s prosperity over time. After Charles’ policies eventually caused bankruptcies, the blame fell onto the monarch under whom the problems arose. Charles’s Hapsburg successors continued to use his methods of administration. Charles’s longevity and the centralization of his government provided stability. Income from taxes and domestic juros made Castile Charles’s power base as Castilian taxes provided the most significant source of revenue for Charles’s expenses. Charles’s

28 Ortiz, Golden Age of Spain, 48-49.
29 Maltby, Reign of Charles V, 81.
30 Maltby, Rise and Fall of the Spanish Empire, 48.
31 Maltby, Rise and Fall of the Spanish Empire, 47.
32 Maltby, Reign of Charles V, 82.
reign set precedents for success, but his flawed financial decisions left his successors with problems that eventually brought trouble for the Spanish crown. Charles’s reforms had long-lasting negative effects for the Spanish, such as bankruptcy and foreign debt. However, his success in reforming and centralizing power for the monarchy allowed his successors to raise the profile of the crown.

It became evident in the seventeenth century that Charles had positive and negative influences on Spain’s future. Charles’s territorial expansion and economic practices set precedents for future monarchs and their policies. Charles’s example of success became important for his legacy and the development of Spanish success and the perception of decline. However, in his efforts to build his power throughout Europe, Charles created conditions that led the Spanish economy and treasury to crash, an effect that his successors continued to deal with later in the seventeenth century. Ultimately, Charles’s empire was not Spanish, German, or Burgundian, but one that included various realms within his inheritance. The rise of the Spanish empire came after Spain’s disassociation from the Holy Roman Empire through partible inheritance. By the time of Charles’s abdication in 1556, Spain had become the dominant power in Europe because of its position of importance among Charles’s dominions.33 After Charles abdicated and moved to the monasterial palace, El Escorial, he divided the territories he once ruled between his son, Philip, and his brother, Ferdinand. Philip inherited his father’s Spanish possessions and continued to expand Spanish power and influence while Ferdinand became the new Holy Roman Emperor and inherited Charles’s German possessions. Ultimately, the continuation of Charles V’s policies

33 Maltby, *Rise and Fall of the Spanish Empire*, 35-36.
encouraged his successors to expand Spanish territory, for example, Philip II added to
the Spanish empire with the conquests of Portugal and the Philippines.

SPAIN UNDER PHILIP II

After his father’s abdication, Philip inherited the Kingdom of Spain as well as its
imperial possessions. Philip, by adding to his kingdom, saw the size of the Spanish
empire peak in the latter half of the sixteenth century. While Charles may have set the
precedent for the ideal Spanish king, Philip continued to solidify the crown’s position at
home as well as abroad. Philip’s reputation, unlike his father’s, has been more
polarizing, and in general, Philip was not as revered as his father was. Protestants did
not view Philip as a benevolent ruler and others throughout Europe viewed the King of
Spain as a man with imperial ambitions who sought to take freedom away rather than
bring it. Baltasar Porreño’s rather favorable A Portrait of King Philip II presented some
of Philip’s more likable qualities; however, Porreño published the work in 1628, after
Philip’s death. Porreño’s account suggested that Philip had a humble, religious, loyal,
and serious temperament. Despite Porreño’s incomplete or biased picture of Philip II,
his account presented Spanish ideas of virtue, which characterized virtue in the
seventeenth century. Porreño described Philip’s wars with England, with Flanders, and
with France as religious crusades against the heretic, as well as conflicts in the Indies
and with the Turks as those against the idolater, pagan, and infidel.\(^{34}\) Porreño argued
that Philip’s financial difficulties, which stemmed from continuing his father’s policies of

\(^{34}\) Baltasar Porreño, A Portrait of King Philip II in Early Modern Spain: A
Documentary History, ed. and trans. Jon Cowans (1628; Philadelphia: University of
Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 87.
taxation and ruinous borrowing, resulted from Philip’s selflessness in supporting Catholics, leaving him in perpetual debt.\textsuperscript{35} Porreño’s account of Philip presented a sympathetic view of him. However, Philip also had detractors in his court who shaped his character and how he ruled. Particularly, Philip developed ideas about his Austrian cousins that influenced his dealings with them. For example, during the crisis of Villach, he learned that he could not rely upon family ties or ties of any other kind.\textsuperscript{36} Philip sought to succeed with Spanish might alone and did not want to rely on his Austrian family members. These ideas perhaps influenced Philip’s work ethic as he was apt to work late into the night and insisted on reading all dispatches from his agents.\textsuperscript{37} Philip II did not trust easily, ruled alone, and the idea of a centralized monarchy in Spain reached a zenith. Under the succeeding reigns of Philip III and Philip IV, the monarchy relied heavily on ministers like Lerma and Olivares to rule, unlike the reign of Philip II.

By his death in 1598, many believed Philip II to be an inadequate king because of the many problems arising in Spain during the latter half of the sixteenth century that caused a significant feeling of dissatisfaction throughout the country. Castile, which bore the brunt of taxation and manpower for many of Philip’s foreign wars, exhibited much of the discontent.\textsuperscript{38} The belief in Philip’s inadequacy to rule spawned ideas that he was intellectually unable to understand his empire’s problems or apply the solutions that came across his desk.\textsuperscript{39} While his father Charles retained a relatively positive

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{35}{Porreño, \textit{Portrait of King Philip II}, 87.}
\footnote{37}{Lovett, \textit{Early Hapsburg Spain}, 121.}
\footnote{38}{Henry Kamen, \textit{Philip of Spain} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 317.}
\footnote{39}{Lovett, \textit{Early Hapsburg Spain}, 121.}
\end{footnotes}
reputation, Philip, despite his conquests and his status as the most powerful monarch in the world among his contemporaries, retained a negative reputation. Philip ruled the Spanish empire as it reached its territorial peak, but his reign faced many problems and created new ones that influenced his negative reputation.

Speaking first on his accomplishments, Philip continued the policies of his grandparents, Ferdinand and Isabella, and sought to add territories under the Spanish domain. As a devout Catholic, some of his reasons for expanding were religious and concerned spreading the Catholic faith throughout the world, but they also included the search for glory, wealth, and power. Philip continued to build upon the administrative foundations set by his father and attempted various types of reform and an aggressive military policy of conquest. Philip’s reforms continued his father’s financial practices and led to further debt. Philip endeavored to add to the Spanish empire, most notably with his invasion of Portugal in 1580. The further colonization in the Americas also added to Philip’s responsibilities. While the conquest of the Aztecs and the Inca and the expeditions that found the Philippines naming them after Philip while he was crown prince were during Charles’s reign, Philip intended for the Philippines to function as a trading outpost with the east rather than a new colony. For Philip, the Philippine islands served to enlarge Spain’s economic influence eastward. However, although the Spanish established themselves in Manilla by 1572, the difficulties of traveling to the Philippines hindered great masses of Spaniards from settling there and the Spanish never gained control of all of the islands.

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40 Maltby, *Rise and Fall of the Spanish Empire*, 60-61.
41 Maltby, *Rise and Fall of the Spanish Empire*, 61.
After the Spanish expanded into the Philippines, Philip looked to add to his European territories. In 1578, the King of Portugal died without any eligible male heirs, and with a succession crisis following the ascension of Cardinal Henry, Philip wrote to his ambassador in Lisbon with a claim to the Portuguese throne. Philip stated that if he became heir to the Portuguese throne, Portugal would continue to prosper and gain protection. Philip also promised to open the border between Spain and Portugal for commerce. In response to the other two possible candidates for succession, Don Antonio, prior of Crato, and Catherine, duchess of Braganza, Philip added that he was as much Portuguese as he was Castilian, and that the differences between the Spaniard and the Portuguese did not exist. Due to the prior of Crato’s popularity among the Portuguese people, Philip took Portugal by force after the prior took Lisbon. The Spanish invasion force met little to no resistance after the Portuguese army met its demise under the former Portuguese king, Sebastian, on a Moroccan campaign. For Philip’s general, the duke of Alba, the conquest of Portugal presented an opportunity for glory that would return prestige to Castile and relied on Spanish soldiers rather than those of foreign origin. This, too, represented the nostalgic attitude that permeated the latter seventeenth century. Alba sought to conquer with Spanish might and not with the help of mercenaries. Alba’s attitude toward the use of

44 Maltby, Rise and Fall of the Spanish Empire, 112.
foreign soldiers is an example of the nostalgia that dominated the seventeenth century and influenced the perception of Spanish decline. Spanish nostalgia in the seventeenth century centered on the idealized court of Ferdinand and Isabella. Rather than Spaniards hoping for the return of feudal government, they wanted the realization of the chivalric values that they believed their ancestors had preserved.

Charles V’s and Philip II’s reigns increased Spanish territory and debt. Spain entered into foreign entanglements that the empire’s main base of Castile was not prepared to financially support. The most significant of these was Philip’s continuation of Charles’s financial policies that, despite the influx of American silver, added to Philip’s debts and positioned Spain for a century of decline that found its origins in the sixteenth century. The recession that Spain faced in the 1560s contributed to Spain’s economic problems. As Spain faced the Turkish threat in the Mediterranean and attempted to prevent the spread of Protestantism, it reeled from war with the French while still involved in wars in other parts of the continent. By the 1590s, Spain failed to invade England, faced rebellion in the Low Countries and Catalonia, and annexed Portugal. The large revenues from the stream of American silver provided Philip with more incentive and excuse for continuing imperial ventures with more frequency. This increased his rate of borrowing and expenditures. For example, the Armada of 1588 cost the crown 10,000,000 ducats.\footnote{Elliott, \textit{Imperial Spain}, 281.} By the mid-1590s, Philip was spending over 12,000,000 ducats a year, with only a quarter of his expenditures coming from the treasury itself; the rest he borrowed.\footnote{Elliott, \textit{Imperial Spain}, 281.} In November of 1596, the crown was bankrupt.
and Philip proceeded to suspend payments to the banks and negotiated repayment plans through *juros*, financial agreements between the crown and an institution functioning as loans. After consolidating its debt Philip’s government hoped for improvement, but by 1598, the might of the Spanish economy had deteriorated. Towns in northern Castile entered relative insignificance and Madrid had become the financial capital of Castile.\(^\text{48}\) The change in the Castilian economy transformed Castile from an economically strong and productive place into a land of deserted villages that no longer could support an empire, further expansion, or any other imperial desires.\(^\text{49}\) The bankruptcy of 1596 ended Philip’s ambitions. He failed to change his policies enough to maintain his economy or Spain’s position in the world. Although peace with France and England came by the turn of the century in 1598 and 1604 respectively, Philip’s successors did not easily learn the lessons that Philip II’s reign left behind.\(^\text{50}\) On the surface, sixteenth-century Spain had successful rulers like Charles V, but the consequences of territorial additions like those in the Americas, Portugal, and Philippines added considerable strain on the government treasury.

**SPAIN UNDER THE LATER HAPSBURGS**

Following Charles V’s and Philip II’s reigns, Philip III and Philip IV faced the same kind of problems that sixteenth-century monarchs had, but the continuation of the fiscal policies of the past further damaged Spain’s financial position. At the time, however, Spanish success in the sixteenth century lured into government positions Spaniards

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\(^{48}\) Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, 283.
\(^{49}\) Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, 283.
\(^{50}\) Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, 286.
who wanted to mimic that success. Nostalgic seventeenth-century Spanish government ministers hoped to renew sixteenth-century imperial policies to recreate the successes of Charles V and Philip II. However, following Philip II, Spain financially and militarily over-extended itself. The continuation of sixteenth-century policy in the seventeenth would not only make Spain overreach further, but would also lead Spain into an accelerated decline that brought the loss of international territory and prestige. 

The Spanish economic relationship between the mother country and the colonies depended on the economic cooperation between New World mining and Castilian farms and ranches.51 By the seventeenth century, the Mexican and Peruvian economies diversified and did not require as many raw materials, but more manufactured goods, which the peninsula could not provide. The Spanish economy became too dependent on the import of precious metals and lacked the motivation to diversify.52 Traditionally, Spain had a largely pastoral economy that did not grow fast enough to keep up with Spain’s colonial expansion and the colonies’ economic needs. Lack of diversification led to higher demand for raw materials from the colonies, but colonial economies began to manufacture their own goods and could not spare as much raw materials for the home country. The Castilian economy remained unchanged through Charles V’s and Philip II’s reigns and the rising strains on the peninsular economy left a largely rural system with little manufacturing capacity with obligations it could not meet. The Castilian economy’s reliance on precious metals and sheep did not meet the economic needs of the Spanish Empire in the seventeenth century. For example, military 

expenditures increased under the reign of Philip II and the national debt increased exponentially as well. Domestically speaking, the Spanish economy relied on the population density of rural Castile. The population in Castile provided taxes, sheep herders, small farmers, soldiers, and colonists, all of whom were the basis of the growth of the Spanish Empire. In the seventeenth century, some of the economic complaints that the arbitristas expressed included the decline of the important Castilian population. In the seventeenth century, the Castilian countryside became less densely populated as famine and plague reduced the population in 1599 and 1600. The expulsion of the Moriscos between 1609 and 1614 had some effect on the reduction of the population as well, with 275,000 people leaving Spain, including 90,000 Castilian Moriscos. However, the most significant way that the rural population declined in Spain was due to military duty and migration to the colonies. By the time Philip II died in 1598, Philip III ascended the throne with major challenges and responsibilities on the horizon, but many in the court had little faith in the new king's abilities. Philip III had detractors at court, including his father, who considered him unfit to rule effectively, and believed that he lacked the intelligence and character to meet his new role. Detractors viewed Philip III as an incompetent ruler whom his favorite, the duke of Lerma, dominated while handling domestic affairs as the king focused on foreign policy. By the end of Philip II's life, Spain, weary of war, began to consider peace, and Philip left the Spanish Netherlands to his daughter and her husband, Archduke Albert.

54 Elliott, “The Decline of Spain,” 58.
56 Maltby, Rise and Fall of the Spanish Empire, 120.
57 Maltby, Rise and Fall of the Spanish Empire, 119.
For Philip, the state of foreign affairs got complicated. Albert sought peace while Philip continued to be aggressive. However, the Spanish treasury ran low and could not continue to support the Spanish war effort, which prompted Philip to seek peace as well. The early part of the seventeenth century then known later as the *pax hispanica*, was a period of hope for the Spanish. The introduction of the Twelve Year’s Truce in 1609 ended hostilities in the Dutch provinces and the end of war, at least in one front, gave some relief to the Spanish purse. However, the Army of Flanders continued to need great amounts of resources and money amounting to around four million florins a year and remained a financial burden for the crown. Although conflict with the Dutch ceased during the truce, war continued in Italy and conflicts resumed with the French and the Turks in the Mediterranean, all of which meant that Europe remained just as violent as it was before the *pax hispanica*.

Domestically, the Spanish system of government ruled over relatively autonomous provinces and kingdoms. The true base of the Spanish crown, Castile, built and defended an empire with its manpower and money. Many of the regions that Spain ruled retained significant levels of autonomy. On financial matters vassals had independence, resisted taxes, and contributed little to the crown’s expenses when compared to Castile’s contributions. The Low Countries provided only small subsidies, such as 3.6 florins per year, which only covered local administrative expenses, while Castile provided defense. The Italian dependencies contributed even more than the Low Countries, with Sicily, Naples, and Milan contributing 5.5 million florins per year.

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58 Maltby, *Rise and Fall of the Spanish Empire*, 120-121.
59 Maltby, *Rise and Fall of the Spanish Empire*, 121.
ducats per year in addition to providing military support in Europe and the Mediterranean mostly under their own expense.\textsuperscript{61} The Kingdom of Aragon and the Basque region resisted higher taxes and contributions, which put most of the financial strain on Castile.\textsuperscript{62} At the court itself, things changed from Philip II’s reign into Philip III’s. While Philip II had many ministers and courtiers who assisted him in government, the Duke of Lerma maneuvered himself into prominence in the royal court by the time of Philip III’s ascension, after which the king appointed him to a councillorship.\textsuperscript{63} Lerma became Philip III’s first minister, the man that the king depended upon the most. By appointing Lerma, Philip III went against his father’s warnings of abandoning the responsibility of government to anyone.\textsuperscript{64} Although Spanish monarchs attempted to exercise levels of absolutism, Spanish regionalism, where the various regions of Spain maintained significant levels of autonomy especially in financial matters, made it very difficult for Spanish kings to raise funds and men to keep up their military efforts abroad. By the end of the Twelve Year Truce, Spain again went to war throughout Europe with the Dutch, French, Turks, and the English. The Castilian economy did not have enough money to fund such widespread campaigns, and the Spanish military ran low on soldiers as well as on money. The Spanish treasury incurred significant debt, which steadily increased through Philip III and Philip IV’s reigns. Through the reigns of the latter Hapsburg Kings the need for men and revenue increased along with the amount

\textsuperscript{61} Lynch, \textit{Spain Under the Hapsburgs Vol. 2}, 34.
\textsuperscript{62} Lynch, \textit{Spain Under the Hapsburgs Vol. 2}, 35.
\textsuperscript{63} Patrick Williams, \textit{The Great Favourite: The Duke of Lerma and the Court and Government of Philip III of Spain, 1598-1621} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 42.
\textsuperscript{64} Williams, \textit{The Great Favourite}, 41.
of conflicts that Spain entered. The role of the nobility participating in military affairs changed from the reign of Charles V to the reign of Philip II. Men had less of an incentive to join military service as the pay for soldiers decreased. Pay reduction and a change in court culture from Charles V’s warrior mentality to a more sedentary court under Philip II also led to difficulties in recruiting noblemen to service as well as the men who served under them.65

_Arbitrista_ theories inspired nostalgic reform efforts that emphasized a return to a perceived “Golden Age” by suggesting that Spanish men needed to be like the men of the past and Spanish policies needed to return to sixteenth-century policies. Philip IV’s first minister, Olivares, concentrated his policies on restoring Spanish power and institutions to the glory they had under Charles V and Philip II. Olivares had objectives to modernize the Spanish system, to better equip it to deal with current and prospective enemies and problems, while still reestablishing traditional values.66 For Olivares, the abandonment of traditional values begat Spain’s decline, but he also thought Spain needed the ability to adapt to issues and problems to thrive.67 Philip IV’s court began a propaganda campaign to repair the image of the crown. Olivares’s made widespread attempts at reform, but warfare in Flanders and Italy and provincial revolts led to further strain on the Spanish treasury. By the 1620s, Spain found itself in dire straits. Attempts to finance military actions like the war of the Mantuan Succession, the revaluation of currency, the resulting inflation, and the fall of Atlantic trade left the Spanish economy

65 Elliott, “The Decline of Spain,” 58.
67 Elliott, _Spain and its World_, 164-165.
on the verge of collapse. In addition to Castile’s financial woes, a major decline in agricultural production from 1629 to 1632 led to famine. The Castilian countryside began to lose population through increased domestic migration and mortality rates. Under Philip IV, attempts at reform ultimately failed and left an already battered Castile unable to support an empire for much longer. Olivares’s calls for the resurgence of traditional values and practices display the nostalgia that characterized the way that Spaniards perceived decline in the seventeenth century. This nostalgia also influenced writers and their perceptions of decline and the state of masculinity.

At the turn of the seventeenth century, the Spanish empire was an important force in Europe because of its vast amount of wealth and territory. The later Hapsburg kings, however, remained stagnant in their financial and military policies, which largely depended on a one-dimensional pastoral economic system that relied on its extraction the colonies. Spanish rulers also depended on an imperialistic point of view that perceived Spain as the defender of Christendom against the Turks and heresy. Spain saw itself as the global missionary for the spread of Catholicism and spent significant amounts of money to send priests and soldiers to spread their faith. As the Castilian economy failed to diversify, inflation led the Spanish crown to increase the practice of ruinous borrowing, leading to multiple bankruptcies. These financial problems left a once great empire a shell of its former self, teetering on the verge of collapse, hobbling on past glories for another two hundred years. The arbitristas and other authors constructed new models of masculinity in their search for the causes and solutions to

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seventeenth-century Spanish problems within these historical circumstances. These factors also influenced how they perceived the outcomes of the empire’s difficulties. This led to female authors questioning Spanish men’s attitude toward duty, which brought their manhood into question. Nostalgia and gender had significance within the discussion of decline as exemplified by authors questioning Spanish masculinity. The circumstances of decline influenced how the Spanish empire began its downward slope, but the tangible effects of decline influenced how Spanish authors perceived decline and how authors reflected on Spain's past and compared it to their present.

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF DECLINE

Writing in the mid-1960s, the Spanish scholar Miguel Herrero García analyzed aspects of Spanish self-perceptions developed over the course of the reigns of the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella, and their grandson, Charles V, in Ideas de los Españoles del Siglo XVII. García also includes foreign perceptions of Spain that developed because of these monarchs’ reigns through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For example, the black legend, the bad reputation Spain had among primarily Protestant nations regarding its treatment of New World natives in the name of expanding the Spanish empire and the Catholic faith, contributed to the low regard other countries had for Spain. For García, religious identity played a large factor in the development of Spanish triumphalism. He describes Spain as having a messiah complex and having a sense of mission to defend Christendom, which was a major factor in how Spain perceived itself and how the rest of the world perceived it. These sentiments of self-righteousness developed as many Spaniards considered the role of
Spain in the Indies, central Europe, and in the Mediterranean as one of saviors. Ultimately, the state of Spanish self-perception had an attitude of providence. The Spanish saw themselves as the chosen people of God and saw their mission required as the responsibility to spread and defend the Catholic faith throughout the world.\textsuperscript{70} Understanding how and why Spaniards viewed themselves is important to seeing the impact decline had on the Spanish psyche in the seventeenth century.

Historians have debated what caused the decline, what characterized decline, and what the decline of Spain was in the first place. Before twentieth-century historians studied the question of decline, many seventeenth-century Spaniards asked themselves similar questions, as they witnessed Spain’s position in the world and Europe fall, and, perhaps more tangible than the political, as they saw financial signs of decline as well. The arbitristas consisted of a wide variety of people with many different occupational, social, and economic backgrounds who discussed the sources of Spain’s problems and debated their solutions. Helen Rawlings suggests that between the reigns of Philip III and Philip IV, 1598 – 1665, arbitristas, who felt they had to advise the king on matters of state, published one hundred and sixty five tracts. The arbitristas considered the state of the Spanish economy when they deliberated economic solutions to Spain’s problems. Arbitristas criticized the overestimation of the wealth gained from the discovery of the New World, the cost of imperial defense, taxation, and a plethora of other problems that they believed permeated Spanish society and government.\textsuperscript{71} In their writings, they

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Rawlings, \textit{The Debate on the Decline of Spain} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 31-32.
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championed a return to the victorious eras of Ferdinand and Isabella, Charles V, and Philip II. Many of their critics, like Guevedo and Cervantes, considered their proposition idealistic. The arbitrista writings advocated solutions that would end decline and move Spain to a restoration of glory, good government, economic affluence, and morality in order to enter a new age of prosperity and the improvement of man.\textsuperscript{72} For Rawlings, Martín González de Cellorigo was among the most important of the arbitristas. Cellorigo wrote his treatise, \textit{Memorial de la política necesaria y útil restauración de la República de España} (1600), to criticize the practice of basing wealth on the stock of precious metals, which he deemed unreasonable, rather than the production of land. As a witness to the plague and famine that swept across Valladolid and the decline in population, Cellorigo considered the true wealth of Spain to be its people and its population’s ability to produce goods, food, and trade.\textsuperscript{73} Cellorigo saw the decline of population not due to war but to laziness caused by people’s obsession with identifying wealth, prosperity, and growth with the accumulation of precious metals.\textsuperscript{74} The changing nature of the Spanish economy from a rurally based system to a colonial system that depended on colonies for resources and trade instead of on domestic sources is a factor in Cellorigo’s assessment. Cellorigo saw the evolution in the economy as a shift in importance from the rural, humble farmer to the greedy, urban businessman and a shift from domestically produced goods to the foreign. For Cellorigo, the main cause of decline was an economic downturn caused, not by

\textsuperscript{72} Rawlings, \textit{Debate on the Decline of Spain}, 34.
\textsuperscript{73} Rawlings, \textit{Debate of the Decline of Spain}, 37.
inflation, taxation, or excessive borrowing, but by a decline in population. Much like other arbitristas, Cellorigo suggested that Spain’s problems found their roots in economics. However, Cellorigo viewed the base of the Spanish economy as the population, and as it declined, the kingdom went with it. Cellorigo’s viewed the base of the Castilian economy as the hardworking countryside population. The change in the economy from rural to urban presented an example for Cellorigo to claim that this change caused the onset of idleness. Cellorigo’s concern over idleness related to seventeenth-century worries about effeminization. Although Cellorigo did not directly complain about men and their behavior in his treatise, his uneasiness regarding the economy is relevant to the discussion of decline and gender because other authors’ complaints about masculinity attribute idleness to effeminacy. The discussion of decline through the seventeenth century fostered economic and political thinking, but also fostered elements of self-perception, where Spaniards began to view themselves in a state of perpetual decline, always seeking a return to the glory days of their ancestors, hoping for a return to prosperity, chivalry, and virtue.

In the twentieth century, historians discussed the decline of Spain as a predetermined outcome. In 1961, John H. Elliott advocated for a well-rounded approach to Spanish decline and a return to not just economic history, but also intellectual and cultural history because he believed economic studies alone could not fully explain the fall of Spanish power without including other aspects of Spanish society that were just as important as the economy. Elliott also criticized how narrow

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75 Cellorigo, *Memorial*, 135.
economic studies on Spain have been in the past and how this resulted in historians viewing Spain in isolation, with its problems assessed outside the European context.\(^77\) Although Spain’s economic problems found origins in various moments and policies, the base of the Spanish economy were Castilian taxes and the import of precious metals from America. For Elliott, the decline of Spain was in fact the decline of Castile, and its ability to support the cost of maintaining an empire.\(^78\)

As a follow up to his article, Elliott analyzes the Spanish as a whole, describing the rise of an imperial power through to its final death throes by the reign of King Philip V. Elliott illustrates the origins of Spanish unification and dominance, clearly showing that Castile’s importance to the Spanish had its source in the Middle Ages as Castile’s population density was overwhelmingly larger than that of any other Spanish kingdom or Portugal, containing 73.2 percent of the population in the peninsula.\(^79\) Castile’s population density certainly backs up claims that *arbitristas*, such as Cellorigo, made about population and productivity being Spain’s main source of wealth. Elliott’s purpose for the work is to show the reasons for Spain’s rise and fall, illustrating that Spain went the way of Castile, based on the dependency the Spanish crown had on Castile and her resources. Elliott’s interpretation of decline then depends on Castile’s decline in productivity, the movement of population from rural to urban areas, and the decline of the countryside and its production. A large change occurred in the relations between

\(^{77}\) Elliott, “The Decline of Spain,” 55.
\(^{78}\) Elliott, “The Decline of Spain,” 57.
\(^{79}\) John H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, 25; Elliott uses statistics from Javier Ruiz Almansa’s “La población española en el siglo XVI,” *Revista Internacional de Sociología* III (1943): 115-136; Elliott admits, however, that these figures are higher estimates than many historians would be willing to accept.
urban areas and the countryside. While Elliott’s article mainly focused on the 1640s, in *Imperial Spain* Elliott broadens the scope of his study by considering a wider period from which decline may have begun, postulating that decline found its origins in the sixteenth century in the 1560s or during the crisis of the 1590s. Along with his study of decline in *Past and Present* and in *Imperial Spain*, Elliott also published *The Revolt of the Catalans* in 1963, in which he studies decline through analyzing the policies of Philip IV’s favorite, the count-duke Olivares. In doing so, Elliott shows decline through showing the breakdown of relations between Castile and the rest of Spain and its unequal marital union with Aragon. As Elliott suggests in his earlier article, Castile’s rise and fall caused the rise and fall of Spain as a whole. Castile found itself in an unequal relationship with Spain as the rest of the peninsula was unable to, or refused to, add to the Castilian empire by resisting new taxes and dues. Elliott’s work on the Catalan revolt shows how decline affected the relationship between Castile and the Spanish kingdoms, as well as how this relationship affected Spanish decline.

The historian Henry Kamen, however, sparked debate by suggesting that Spanish decline was nonexistent and that Spanish decline was nothing more than the decline of the Spanish economy rather than an inevitable event. For Kamen, there was no Spanish decline, because the Spanish never actually rose in the first place. Kamen suggests that decline was a period of weakness for the Spanish economy as well as a

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80 Rawlings, *Debate on the Decline of Spain*, 140.
81 Rawlings, *Debate on the Decline of Spain*, 141.
growing disparity between imperial might and internal vulnerability.\textsuperscript{83} J.I. Israel replied to Kamen’s article in 1981, criticizing Kamen’s assertions that Spanish decline was an increase in Spanish dependence on foreign economies through the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{84} Although Kamen’s views on decline are controversial, especially as Israel views Kamen’s comments on the arbitristas as incorrect, Kamen does show that the concept of decline is a complicated one that continues to spark debate. Kamen replied to Israel and asserted that their differences were not fundamental but rather over the contexts of the sixteenth-century Spanish economy.\textsuperscript{85} Whereas Kamen disagrees with Israel’s views of a sixteenth-century Spanish economy that had a prolific rise he does agree that the economy did expand, just not to any significant extent. The debate between Kamen and Israel exemplifies the debate surrounding the decline of Spain, especially regarding whether or not decline was mythical or real and whether or not seventeenth-century Spaniards perceived decline as nostalgia for the court of Ferdinand and Isabella or as the decline of contemporary Spanish society.

This work will contribute to the historiography of decline by presenting the role of gender in the Spanish perception of decline. For example, some, like Cellorigo, wrote on the change in the economy and life in Spain and included concerns over idleness, which in turn, related to ideas of masculinity. Among those who constructed ideas of masculinity were female authors who offered new perspectives on masculinity and

contributed to seventeenth-century discussions of decline. Female playwrights and authors gave examples of men representing ideal masculinity and pilloried male behavior that did not hold up to those standards. The literature and plays that women wrote offered insight into how Spanish society dealt with decline and how gender and decline were related. The perception of decline and the role of nostalgia in the debate on decline influenced how female authors viewed masculinity. In presenting their views of manhood, female authors took tropes like honor, piety, and virtue and suggested that to return to the glory days of Ferdinand and Isabella men had to behave according to honor, piety, and virtue. Female perspectives of masculinity in the midst of decline emphasized that men should improve their behavior toward women. Virtuous masculinity was a product of the nostalgic way that authors perceived decline as a loss of Spanish traditions. While decline was an economic and political process, it affected other aspects of Spanish society besides the economy. Authors described how Spanish men came under scrutiny. Decline caused a cultural reassessment of masculinity, which female authors contributed to by portraying ideal and mediocre examples of masculinity with their characters or through real life examples in treatises.
CHAPTER 3

VIRTUOUS Masculinity and Awareness of Decline in Literature

Men and women produced a great volume of literature during the seventeenth century in the form of tracts, plays, poetry, and novellas. These various works included examples of ideal masculinity as well as of characters who displayed less than admirable qualities. While many complaints about decline came from arbitristas, portrayals of men and masculine women were common in other forms of literature, which reflected the effect that decline was having on Spanish culture. Authors blamed decline on men’s inability to perform their duties. For example, in her treatise, María de Guevara criticized Philip IV’s misplaced trust in ministers to conduct government business instead of taking the initiative to govern himself. Playwrights and other writers offered feminine perspectives on masculinity during an age of decline. As decline led to the questioning of Spanish manhood, women’s writing featured portrayals of men that either challenged or affirmed Spanish models of masculinity. These works contained male characters who were chivalrous and others who were scalawags. For example, female authors based some characters on chivalric ideas, such as religious piety, honor, and virtue, and others on bad characteristics, such as sexually adventurousness, vanity, and unscrupulousness. Writers created these characters as caricatures of the male behavior they observed in real life.

Arbitristas and others produced literature in reaction to seventeenth-century decline and although many focused on economic and political factors, some literature criticized Spanish men’s inability to perform their roles of protectors and providers. In
the early part of the seventeenth century, Luisa de Padilla wrote various books with the purpose of defining the ideal Spanish nobleman. Through the first half of the seventeenth century the onset of economic difficulties under the later Hapsburg kings, Philip III and Philip IV, and continental conflicts changed how men and women perceived each other as well as themselves. Padilla created a treatise that discussed what qualities made up the ideal nobleman and what actions a man should take to continue to be the ideal. She emphasized the importance of the qualities of virtue, honesty, and piety to Spanish manhood, while ignoring elements of Spanish society, such as dowry, that held women back. On the other hand, María de Guevara wrote treatises addressed to the crown itself. She wrote to Philip IV and Charles II with suggestions for the war in Portugal and raising the Spanish profile in Europe. Guevara’s works and suggestions to kings are examples of women’s awareness of decline and their awareness of themselves as political beings.

To assess the impact of the works these authors produced, I must first discuss literature by women as well as the consumption of literature in seventeenth-century Spain. I will then analyze the works of Padilla and Guevara in the context of decline. Essentially, the development of the literature created by these women is evidence of their awareness of decline. As decline influenced many into believing in a masculine crisis, a feminine literary movement took hold that was able to comment on decline and masculinity.
LITERATURE AND WOMEN

In the early modern period, men dominated the visual and literary arts largely due to the disparity in the education of men and women. However, many women began to enter into such endeavors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Italian artist Sofonisba Anguissola, for example, gained notoriety in the sixteenth century as a court painter for Philip II of Spain as well as a portrait painter.86 The role of women in the arts expanded and as the print industry grew, so did the volume of written works produced throughout Europe, among which were works created by women. Although governmental and religious regulations restricted the subject matter of written works, women were able to produce significant amounts of literature that became influential. Both secular and religious women created fictional works as well as non-fictional treatises that reflected Spanish life in the early modern period. Men portrayed traditional roles, and chose to write about traditional concepts such as honor, and included those ideas in the literature they created during the “Golden Age.” However, female authors did not necessarily always concern themselves with following those same ideas. As Bárbara Mujíca suggests, female authors like Ana Caro and Leonor de la Cueva were able to challenge the concept of honor through satire or by ignoring it all together. Female authors were able to offer new perspectives that differed from those of male authors. While males portrayed quick-witted and powerful male characters, women created similarly strong female characters who offered new models of female

behavior. As Joan Cammarata asserts, literature shapes how a culture sees itself and as the creators and subjects of literature, women revealed the experience of the Spanish woman in the seventeenth century. Similarly, female authors provided views that contrasted with male authors in their representations of femininity and masculinity. For example, when women defined ideal masculinity they concentrated on the good treatment of women, while male authors mostly focused on the protection of women’s sexual reputation. As writers of non-fiction treatises, such as conduct manuals, women offered arguments for a version of ideal masculinity that featured some of the same qualities that male authors desired, like honesty, honor, and piety, but women were still able to provide additional traits of ideal manhood, like improving the treatment of wives.

Women in the seventeenth century and throughout the early modern period did not have the same level of freedom, privilege, or opportunity as men did. Some women managed to exceed expectations and sought to empower themselves and their gender through the creation of literature that expressed their concerns about society. In order to understand those worries I must discuss women and their experience during the seventeenth century.

From the Renaissance to the early modern period the status of women depended on the society in which they lived, their social class, as well as on their own character. Some women excelled in counteracting the status quo and achieved things that some considered inappropriate or impossible for their sex. For instance, female monarchs

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and rulers held traditionally masculine positions of government. Another different example would be Catalina de Erauso, who dressed as a man achieved more independence other sixteenth or seventeenth-century women. As Margaret King describes, “The woman of the Renaissance is many women,” and through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries society viewed women according to various viewpoints and described them with numerous characteristics.\(^89\) Many viewed women like Caterina Sforza, Elizabeth I of England, and Catherine de’ Medici of France as warriors and queens because these women took military and political power and needed to maintain a positive public image to keep their power. Many of these women presented themselves as models of feminine virtue. However, women refused to act subservient to the men in their courts as they had the ability to be both feminine and assertive.\(^90\)

Beyond the realm of politics, women influenced the arts through patronage and creation. Women’s pursuit of knowledge led them to literature and better education, and contributed to the creation and expansion of vernacular literature in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. While most male intellectuals were interested in Latin literature, women pursued all forms and became patrons and consumers of vernacular literature as well. A substantial number of women owned books; through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries up to 186 laywomen were book owners, one of whom owned up to two hundred titles in 1474.\(^91\) Into the early modern period, as literacy increased across the board, higher formal education for women was still not common whereas


\(^{90}\) King, *Women of the Renaissance*, 158.

elementary schools for girls teaching basic literacy were commonplace.\textsuperscript{92} Women were able to become more involved in intellectual discussion and, with the increasing ease of printing and publishing, women played major roles in producing and endorsing literature. Women’s influence as patrons increased as the court’s role became more important with the rise of absolutism. Many women not only used their influence to further the careers of the males in their families, but those of artists, writers, and performers.\textsuperscript{93} Patronage and the rise of print culture were key factors in how women increased their cultural influence, which in turn reflected their experience in the seventeenth century. Spanish women were able to gain some amount of influence as authors but also as members of the royal court.

The experience of Spanish women was unique when compared to that of women in other countries. Elite women had considerable influence in the Spanish court. For example, Philip III’s female family members represented Austrian Hapsburg interests in the Spanish court. Magdalena Sánchez suggests that Philip’s wife, grandmother, and aunt were major forces in the royal court who used their family ties to provide opposition to the royal favorite, the duke of Lerma.\textsuperscript{94} Most accounts of women, written by women or about them, consisted of accounts of noble women. In fact, Luisa de Padilla and María de Guevara were noble women concerned with the conduct of noblemen as well as with advancing women’s roles in society. Women used their family connections and their wealth to be influential in political realms as well as in artistic and cultural realms.

\textsuperscript{92}Wiesner-Hanks, \textit{Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe}, 163.
\textsuperscript{93}Wiesner-Hanks, \textit{Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe}, 167.
\textsuperscript{94}Magdalena S. Sánchez, \textit{The Empress, the Queen, and the Nun: Women and Power at the Court of Philip III of Spain} (Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 6.
as patrons. Because of the nature of the state of the Hapsburg family in the seventeenth century, the women who were close to Philip III and his court had considerable influence that went beyond being patrons. As the Austrian Hapsburgs grew more and more dependent on the Spanish monarchy's financial and military support, the role of their family members in the Spanish court grew more important. The Hapsburg women in Philip III’s court focused on using their affective familial ties to keep Hapsburg interests in Philip's mind by having private conversations or correspondence with him for continued Spanish military and economic support for the Austrian Hapsburgs. The women in the king’s family exercised all the influence they could and in doing so showed women’s significance in politics. Women who were not in the royal family were also able to comment on political issues because they too were in positions to know about the politics of their day.

Other positions from which women were able to be influential were in religious institutions, as nuns and abbesses. Although the majority of the literature produced by nuns was religious in nature, it is important to acknowledge that nuns were an important group of authors because of their numbers and varied socioeconomic backgrounds. Women from all levels of society comprised the convent population in Spain. Convents offered unmarried women an honorable way to live, but as Lisa Vollendorf explains, the convent was also an instrument for men to control women's lives. Men removed women from high society and entered them into convents while the justice system used

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95 Sanchez, The Empress, the Queen, and the Nun, 136.
97 Vollendorf, Lives of Women, 93.
convents known as Magdalene houses to reform women of “ill-repute.” This diversity in convent population as well as the differences between the various orders in Spain produced a wide array of women’s literature.\textsuperscript{98} Some of the literature produced by nuns was secular in its own way as these writers reflected seventeenth-century Spanish society. Women were able to produce more literature in the seventeenth century than in previous times. The general increase in literary production allowed women to write more material and reach larger audiences. Despite the wide-reaching literature of secular women, the church still maintained high levels of control over what was published. In the first few pages of Luisa de Padilla’s published pamphlets from the 1630s and 1640s, for example, the archbishop of Zaragoza wrote about Padilla’s piety and honorable reputation in an approval letter.

Uncertainty characterized the reigns of Philip III and Philip IV because both Philip III and Philip IV attempted to salvage what they could and hoped to return to the glory of a perceived golden age. Many saw Spanish domestic and foreign woes as the results of a masculine crisis that led many to self-examination and discussion of decline. While some authors complained about Spanish men and their failure to fulfill their masculine duties, others suggested ways men could restore Spanish manhood. Clamor for the return of virtue and honor filled much of the literature of the period, but as Elizabeth Lehfeldt views it, many \textit{arbitrista} writers offered little but a nostalgic look toward the past.\textsuperscript{99} Women like Luisa de Padilla created volumes of literature directed at Spanish men with the intent to restore virtue. Others like María de Guevara directly addressed

\textsuperscript{98} Vollendorf, \textit{Lives of Women}, 94.
\textsuperscript{99} Lehfeldt, “Ideal Manhood,” 463.
political leaders and involved themselves in the issues of the day. Padilla offered a chance for improvement through her works, but the advice that she gave was just as rooted in nostalgia as some of the work that men produced. On the other hand, Guevara provided innovative ideas for improving government that were not.

LUISA DE PADILLA AND IDEAL MASCULINITY

Writing in the first half of the seventeenth century, the noblewoman Luisa de Padilla published tracts directed at Spanish noblemen with the intent of restoring the virtuous qualities of Spanish manhood and nobility. Padilla emphasized that religious piety, honesty, military duty, as well as the good treatment of wives were qualities that a nobleman should exemplify. Much like the arbitristas, Padilla had a nostalgic view of masculinity and virtue and used historical examples of past noblemen in order to present qualities of masculinity that she felt were essential for an ideal nobleman. Padilla also presented these as lost qualities that influenced the onset of decline after their loss. The themes that run throughout all of these tracts are the pursuit of virtue and the return of virtuous masculinity. Padilla’s tracts advocated for the men of Spain to return to being hardworking, honest, honorable, and pious.

Padilla’s 1639 work, Lágrimas de la nobleza, expressed Padilla’s concern over how the nobility committed excess and vice. As Padilla put it, “Llora con justas causas, tiernas lágrimas de la nobleza, y con ella todas las virtudes, lo mucho que algunos de sus hijos debieran sentir los excesos de las relajadas vidas que profesan.”

100 Luisa de Padilla, Lágrimas de la nobleza, (Zaragoza, 1639), 11-12; “The nobility cries tender tears with just cause, along with their virtue, their children’s practices of delving far into the excesses of the relaxing lives that they lead.”
Padilla concentrated on the rise of luxury and idleness among noblemen at a time when war and economic difficulties threatened Spanish interests abroad. By the 1630s and 1640s, the Twelve Year’s Truce had ended, hostilities resumed with the Dutch, and the Thirty Year’s War continued to threaten Spanish power in Europe. At a time when Spanish leadership spread Castilian forces thinly across various fronts, concern over idleness was prevalent because of effeminacy and many authors focused on those anxieties. Particularly, idleness held the most importance in the minds of military leaders as the need for fighting men was high and recruiting was increasingly difficult. Padilla, in this case, took the debate on the role of increasing idleness in the nobility a step further. Padilla’s thoughts on idleness reflected how female authors were aware of decline, and as a noblewoman, Padilla experienced it. She observed the nobility’s lack of involvement in Spanish military and economic efforts. Padilla wondered:

Donde están aquellos Españoles, de quien dice Justino son grandes sufridores de hambre, sed, toda descomodidad, y trabajo, aplicándose desde su niñez a ejercicio militar, por ser más inclinados a él, que otra nación del mundo, templados, y dispuestos a dar la vida por la conservación de honra y virtud?101

Here, Padilla expressed her frustrations with noblemen who chose not to involve themselves in military matters. Padilla attempted to answer this question by suggesting that the Spanish let their vices turn them into effeminate men who led a once prominent and victorious Spain into disgrace.102 According to Padilla, Castilian baths and other

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101 Padilla, Lágrimas, 154; “Where are these Spanish men, whom Justin says, are great sufferers of hunger, thirst, great discomfort, and work, applying themselves from childhood to dedicate themselves to military affairs, to be good at them, better than any other nation, and be ready and willing to give up their lives for the preservation of honor and virtue?”

102 Padilla, Lágrimas, 154-155.
vices introduced by the orient led to effeminization.\textsuperscript{103} Although Padilla is vague when she mentions what she refers to as oriental vices, this does represent the Spanish practice of regarding foreign things as effeminate when compared to the Spanish culture. Although she did not mention any other specific pleasures, Padilla described these as a weakness that the nobility had at the time. By emphasizing this element of effeminization, Padilla acknowledged the worries Spanish authors had about Spanish manhood and its effects on Spanish efforts abroad. As the study of decline shows, many considered Castilian strength to be in the countryside and in its population; therefore, idleness was a trait that the Spanish could not afford. The economic effect of the diminution in population in Castile and elsewhere was recession. Padilla suggested that idleness was a contributing factor to the Spanish economic recession. Padilla called for a far more tangible solution to effeminization and decline: the pursuit of virtue through combating idleness by reestablishing Spanish customs and morality, which contributed to the Spanish cause. Padilla also called for the return to the pursuit of the virtues of honesty and truth.

In 1640, Padilla’s \textit{Elogios de la verdad} presented a study on truth, lies, and honesty and the importance of truth in virtue. This particular tract followed Padilla’s goal of showing elements of virtuous masculinity. By her 1644 work, \textit{Idea de nobles y sus desempeños en aforismos}, Padilla described virtuous masculinity by using various examples of noblemen who, in her eyes, embodied the sort of virtue that men needed to exemplify. She included themes that had a less direct connection to decline, as her previous work did with economic crisis, but Padilla considered that qualities like honesty

\textsuperscript{103} Padilla, \textit{Lágrimas}, 155.
were important to emphasize. Padilla gave a description of the life of a nobleman, Don Iñigo Lopez de Mendoza, the marquis of Santillana, who personified virtue in many ways. Among the first of the qualities that Padilla describes is that of Lopez’s faithfulness to his wife, about which she says:

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\text{Amó mucho a su mujer, porque jamás puso los ojos, ni amor en otra: y siendo, como dice Hernando del Pulgar, de gentil, y bien proporcionada disposición, y hermoso rostro; estuvo siempre muy lejos de preciarse de galán, ni galantear en Palacio, ni fuera del.}^{104}
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Here Padilla advocated for Spanish men to follow the examples set by the marquis’s life and pursue lives that are more virtuous. Particularly, she suggested that men treating their wives better added to masculine virtue. For Padilla, the pursuit of virtue also meant the rejection of vices, referring to aspects of luxury and excess, which some arbitristas seeing these as symptoms of effeminacy. Padilla proposed a return to virtue as male authors did, in particular those who advocated for religious piety, honor, and honesty. However, Padilla added her own perspective on the ideal nobleman and masculinity through using the marquis of Santillana’s life as an example. She made sure to emphasize how the marquis treated his wife with respect and faithfulness. In the pursuit of virtue, Padilla also agreed with male writers when she concerned herself with idleness and encouraged men to engage in study and work throughout their lives in order to maintain and gain virtue.\(^{105}\) Padilla maintained discretion when mentioning the

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\(^{104}\) Luisa de Padilla, *Idea de nobles y sus desempeños en aforismos* (Zaragoza, 1644), 17; “He loved his wife very much, because he never put his sight nor his love onto another: and being, as Hernando del Pulgar describes, of gentle, and well-proportioned disposition, and of handsome face; he was always far from presenting himself as a romantic, and from gallivanting within the palace or around it.”

\(^{105}\) Luisa de Padilla, *Idea de nobles y sus desempeños en aforismos*, 92.
undesirable behavior and did not name nobles by name who exhibited those traits. Her
treatise served more as an example for the nobility rather than a way to publicize
specific nobles who did not meet her standards of the ideal nobleman.

Padilla showed that Spanish masculinity and the ideal nobleman depended on
ideas of virtue, where a man’s ability to be honest, religious, and hardworking defined
his manhood. For authors like Padilla, Spanish noblemen in the seventeenth century
were idle, and indulged more on vain pursuits than providing support for Spanish war
efforts throughout the continent. By the 1640s, Spain found itself in the midst of various
conflicts and rebellions, which by the seventeenth century compounded Spain’s
problems. War continued to increase Spain’s economic difficulties by draining the
Spanish treasury and forced Spain to seek out foreign loans and reduce Spanish
manpower. These problems significantly weakened the Spanish power base in Castile.
These troubles influenced Padilla’s thought processes and included them in her
analysis of ideal nobility, particularly in her Lágrimas de la nobleza. María de Guevara
had similar concerns, but instead of addressing the nobility with tracts, Guevara
proceeded to address the issues of her day by writing to the king himself.

MARÍA DE GUEVARA AND DECLINE

In response to the war in Portugal, María de Guevara produced a work entitled
Tratado y advertencias hechas por una mujer, where she commented on Spanish men,
their military duties, and the nobility’s lack of involvement in war. By 1663, Philip IV was
King of Spain for forty-two years and ruled over a Spanish empire weakened by
economic recession and constant war with Flanders, Italian states, France, England,
Catalonia, and Portugal. However, Philip IV entrusted much of his government to his favorites, among the most important the count- duke Olivares, who attempted to restore Spanish power. Guevara criticized the Council of War during the Portuguese campaign for practicing favoritism because they appointed to important positions cowardly nobles instead of nobles with military prowess.\textsuperscript{106} Much as society expected the head of a household to keep his house in check, society expected a king to keep his ministers in line. Guevara’s call for Philip’s further involvement in government also implied a level of laziness exhibited by the king. Many seventeenth-century complaints over laziness applied the trait as a sign of effeminization and some interpreted Philip’s disinterest in policymaking as such. Guevara suggested that there was corruption among finance ministers and declared: “que se modere la mucha gente que hay en el Consejo de Hacienda comiendo a costa de Vuestra Majestad y de todos.”\textsuperscript{107} She also warned against vanity and luxury because in her eyes they caused negative economic effects, such as a rise in food prices and idleness among young men because of unemployment.\textsuperscript{108} Her warnings to the king about greed and idleness follow similar arguments presented by other authors, particularly those against idleness. The Dominican friar, Francisco de León, for example, raised concerns in a sermon regarding luxury and idleness that observed Spanish men engaged in pleasures rather than

\textsuperscript{106} María de Guevara, \textit{Tratado y advertencias hechas por una mujer celosa del bien de su rey y corrida de parte de España} in \textit{Warnings to the Kings and Advice on Restoring Spain}, ed. and trans. Nieves Romero-Díaz (1663; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 55.

\textsuperscript{107} Guevara, \textit{Tratado y advertencias}, 60; “Let there be a limit on the people in the Council of Finance, because they dine at the expense of your Majesty and all of us.”

\textsuperscript{108} Guevara, \textit{Tratado y advertencias}, 63.
duty. Isabel Barbieto asserts that Guevara’s treatise was a way for Guevara to use her femininity to be able to attack “masculine negligence.” Many authors focused on idleness and luxury as sources of the corruption of Spanish masculinity and furthermore, the sources of decline. Authors believed that idleness and effeminization caused Spanish men to prefer indulging themselves at the theatre or at court instead of engaging in productive pursuits like participating in military duty or administering their lands. Guevara mentioned that greed, avarice, gluttony, and envy were the ill effects of the royal court: competition among nobles to display their wealth did not benefit the country in a positive way. Nobles preferred to purchase items like clothing for themselves rather than reinvesting in their land for improvement of the country. The perception of male disengagement in Spanish problems during the seventeenth century was prevalent in the literature of the time. Among the many problems that Spain faced, Guevara recognized that the primary problems were the king’s inability to recognize that problems existed, the forceful conscription of men into the army because of the lack of incentives to sign up, favor of foreigners like those placed in government positions over Spaniards, and fear of Portugal. Guevara warned the king and advocated for the

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109 Francisco de León, Sermon predicado por Francisco de León (Granada: 1635), 254, quoted in Elizabeth A. Lehfeldt in “Ideal Man: Masculinity and Decline in Seventeenth-Century Spain,” Renaissance Quarterly 61.2 (2008), n.2 463.


112 Isabel Barbieto Carniero, “María de Guevara,” 77.
return of virtue. Her works offer insight into how women were aware of decline and willing to enter discussions pertaining to decline.

Guevara’s Desengaños de la corte y mujeres valerosas, in which she addressed the future King Charles II in 1664, proceeded to council the prince on how to restore Spanish glory and revealed aspects of the royal court and gender. Chiefly, she disclosed details relating to courtiers, nobles, and virtuous women. Guevara’s discussion of valorous women presents her observations of ideal femininity and later contrasts it with the court’s lack of virtue. Guevara mentioned a chronicler, Antonio de Guevara, who included valorous women in his works, including Queen Zenobia of Palmyra, the French queen mother, referring to Catherine de Medici, Marie de Medici, and Queen Catalina of Lancaster. Guevara viewed these queens as examples of leaders of effective governments and even suggested, “que el gobierno de las mujeres a veces suele ser mejor, que el de muchos hombres.”

Guevara described other instances in which women were valorous and questioned why their reputations were remembered throughout history if women were meant to be seen and not heard. She showed the princess of Naples, Giovanna, as an example of how a valorous woman would react. Guevara explains that Giovanna resisted her new husband, Andrew, and did not subject herself to his control. Since Andrew forced her to marry him, Guevara explains that Giovanna had him hanged on a festival day like a valorous woman should.

Another person Guevara uses as an example of a valorous woman is the

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113 María de Guevara, Desengaños de la corte, 71; 129 n.10-12; “a government of women is at times better than that of many men.”

114 Guevara, Desengaños de la corte, 73.
noblewoman, Blanca de Guevara, who in retaliation for a Moorish siege of Navarre, returned with the king of France:

Como General, prende a Marfidio, y liberta Navarra, y si ahora una mujer quisiera hacer esto, y es varonil, se rieran de ella, malos tiempos hemos alcanzado.115

Guevara went so far as to say, “que si usasen las mujeres de las letras, que se sobrepujaran a los hombres; pero esto temen ellos, y no quieren que sean Amazonas, sino tenerles las manos atadas, con que no parece bien, que las mujeres salgan de su rincón.”116 What Guevara proposed in Desengaños de la corte is that women had the ability to become involved in the political discussion and to perceive the problems of a decaying empire. For example, when giving warnings to Philip IV Guevara wrote, “¿quién mete una mujer en esto? A que responde que harta lástima es que lo lleguemos a entender las mujeres tan bien como los hombres y a sentirlo mejor.”117 The influence of decline over authors like María de Guevara is evident. Authors like Guevara produced works that contributed to debates over decline by addressing the government directly and by referencing past events with nostalgic tones.

Guevara’s discussion on the men of the court added an additional dynamic to her Desengaños de la corte and gave her significance as a witness and commentator on

115 Guevara, Desengaños de la corte, 75; “Like a general, she captures Marfidio and liberates Navarre. If a woman wants to do such a thing today, and if she is manly, she will be laughed at. Bad are the times which are upon us.”

116 Guevara, Desengaños de la corte, 72-73; “if women made use of letters, they would surpass men, which is just what men fear; they do not want women to be Amazonas but rather to have their hands tied, making it unbecoming for a woman to leave her corner.”

117 Guevara, Tratado y advertencias, 50; “who is a woman to meddle in this? To which I respond: how sad that we women come to understand what is happening as well as men do, but feel it even more.”
the developing masculine crisis. Guevara found herself disillusioned with the court as a whole and viewed it as a corrupting place, but not one that all could leave behind because it was necessary for government to function and for ministers to conduct business.\footnote{Guevara, \textit{Desengaños de la corte}, 69.} Guevara criticized men’s behavior at the court, their treatment of their wives, and lack of virtue. Guevara emphasized that men should trust their wives and handle their wives’ wealth and dowries responsibly, which in itself would add virtue to their lives.\footnote{Guevara, \textit{Desengaños de la corte}, 85.} She viewed the behavior of many Spanish husbands as disgraceful, as many wasted their wives’ dowries, associated with mistresses, and had illegitimate children.\footnote{Guevara, \textit{Desengaños de la corte}, 79.} She certainly seemed to hold most men with contempt and even began her chapter on men’s treatment of their wives with the phrase, “los hombres son todos una misma habla.”\footnote{Guevara, \textit{Desengaños de la corte}, 79; “Men are all the same;” the translator, Nieves Romero-Díaz, suggests that the word in the original, \textit{fabla}, does not exist in Spanish and therefore it may be a misspelling of \textit{habla}; Romero-Díaz, \textit{Warnings to the Kings}, 132 n. 36.} In Guevara’s view of manhood it was important for men to not only exhibit strength in their resolve to defend their homes and provide for their families, but it was just as important for men to treat their wives with the same levels of respect that they expected for themselves. Based upon the various historical examples that Guevara provided, it is evident that she believed that the course of Spanish masculinity had lost elements of virtue and religious piety. For example, when she discussed men’s discourtesy toward their wives Guevara used Henry VIII as an example of an adulterer who left his faithful wife for a heretic and followed that by inviting heresy into his
kingdom. She criticized Henry VIII’s disownment of the Castilian princess, Catherine, but also his hypocritical writing, which changed from defending the Catholic faith to challenging it. Just as men had to publicly show their honor by defending their own reputations or those of their family, the idea of virtue and the treatment of women had a public aspect to it. Guevara wanted men to incorporate women into government because she felt that women were capable of being productive in that part of society. Guevara’s message to men suggested that men’s improved treatment of women should extend into the private sphere because of her emphasis on men’s management of their wives’ wealth and her opposition to violence and adultery. Guevara chooses to voice her opinions on men’s treatment of their wives with abstractions rather than specific complaints about dowry and dynastic marriage. For Guevara, virtuous masculinity was both public and private.

As more authors contributed titles, their works influenced many women to do the same. While many male authors followed traditional norms when portraying women, women like María de Guevara gave insight into what women’s lives and concerns were in the seventeenth century. Padilla’s search for virtue is part of the Spanish literary pursuit to define ideal Spanish manhood as the traits of honesty, honor, and respect. Padilla emphasized truthfulness, men’s piety and devotion to their marriages as important facets of masculinity in addition to protecting their families and country and providing for their families. While male authors focused on male duties to crown and country, female authors added domestic viewpoints on manhood and advocated for the

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122 Guevara, Desengaños de la corte, 83.
123 Guevara, Desengaños de la corte, 83.
better treatment of wives. Padilla, for example, believed that men could improve their treatment of their wives by being honest and faithful toward them. Guevara by contrast believed that men could treat women better by including them in all aspects of political and cultural life. Unlike Padilla, Guevara criticized Spanish men and then proceeded to suggest that Spanish women have as much ability as men, to administer their own households as well as government. María Barbieto argues that feminist overtones permeated the literature that many women created in the seventeenth century and, although not feminist in the modern sense, still advocated the betterment of conditions for women.¹²⁴ Although there were aspects of feminine pride in Guevara’s works, her commentary on masculinity had similar tones to those of Padilla and both acknowledged the existence of a masculine crisis. Guevara expressed it directly by criticizing Spanish men for their failed attempts at government. Padilla, on the other hand, attempted to provide advice for improving Spanish manhood; both, however, advocated for virtue and religious piety. Authors like María de Zayas also advocated for women and in doing so provided commentary for Spanish masculinity by arguing that seventeenth-century Spanish masculinity included the proper treatment of women.

Women writers saw decline as a chance to improve their state. Padilla’s work is filled with descriptions of ideal behavior with some examples of noblemen who inspired such traits. Guevara used real life contemporaries and biblical or historical examples of the behaviors and changes that she argued for and presented her arguments in a much

more concise way. The virtuous masculinity that Padilla and Guevara advocated relates to decline because these authors’ different definitions of virtuous masculinity addressed Spain’s economy. Padilla addressed the economy when she suggested that men be more responsible as heads of households. Guevara went one step further when she asked the king to involve himself more in the government’s affairs and when she wrote on women’s involvement in government and in the royal court.

As authors in various genres, women gave insight into how women experienced seventeenth-century decline and how they perceived Spanish masculinity. Guevara’s and Padilla’s works featured the effects of decline, as both women exhibited an awareness of decline through their calls for improvement, specifically those for virtuous masculinity. In advocating for virtue, these authors promoted the improvement of men’s treatment of women, and in Guevara’s case, she advocated for an acknowledgement of women’s ability to be equal with men. The literature Guevara and Padilla produced is an example of how decline affected ideas of gender in seventeenth-century Spain, where both men and women wanted to know why decline existed and how to stop it. Particularly, women were able to become more politically and socially aware than before and influenced the course of debate with their writing. Decline led to a masculine crisis, but it also led to a movement of female writers where they offered their own perspectives on what a man should be, and how a man could arrive at such an ideal state.
CHAPTER 4

DECLINE AND VIRTUOUS MASCULINITY IN THEATER AND SHORT STORIES

Authors in seventeenth-century Spain responded to decline in non-fiction works and contributed theories on the nature of decline. Decline was also an important influence present in Spanish fictional works as well. While non-fiction authors like Luisa de Padilla and María de Guevara commented on decline by directly addressing the nobility and crown, writers like María de Zayas created fictional works that included characters who reflected the best and worst of decline. Authors created their characters with the intentions to have them represent ideal manhood, or womanhood, or the lack thereof. Much like their counterparts, the authors of fiction wrote with decline’s influence present and created characters who represented ideal or undesirable traits. These writers addressed a large part of Spanish society when they published poems, novellas, and plays. Unlike their counterparts, Guevara and Padilla, these women addressed a substantial part of the Spanish population. The popularity and volume of Spanish literature produced in the seventeenth century characterized the Spanish “Golden Age” and this artistic environment fostered a great number of writers. Among the most influential was Miguel de Cervantes, who created important works, such as Don Quixote in 1604, which was a parody of the nobility’s and arbitrista reliance on nostalgic ideas of chivalric manhood.

These themes are the ideas that seventeenth-century Spanish writers conveyed in their works and understanding these ideas gives insight into how decline affected Spanish life and culture. Therefore, when analyzing poems, novellas, and plays, the
themes that the authors addressed are more important than the narratives that they
created. It is then important to speak of themes that many authors portrayed like the
mujer varonil, or masculine woman. Authors also gave examples of relationships
between men and women, between men, and between women and society. For
example, the concept of the mujer varonil is an important archetype that the writer
María de Zayas employed in her comedias, or comedies. To feature theater in such a
study not only requires an understanding of women’s literature as in the previous
chapter, but also an understanding of Spanish theater in the seventeenth-century.
Seventeenth-century writers portrayed elements of the crisis of masculinity that was
ongoing. Through this crisis, women were able to attain new roles as writers and
performers, where they provided their own perspectives of masculinity, femininity, and
decline. Therefore, decline is influential over the themes that these women included in
their works.

The variety of literary contributions that women made in the seventeenth century
offered their perspectives on Spanish manhood. As in the previous chapter, some
women chose to write non-fiction treatises and directly addressed decline. However,
other women created characters in novellas, poems, and plays that reflected how a
portion of the Spanish population felt. The effect of decline in fiction and theater is
visible in the characters that authors created. The characteristics and actions that these
characters took represented extreme aspects of Spanish masculinity and femininity.
As Melveena McKendrick remarks in the introduction to her history of Spanish theater, the seventeenth century was a moment in time of contrast, when Spanish literary achievement reached a peak at a time when Spanish power was plummeting to new lows. Many of the plays that Spanish playwrights produced in the early days of Spanish drama were religious in nature, with many playwrights producing morality plays and reenactments. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, playwrights produced around seven *autos*, one-act moral or religious plays, each year in Toledo from 1493 to 1510, including thirty-three in total. As the sixteenth century progressed, one-act plays began to change and playwrights began to be more ambitious. Eventually, Spanish drama fell under two schools, one being the humanistic school of drama that produced works written in multi-act form that derived influence from various sources, the other the Encina school of one-act plays for Church holiday performances. This growing number in approaches to drama encouraged an increase of demand for performances, but also led to the creation of new genres and the formation of the first theatrical companies. Among the first companies were the Italian theater companies that arrived in the mid-sixteenth century, which offered competition to Spanish theater companies in the mid-sixteenth century and influenced financial changes in Spanish theater. Instead of private or municipal funding of performances, theater companies began to charge for admission and those proceeds

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began to fund the charity hospitals. In the Italian system, many theater companies were compelled to donate some of their profits for charity and they brought this practice to Spain.\textsuperscript{129} The Italian influence over Spanish theater was not just a financial one or one of competition. The rise of theater companies and public theaters were concurrent with the progression of the theater genres that developed in the sixteenth century. The Italian influence over Spanish theater was evident as they popularized the classical themes and comedies of intrigue that influenced Lope de Vega and the three-act \textit{comedia nueva}.\textsuperscript{130}

By the seventeenth century, theater grew and achieved great popularity and importance within Spanish society. The political impact of theater was certainly significant. Public theaters engaged in performances for anyone who could afford admission. The opening of performances to the masses caused Spanish authorities to consider the regulation of theaters, theater companies, and the circulation of plays. The commercialization of theater allowed playwrights and actors to specialize in their craft, but the fact that theater was becoming commercialized and professional meant that theater was becoming one of the primary forms of entertainment in early modern Spain. The commercial development of theater not only reflected theater’s social impact, but also the expansion of the European economy into an early form of mercantile capitalism.\textsuperscript{131}

\textsuperscript{129} McKendrick, \textit{Theater in Spain}, 46-47.
\textsuperscript{130} McKendrick, \textit{Theater in Spain}, 49.
The playwrights and actors who owned theater companies therefore had considerable influence on public opinion. Spanish theater also displayed a sense of political awareness that is valuable for historians because portrayals of kings and kingship in plays revealed popular attitudes toward the Spanish monarchy. However, the popularity of dramatic performances also meant that the monarchy could use theater as a vehicle of propaganda. Early scholarship on Spanish drama determined that most of Spanish drama supported Spanish absolutism, but as Jodi Campbell describes, more recent scholarship elaborated on elements that did not entirely support absolutism.132 Whether Spanish plays, theaters, and playwrights were creating productions for the crown’s benefit, or to reflect the public’s feelings, the creations that playwrights chose to make exhibited sophisticated levels of political awareness. Just like their male counterparts, women were able to write plays that incorporated the political turmoil of the seventeenth century. Female playwrights displayed awareness of the decline of the Spanish empire and their works reflected their own sentiments and those of the people. With an awareness of decline and popularity among the people, seventeenth-century Spanish theater is a source of insight into how decline affected literature and how it contributed to discussion on the masculine crisis of the seventeenth century. By creating theatrical productions that included depictions of manhood, women portrayed male characters that embodied their perspectives on what manhood was supposed to be or what they thought Spanish men were.

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Female authors featured themes in their plays and novellas like cross-dressing, portrayals of female friendships, relationships between men and women, and the masculine woman. Cross-dressing characters, particularly female characters dressing as men, were commonplace in Spanish literature in the early modern period. As a literary device, cross-dressing advanced an author’s narrative where a cross-dressing woman could seek revenge or love and enhanced a female character’s strength, assertiveness and intelligence. Cross-dressing was a method that authors used to portray female protagonists as conflict solvers. However, cross-dressing also served a commercial strategy for theater owners who had objectives of selling more tickets. Spanish society expected women to dress with the intentions of concealing their bodies. By dressing as men, actresses dressed in more revealing costumes. In many theatrical productions, cross-dressing actresses became an attraction for male theater customers and represented male fantasy when they wore revealing male clothing instead of traditional clothing. Some of the situations characters participated in showed two women interacting playfully with each other while wearing revealing costumes. In theater, authors used character driven ways to show feminine strength, however, elements of costume provided comedic relief as well as plot points.

Authors used tropes like The *mujer varonil* (masculine woman) to show feminine strength. The *mujer esquiva* was an important example of the *mujer varonil* in the seventeenth century. While the masculine woman rebelled against man-made rules and social structures, the *mujer esquiva* resisted love, marriage, and men and therefore rebelled against the “natural order of things.”

Although this example of the masculine woman was most common in male authored plays, Ana Caro’s heroine, Rosaura from *El conde Partinuplés*, was a special case of the *mujer esquiva*. Unlike similar characters created by male authors, Caro’s *mujer esquiva* resisted marriage and love because she feared that she would be deceived. In plays by male authors, the *mujer esquiva* eventually fell in love and married.

Authors also portrayed the *mujer varonil* as an avenging character, where the character took on masculine qualities in her quest to defend her honor. In doing so, the female character took on the masculine role and positioned herself on an equal social footing as men. The *mujer varonil* was an important element of Spanish literature and theater during the Golden Age as a good foil for the portrayals of male characters and their behavior. Through the creation of masculine female characters, female playwrights and authors expressed their own attitudes of masculinity. As the non-fiction authors showed, women were just as politically aware as men and produced works that displayed their awareness. The female playwrights and authors also had political awareness and used it in creating

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137 McKendrick, *Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age*, 171 n. 1; 171-172.
stories that reached mass audiences. With these literary tools, female authors presented women who rebelled against men and society.

MARÍA DE ZAYAS, IDEAL MASCULINITY, AND DECLINE

One of the most important female writers of the seventeenth century was María de Zayas y Sotomayor. While scholars have uncovered little about her personal life, we know that she was a member of the nobility through accounts written by some of her contemporaries. She wrote novellas and one play characterized by strong female leads. There is a significant amount of scholarship on Zayas’s work, particularly in the genre of literary criticism, but using Zayas’s titles as historical sources dating from decline can help understand how Spanish society experienced decline. María de Zayas created characters who filled different roles in her stories like the male antagonists in her novellas who betrayed the female protagonists. Over the course of these novellas the female protagonists found strength and pursued revenge or redemption. Zayas’s creations reflected her perceptions of men, women, and decline to her audiences and readers. Seventeenth-century literature consumers then were reading about and observing reactions to decline as they themselves experienced it. In 1632, Zayas finished writing her play, La Traición en la amistad, wherein she included the mujer varonil, Fenisa, but as a whole also created a work that exposed the hypocrisy of the Spanish aristocracy.

Zayas used the character of Fenisa as a woman who behaved in masculine ways and who sought out many lovers and resorted even to betraying her friends to get what she wanted. Zayas’s character of Liseo also exhibits similar qualities, but the
consequences of his actions differ from the ones that Fenisa suffers at the end of the play. By having two characters with similar intentions and characteristics, but one being female and the other being male, Zayas presented the double standards that judged women. In the second act, Liseo and León, Liseo’s servant, are talking about Liseo’s romantic options. When Liseo recounts all of the women that love him, he also tells León of his plans for Fenisa:

LISEO: Marcia en eso será la preferida. / Tiene hermosura y perfecciones raras / su hacienda, su nobleza, su hermosura / su raro entendimiento.
LEÓN: ¿Y no reparas / ya señor que de Laura no te acuerdas, / como Fenisa tiene tal locura / que piensa ser tu esposa?
LISEO: ¡No me pierdas / el respeto, borracho, y me des ira! / ¡Lindo, por Dios, qué bien templadas cuerdas! / León, si yo a Fenisa galanteo, / es con engaño, burlas y mentira, / no más de por cumplir con mi deseo. / A sola Marcia mi nobleza aspira. / Ella ha de ser mi esposa, que Fenisa / es burla.139

Zayas showed two male characters in conversation about women with the purpose of developing the characters of Liseo and León. However, the display that Zayas created was also an example of how she viewed the state of Spanish masculinity in the seventeenth century. The character trope of the burlador, a Casanova or Don Juan type, served as an opportunity to express her perspectives of masculinity by describing a man as choosing his desires over treating a woman with respect. This trope involves

139 María de Zayas, *La traición en la amistad*, ed.Valerie Hegstrom trans. Catherine Larson (1632; Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1999), 108-109; “Liseo: Marcia would be the one I would choose. She is gorgeous and simply perfect in every way – in her estate, her nobility, her beauty, her rare understanding. León: But, sir, what about Laura, not to mention Fenisa, who is crazy enough to think you are going to marry her? Liseo: Show a little respect, yes you drunkard; you are making me angry! Everything is under control, León, if I am courting Fenisa, it is with deception, tricks, and lies, and only to satisfy my desire. Marcia is one my nobility deserves and hopes to win. She is to be my wife; Fenisa is a joke.”
a level of deception that in turn was also a hypocritical example of masculinity as society expected men to be honest and honorable but also accepted men having mistresses.

Fenisa as a *mujer varonil* also served to describe the state of masculinity in early modern Spain. By writing Fenisa as a character who betrayed her friendships in the pursuit of her desires, Zayas created a female character who had some of the same traits as a male character. The creation of Fenisa as a masculine woman showed the double standards and hypocrisy of the Spanish nobility. Zayas also covers this type of dishonesty in her novellas, but Luisa de Padilla also wrote on the importance of honesty and truth to ideal masculinity. Just as Liseo recounted to his servant all of the women that loved him, Fenisa tells the audience the conflict within her about all the men that she loved.

**FENISA:** Gallarda condición, Cupido, tengo: / Muchos amantes en mi alma caben. / Mi nuevo amartelar todas alaben. / Guardando la opinión que yo mantengo, / Hombres así vuestros engaños vengo. / Guárdenos dellas necias que no saben, / aunque más su firmeza menoscaben, / entretenerte como me entretengo. / Si un amante se ausenta, enoja o muere, / no ha de quedar la voluntad baldía, / porque es la ociosidad muy civil cosa. / ¡Mal haya lo que sólo un hombre quiere!, / Que tener un solo es cobardía. / Naturaleza es vana y es hermosa.\(^{140}\)

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\(^{140}\) Zayas, *Traición en la amistad*, 118-119; “Cupid, I am in quite a state. There is room for lots of lovers in my soul. Everyone praises my ability to make men fall in love with me, an opinion that I happen to share. Men, that is how I get even with you and your tricks. Lord, keep us from those foolish girls who do not know how to enjoy themselves the way I do, even though they may not take their faithfulness too seriously. If a lover is absent, angry, or dead, you do not have to leave you affections in a wasteland; idleness is a sociable thing. Cursed be the woman who loves only one man, because it is cowardly to limit yourself to a single lover. Nature is vain and beautiful.”
Zayas created Fenisa as having similar traits as Liseo, where her character also chose
desire over virtue. In the aftermath of the play, however, everyone gets to marry one
another. Fenisa as the rebel does not, and ends up with no one. While *comedia* literary
tradition rewards Liseo in the end, Fenisa was not because she not only chose to betray
her friends, but exhibited masculine behavior. The characters of Liseo and Fenisa
represented two things in the context of decline and the masculine crisis. Liseo’s
licentiousness was an indictment of Spanish masculinity and an exposé of what some of
the practices Spanish men indulged in. On the other hand, Fenisa was not rewarded in
the story because the character, although female, exhibited masculine qualities, but her
lack of reward represented the double standards that Zayas observed. In portraying
characters like Fenisa and Liseo, Zayas also makes a case for a return for virtue. When
Zayas wrote the characters as people that would choose their own desires over
engaging in proper behavior, she kept in line with other authors who argued against
vanity, luxury, and called for virtue. Much like her contemporaries, Guevara and Padilla,
Zayas calls for the return of virtue for the improvement of Spain.

While the play *La Traición en la amistad* provided its audiences with
entertainment and its author an outlet for commentary on various aspects of Spanish
life, its use as an historical artifact does give some insight into how decline and the
masculine crisis influenced de Zayas’s creation of male characters. Zayas made
important contributions through her novellas as well and those works provided
examples of Zayas’s attitudes on masculinity in the seventeenth century. Her
*Desengaños amorosos* consisted of novellas that showed various types of male
characters and their interactions with women and each other. Zayas’s plays consisted
of violence against women and womanizing, both of which represented the undesirable qualities of manhood that some men could display.

Zayas and the other authors like Padilla, Guevara, and Caro had roots in the nobility and created characters who portrayed the behavior of the nobility they observed. In the fiction and the non-fiction these authors created, the portrayal of noblemen seems to be exaggerated to get the points of the authors across. The nobility in the stories are representations of bad and ideal behavior rather than examples based on real life events. The nobility in the treatises are examples of the ideal, but could also be misrepresentations of people who the authors held in high esteem, and therefore, wrote them as flawless examples of good behavior. The authors’ backgrounds as noblewomen themselves also give them limitations on what kind of men they could include in their stories and treatises. They ignored men of lower classes, but certainly seemed to hold the nobility as the standard bearers of Spanish masculinity whom the lower classes should emulate.

Zayas published her *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* and *Parte segunda del sarao y entretenimiento honesto* in 1637 and 1647, respectively. Combined, the two works were Zayas’s most celebrated titles and provided great insight into Spanish society. The *Disenchantments* (1647) presented the outcomes of relationships with men, the behavior of the nobility, and women’s plight in the seventeenth century. Over the course of ten *novelas*, Zayas combated male violence against women in society and in doing so exposed the state of Spanish masculinity as brutal and the state of women one of despair.
Through the *novelas*, Zayas clarified her perspectives on masculinity by depicting men’s behavior and their treatment of women. For Susan Paun de García, Zayas considered that the nobility’s behavior caused decline, as men were adulterous, cowardly, and dressed effeminately. Critics wanted men to dress in conservative fashions that represented Spanish values rather than new foreign trends. As some of the *arbitristas* considered decline and debated its solutions with nostalgic views of the age of knights and chivalry, Zayas denounced the knights and nobles of her own day. As William Clamurro shows, Zayas’s presentation of the plight of women, the behavior of noblemen served two seemingly contradictory purposes, one, Zayas intended to defend women and their honor, and two, Zayas’s concern over the decline of aristocratic behavior and values. For Zayas, the return of traditional values would remedy women’s condition and Spain’s condition. A return to tradition meant the return of virtue and of virtuous masculinity.

The first *Desengaño*, “Slave to Her Own Lover,” is about the character Zelima and her pursuit by Don Manuel for her affections. She considers that if his intentions were truthful and honorable, he would go to her father seeking permission to wed her. In reality, Don Manuel intended to use Zelima and she continued to reject his sexual

142 García, “Zayas’s Ideal of the Masculine,” 254.
144 Clamurro, “Ideological Contradiction and Imperial Decline,” 49.
advances even though they were of the same social class. In the face of don Manuel’s questionable conduct, Zelima responded in soliloquy:

   Men! How can you, being made of the same form and flesh as us and having no more soul than we have, how can you treat us as if we were made of different substances?\textsuperscript{146}

Here Zayas had Zelima wonder why men would treat women as different beings from themselves. Zayas’s attitude regarding male behavior in this instance is clear. The character of Zelima expressed worry over men’s treatment of women and for Zayas, that held more importance than a search for equality. Indeed, Zayas criticized men’s opinions of women. As an author she championed the women in literature as being main characters with agency rather than just being the objects of a man’s desires.\textsuperscript{147} These \textit{Disenchantments} were stories of poisonous love, where men wooed women with deception. Zayas’s portrayals of men as liars presented an image of Spanish manhood that had degraded from the glory days of Ferdinand and Isabella, to a court of dishonor and dishonesty. This presentation mirrored the concerns of some of the seventeenth-century authors commenting on decline and masculinity with nostalgia.

   Zayas also exhibited boldness that was similar to María de Guevara’s when she criticized men’s behavior. While the prevailing view during the seventeenth century was that women’s sensibilities made them weak, vulnerable, and at fault when deceived, Zayas proclaimed that men were at fault for women’s suffering.

   The burden of all blame falls upon the feminine sex as if men’s fault were not greater, insofar as they pretend to be nature’s perfection . . . We should acknowledge that just as there are loose women there are fickle men; for each greedy

\textsuperscript{146} Zayas, “Slave to Her Own Lover,” 51.
\textsuperscript{147} García, “Zayas’s Ideal Masculine,” 253; Zayas, \textit{The Disenchantments of Love}, 1.
woman there’s a treacherous man, for all loose women there are as many cruel men and, when you think about it, it’s men who are the cause of women’s faults.\textsuperscript{148}

Zayas proceeded in statements such as this to challenge literary and societal viewpoints of women being the emotionally weaker sex. For Zayas it was important to emphasize the idea that women were not all inferior and that men should treat women better. As Zayas’s character Lisis said, “It’s not right for men to expand their disregard for women and apply it to all women without exception as if it were the original sin.”\textsuperscript{149} Zayas here challenged the notion that women were more prone to being deceitful and deceived by suggesting that there were as many men as there were women with faults. Zayas did not believe in the conservative ideas that women were emotionally weaker. Instead, Zayas asserted that both sexes had emotionally weak and strong individuals. Zayas was indeed bolder in her descriptions of men, women, and the court in her novelas than she was in her plays. As Robert Bayliss explains, there is no evidence of a public performance of \textit{La Traición}, but at the very least Zayas wrote it with a public performance in mind and therefore, her portrayals were more complex than in the \textit{Disenchantments}.\textsuperscript{150} However, Zayas’s portrayal of men and their behavior in the \textit{Disenchantments} displayed her self-confidence, which in hindsight was an audacious move as the reception for the novelas was widespread.\textsuperscript{151}

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\textsuperscript{150} Robert Bayliss, “Feminism and Marí a de Zayas’s Exemplary Comedy, \textit{La Traición en la Amistad},” \textit{Hispanic Review} 76.1 (2008), 12.
\textsuperscript{151} Bayliss, “Feminism and Marí a de Zayas’s Exemplary Comedy, ” 5.
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Zayas's audaciousness resembles that of her counterpart María de Guevara, who in her treatises addressed the kings of Spain directly. Zayas’s *Disenchantments* addressed an entire kingdom of readers with similar intentions. Zayas proposed a return to virtue by portraying male characters that ruined the lives of the women associated with them. The male characters that Zayas created then represented the opposite of the masculine ideal that Luisa de Padilla proposed in her treatises. The content produced by Zayas certainly showed the influence of decline and the state of Spanish empire in the seventeenth century. Zayas wrote the *Disenchantments* in the 1640s in the midst and aftermath of the revolts in Italy, the Netherlands, and Catalonia where the Spanish military was thinly stretched throughout Europe. Because of the military demand for men, concerns over effeminization were prevalent. These ideas were also a theme present in Zayas’s *Disenchantments*, where she displayed a different aspect of her attitude on masculinity in looking down on men who avoided military service. Susan Paun de García’s chapter, “Zayas’s Ideal Masculine,” centers on the argument that men’s dress was an important element of how Zayas viewed Spanish masculinity. Particularly, García proposes that Zayas concerned herself with the ways that men in her time dressed and conducted themselves to the point that their vanity compromised their performance.¹⁵² Zayas’s tenth *Disenchantment* addressed ideas like changing fashions, the nobility, and their refusal to fulfill their oaths, vows, and duties.

Male dress changed in seventeenth century Spain from rigid, military influenced costumes from the sixteenth century to more ornate designs that still remained subdued

¹⁵² García, “Zayas’s Ideal of the Masculine,” 254.
In color. In the sixteenth century, male dress was armor-inspired and accentuated the male body through padding in the arms and legs to show strength and brought focus to the genitalia as well with a codpiece or with a sword. By the seventeenth century, Spanish fashion changed and French styles entered Spanish culture. According to García, French fashion was popular in Germany and England, but not in Spain, yet, French style was prevalent enough in Madrid for Zayas to label it as effeminate.

The rise of France and its interference in the Thirty Years War was a circumstance of the seventeenth century that worried many Spaniards. The cultural influence of the French over Spanish culture was a turn in the tide of Spanish strength, for when before Spanish culture was dominant in the continent, French culture now made incursions into Spain. Apprehensions concerning the state of the Spanish nobility and masculinity were rampant in the seventeenth century, as Spanish defeat seemed like more and more of a possibility each day. By Philip IV’s reign constant conflict and the rebellions of the 1640s worsened Spain’s financial state. Conquest and military prowess defined Spanish masculinity since the Reconquista and as military defeats were beginning to be commonplace, some authors, like Zayas, examined the Spanish man and determined that effeminization was setting in when he saw men’s behavior and appearance. When Zayas wrote about what Spanish men were doing and compared it to what she believed they were supposed to do she was disappointed:

\[\text{153} \text{ García, “Zayas’s Ideal of the Masculine,” 261-262.}\]
\[\text{154} \text{ García, “Zayas’s Ideal of the Masculine,” 261.}\]
\[\text{155} \text{ García, “Zayas’s Ideal of the Masculine,” 263.}\]
\[\text{156} \text{ García, “Zayas’s Ideal of the Masculine,” 263.}\]
So this is Spanish valor! How can the Castilian spirit tolerate this! Some clever writer has said that the French have stolen Spanish courage and you have stolen French fashion.\textsuperscript{157}

For Zayas, a rising power that defeated Spanish men signified the end of Spanish dominance in Europe, but also adopted French culture, which further showed their capitulation to their French enemies. Not only was surrender on the battlefield, but it was at the home front as well. Zayas’s narrator in the tenth \textit{Desengaño} also mentioned that the Spanish noblemen only viewed their noble titles as adornments that mirrored “silk stockings and curly locks.”\textsuperscript{158} In proposing that Spanish men were no longer performing in their masculine duties, Zayas began to question the substance of Spanish manhood and concluded that effeminacy was the culprit. However, the root of effeminacy in Zayas’s point of view was Spanish men and their ill treatment of women. As brothers, husbands, and fathers Spanish men had to protect their homes and their women from harm. This meant not only that they fought on the battlefield with their king, but also treated their women with respect. Zayas explains that Spanish men and their failure to protect and honor their women was an important cause of the effeminacy that plagued Spanish manhood.\textsuperscript{159} By becoming passive, Spanish men failed to protect their country and their women and instead preferred to indulge themselves:

Where do you think the lack of courage you all exhibit comes from? That lets you tolerate the enemy within Spanish borders, and all while our king is doing battle you sit in the park and stroll along the river all dolled up in feminine frippery? . . . Aren’t you ashamed to be here at court, donning your gala outfits and curling your hair, strolling

\begin{itemize}
\item Zayas, “The Ravages of Vice,” 401.
\item Zayas, “The Ravages of Vice,” 400.
\item Zayas, “The Ravages of Vice,” 400.
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through parks and gallivanting in carriages instead of defending us?\footnote{Zayas, “The Ravages of Vice,” 400.}

Zayas answered the first question by saying that men’s lack of courage came from holding women in low esteem. Zayas used the second question as a rhetorical device to shame men for their indulgence, and suggested that if men wanted their valor and honor back, they should respect and honor women again.

Zayas’s mention of “feminine frippery” is an example of Spanish men not representing themselves as masculine or Spanish. Changes in Spanish fashion led from male costumes accentuating the male body to French inspired dress that hid the body. Zayas believed that men’s public appearances, both in action and in dress, represented their characters as men.\footnote{García, “Zayas’s Ideal of the Masculine,” 264.} The importance of dress to masculinity pertained to men keeping up appearances. Zayas wanted men to dress as the heroes they were supposed to be. Instead of parading in parks to show off their new clothes, she believed that men had to dress as protectors in order to protect their families and the empire.

Just as arbitristas had clamored for Spanish men to regain their manhood by ridding themselves of idleness and effeminacy, Zayas also suggested that Spanish masculinity was at a decline. Although male writers proposed that effeminacy caused the decline of the Spanish, Zayas argued that the crisis of masculinity in seventeenth-century Spain was cause by men’s treatment of women. As Spanish men continued to neglect their duties at home and abroad, Zayas viewed these deeds as caused by a greater problem, their lack of respect for women. Zayas included this view with
nostalgia and wrote that the men that lived under Ferdinand the Catholic were prepared
to fight and die to protect their homes and their women.\textsuperscript{162} This nostalgic view of
masculinity and Zayas's need to see change in men's behavior had the same
characteristics as the treatises that María de Guevara and Luisa de Padilla wrote.
Seventeenth-century female perspectives of masculinity comprised of the same
concerns that men wrote and thought about. In her fiction, María de Zayas expressed a
need for the return of virtuous masculinity, just as her counterparts did.

ANA CARO MALLÉN DE SOTO AND DECLINE

While information on María de Zayas's life is rare, sources that recount her friend
Ana Caro’s life are more abundant. Born circa 1600, Ana Caro lived in Sevilla, but a
short stint living in Madrid with Zayas in 1637 was an influence on her feminist
attitudes.\textsuperscript{163} Caro’s two most famous and influential plays, \textit{El conde Partinuplés} and
\textit{Valor, agravio, y mujer}, are among the few complete titles that have survived and they
each contained lead female characters that displayed masculine qualities. The female
leads in Caro’s works were strong and independent women that shaped their destinies
and sought retribution for the wrongs done onto them.\textsuperscript{164} In \textit{Valor, agravio, y mujer}
Caro’s protagonist, Leonor de Ribera, looked to recover from don Juan’s abandonment
and followed him to Flanders, took on the male persona Leonardo Ponce de León, and

\textsuperscript{162} Zayas, “The Ravages of Vice,” 400.
\textsuperscript{163} Ruth Lundelus, “Ana Caro: Spanish Poet and Dramatist” in \textit{Women Writers of
the Seventeenth Century}, eds. Katharina M. Wilson and Frank J. Warnke (Athens, GA:
The University of Georgia Press, 1989), 230; Teresa Scott Soufas ed., \textit{Women’s Acts:
Plays by Women Dramatists of the Golden Age} (Lexington, KY: University Press of
Kentucky, 1997), 133.
\textsuperscript{164} Mujíca, \textit{Women Writers of Early Modern Spain}, 177.
proceeded to attempt to assassinate her *burlador*. In Caro’s plays, the women ceased to be objects of desire and began to be agents of their futures in response to men’s behavior. The some of the men in Caro’s plays acted deceitful in the same ways that they did in Zayas’s *Desengaños* and *La traición*, but unlike the women of the *Disenchantments*, women like Leonor in Caro’s plays fought back. On the one hand, Caro’s *mujer varonil* exhibited strength and self-confidence, and on the other, the men who wronged them exhibited cowardice. For Ruth Lundelus, Ana Caro was traditional and revolutionary at the same time and adhered to the traditions of her day’s patriarchal society while fantasizing about the reversal of gender roles in society.\(^{165}\)

In Caro’s other play, *El conde Partinuplés*, she included the *mujer varonil*, but furthermore, featured examples of masculine weakness and cowardice. Caro presented the *Partinuplés* as a weak, immature, and cowardly man who wrongs women, but in the course of his journey shows signs that he could improve. These kinds of changes however, are rare and far between. As the *mujer esquiva*, Rosaura rejects marriage with him, but eventually overcomes some of her own faults and chooses to marry him. Rosaura’s choice is a problem because of the *Partinuplés’s* involvement with another, Lisbella. As Judith Whitemack suggests, Rosaura’s choice threatens Lisbella, because if the *Partinuplés* chooses Rosaura he must betray Lisbella, meaning he could then betray her.\(^{166}\) The narrative highlighted weakness and betrayal as important themes associated with the *Partinuplés*, a nobleman in his own right.

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\(^{165}\) Lundelus, “Ana Caro: Spanish Woman Poet and Dramatist,” 231.

Betrayal as a device is common in this play as well as Zayas’s play and novellas and demonstrates the negative aspects of what these women observed in society. The virtuous masculinity that these authors proposed comprised of the rejection of betrayal. Honorable men with virtue kept their word and in doing so treated women with respect.

Both Zayas and Caro portrayed men who neglected their duties to the women in their lives, the neglect of masculine duty was a significant worry in seventeenth-century Spain as it was involved in military conflicts throughout Europe. Zayas presented this idea in The Ravages of Vice at a time when the Thirty Years War was coming to a head. Shortly after Zayas published the Desengaños in 1647, the Peace of Westphalia ended hostilities in Europe in 1648. While peace was what the Spanish military and purse needed, many Spaniards saw the end of the war as a defeat. Taking such attitudes and historical circumstances into consideration, the themes of weakness and cowardice were not only concerns women had about their individual honor, but they were also anxieties Spanish people had when they had a war to win. When Zayas advocated for the return of virtue and virtuous masculinity, she wanted to see a change in how men acted toward women, but in demonstrating how men behaved in society, their dress while walking in public parks for example, Zayas portrayed men who were more interested in indulging in vice rather than protecting their women and their country.

The male characters and the behavior that Zayas and Caro portrayed in their stories are examples of how decline, gender, and literature intertwined in the seventeenth century. These authors observed the decline of the Spanish empire, Spanish men’s behavior, and the failure of both to fulfill expectations. Just as male authors viewed manhood with nostalgic veils, women authors, too, looked to the past for
examples of ideal behavior. This nostalgia reinforced female authors’ need for change in relations between men and women where they encouraged men to treat their wives better. For women like Zayas, nostalgic masculinity meant that men were honorable, honest, valiant, and filled the roles of providers and protectors. A return to that ideal state was a return to virtuous masculinity, where along with those traits, men displayed better treatment of the women in their lives.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

The “golden age” of Spanish literature was a period when female authors took their newfound popularity and produced scores of treatises, novels, short stories, poems, and plays that reflected Spanish society as well as their own interactions and experiences in early modern Spain. These titles included depictions of male behavior, relationships between men and women, female friendships, violence against women, cowardice, betrayal, as well as non-fictional references to historical figures to emphasize virtuous masculinity. Whether these authors wrote entertaining works of fiction or whether they wrote treatises and essays that addressed serious problems directly, these women used their voice and entered the seventeenth-century debate on the decline of the Spanish empire. Spanish masculinity determined that Spanish men were to protect, defend, provide, and respect what they held dear and not gallivant and fall into vices. Female authors proposed that the most important of the masculine duties was to treat women well because that was how the men of the past, when Spain was successful, treated their women. The nostalgia that Luisa de Padilla wrote with was influential in the development of her individual definition of virtuous masculinity.

To contrast images of triumphant knights and ladies, María de Zayas and Ana Caro created male characters that displayed less than admirable qualities. The female characters they created however displayed assertiveness and cleverness that led them on paths to get even with those who wronged them. Through these characters, Zayas and Caro displayed the extremes of how some of the nobility behaved. Zayas in
particular displayed the hypocrisy of the Spanish nobility in *La traición*. Her narrator in the *Disenchantments* was audacious, and through her, Zayas proposed that men needed to treat women better. On the surface, these authors displayed proto-feminist views, but in the calls for the better treatment of women, there was a theory that to achieve such a goal, Spanish men had to better themselves. This improvement forward or to the “good old days” was virtuous masculinity. While the cowards in Caro’s plays and the deceivers and abusers in Zayas’s stories and play did not represent the ideal, Zayas and Caro presented them as examples of how bad Spanish men had become.

Guevara, Padilla, Zayas, and Caro presented an idea of manhood that depended on virtue. Virtuous masculinity was a nostalgic set of standards for masculine behavior that included many of the traditional aspects of being a man such as financial stability, courage, and sexual performance, but emphasized religious piety and respect for women. In seventeenth-century Spain, decline influenced female authors and they created a nostalgic standard for seventeenth-century Spanish men, which was virtuous masculinity. Women writers drew on precedents of Spanish men acting in chivalrous and caring ways toward the women in their lives to produce a nostalgic view of what Spanish masculinity had to be. The idea that Spanish masculinity depended on men’s treatment of women made women authors’ beliefs regarding masculinity new even though they referenced examples from the golden age of the court under Ferdinand and Isabella.

The quest to find virtue altered how authors presented men and defined masculinity. Certainly, the emergence of decline stimulated the quest for the rebirth of Spanish manhood as Spanish society began to change. The rise of France in the
seventeenth century, failed reforms, and retrospectives into what a successful past fueled near apocalyptic attitudes concerning Spanish problems in the seventeenth century. The quest for virtue is evidence of decline because such a quest would not have come had Spain experienced success in the seventeenth century. Decline was not just a period of economic downturns and military defeats but also time when Spanish society debated the essence of “Spanishness.” The experience in the New World held some importance in the development of the Spanish identity. In the terms of masculinity and decline, the New World provided new economic opportunities, but also a new conquest to pad the Spanish ego. However, the deterioration of the Castilian economy and population had significant ties to the New World. Castilian men and women migrated to the New World after the Castilian economy could no longer afford to feed its large population. The women writers referenced in this thesis all represented the nobility on the peninsula itself and primarily addressed Spaniards living in Spain during the seventeenth century. For further investigation, it would be productive to compare the attitudes of women writers in the colonies with those in Spain and to consider the additional influence of the native population on ideas of Spanish manhood in a global context.

Gender was an important component of Spanish self-perception and through self-analysis, Spanish authors found new ways to describe Spanish men and women and the relationships between them. Gender in the context of the decline of the Spanish empire also had significance in the power dynamics within the politics of Spain. Guevara, for example, explicitly referenced these dynamics when she suggested that the king had to involve himself in government more directly instead of allowing his
underlings to rule for him. As Joan Scott explains, gender can be a way to analyze politics. For the study of the decline of the Spanish empire, gender played an important part in the creation of Spanish identity. For example, Spanish triumphalism had its roots in the successes of rulers like Ferdinand and Isabella who exemplified ideal kingship, queenship, masculinity, and femininity. Spanish authors, like the ones described in this thesis, filled their works with references to the ideal masculinity of the past and used that idea to postulate the causes of and solutions to decline. Female authors, in particular, used gender as a way to enter the debate on decline and determined that Spain’s situation could be improved if Spanish men improved themselves.

With the basis of the Spanish economy in the Castilian countryside and inflation changing how Spaniards lived, worries over how the Castilian workforce changed in attitude were legitimate. The decline of the Castilian countryside’s ability to produce was an important factor in Spanish decline as the Castilian economy could no longer support Spanish expeditions and colonial rule as easily as it once could. These anxieties fueled arbitrista arguments for reform but also Olivares’s calls for the return of traditional modes of government and society. Under Philip IV’s government, nostalgic attempts at reform were commonplace as the Spanish crown hoped to reap the same rewards that Charles V’s government gained. In seventeenth-century Spain, nostalgia was an important aspect of the Spanish attitudes and their perceptions of decline. Much like many of the kingdom’s ministers nostalgically looked to institute reforms to bring back traditional success, female authors displayed nostalgia when they...

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portrayed male characters and wrote about male behavior in conduct manuals. Women writers’ perception of decline, then, included perceptions of masculinity that needed to return to traditional values, much like a declining empire needed to return to tradition. Female writers called for the return of virtue, piety, and honor with objectives that matched sentiments that Spanish society shared, which were that Spain and its decline was because Spanish society waned from the values that helped Spain achieve greatness. For Spanish men, piety, honor, and virtue were more important than ever and women wanted to emphasize the improvement of women’s lives with their husbands. Virtuous masculinity represented the perception that the decline of the Spanish empire was the decline of Spanish values. Reforms that mimicked past successes and calls for better male behavior in conduct manuals and other pieces of literature revealed that decline was perceived to be much deeper than just economic and military problems. Women writers entered the debate on decline with the objective to better the condition of women by improving Spanish manhood, which in turn would upgrade Spain itself.
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