



## Lovers and Mothers in Antonio García Gutiérrez's *El trovador*

Christine Blackshaw-Naberhaus

Since the emergence of feminist literary criticism over four decades ago, scholars have been posing “new questions about old texts” (Tuttle 184), and in the field of Nineteenth-Century Spanish studies, questions Bridget Aldaraca, Lou Charnon-Deutsch, Catherine Jagoe, Susan Kirkpatrick, Jo Labanyi, Linda Materna and Karen Rauch have advanced continue to inform our understanding of gender discourse in nineteenth-century Spain. More specifically, Labanyi, Kirkpatrick, and Materna have elucidated how Spanish Romantic plays “dramatize the contradictions inherent in liberal individualism” (Labanyi 8). In their assessment, the progressive ideological project of the early nineteenth century, while endeavoring to expand forms of self-expression for the male bourgeois subject, also tended to contain and define the female voice “within the limitations of the love plot,” making the Romantic heroine the instrument through which the hero, through possessing her, could simultaneously “enter the phallic order of the father” as well as rebel against it (Materna 145). The love plot, as Labanyi contends, limits the heroine to living out her “frustrated desire for agency” by subjugating her will to an “idealized man of action,” or the Spanish Romantic hero, and this subjugation often portends both the heroine’s and the hero’s deaths (20). As a result, the Spanish Romantic hero’s relationship with the heroine simultaneously underscores the destructiveness of the relations between the sexes while it demonstrates “a subtle awareness of the gendered nature of subject formation” in the liberal Romantic project (Labanyi 23).

One notable example of a female character who deviates from her prescribed role is *El trovador*’s Azucena. In her feminist psychoanalytic reading of *El trovador* and three other canonical Spanish Romantic dramas—*Don Álvaro o la fuerza del sino*, *Los amantes de Teruel*, and *La conjuración de Venecia*—Labanyi argues that Azucena is the archetypal “omnipotent, devouring archaic mother” who is the “counterpoint to the Romantic hero’s struggle for selfhood” (17-18). More recently, however, María Luisa Guardiola has posited that Azucena and her gypsy culture symbolize Antonio García Gutiérrez’s and liberal Spanish Romantics’ longing to create a new sociopolitical order “como alternativa al antiguo código aristocrático” (173). For Guardiola, Azucena is a “madre antes que bruja,” through whom Manrique can hope to become “un ser superior y completo en el que se combinan los elementos de juicio y prudencia con la sensibilidad” (173).

Labanyi's and Guardiola's divergent conclusions about Azucena's symbolic function in *El trovador* will be a point of departure for my own analysis. David Gies maintains that García Gutiérrez was "the Spanish dramatist who remained most faithful to the Romantic creed" throughout his career (118). Nonetheless, as I hope to demonstrate, the playwright, like other liberal Romantics, was irresolute about the supplanting of the *Antiguo Régimen*: the Church, the aristocracy, and the monarchy. As a woman and an outlander, Azucena is a projection of García Gutiérrez's ambivalence. Her representation varies between symbolizing the negative and the positive aspects of an alternative sociopolitical order, and between being an archetypal and a sympathetically human figure. I begin my analysis with the Christian patriarchal order and the role that women in general, and Leonor in particular, perform in the Romantic hero's struggle with the *Antiguo Régimen*. I then shift my focus to Azucena, whose society is antithetical to the Count's, and discuss how she defies and conforms to these same conventional gender norms.

### **"Nadie mejor que yo puede saber esta historia"**

In opening scenes of *El trovador*, Nuño's squire Jimeno recounts how a gypsy woman kidnapped and allegedly murdered Nuño's older brother. This family tragedy, and the romantic rivalry between Nuño (the Conde de Luna) and Manrique (a nameless troubadour), provide the impetus for the dramatic tension throughout the play. The opening narrative also provides insight into the Aragonese aristocracy, to which Manrique aspires, and to which Azucena poses a threat. Members of this social class focus exclusively on male relationships: Jimeno begins with a description of the late Count, Nuño's father, who served the former king of Aragon and who "siempre estaba al lado de su Alteza" (112).<sup>1</sup> He then relates how the Count's eldest son don Juan (who the audience later learns is Manrique) purportedly died. None of the characters mention the late Count's wife, the boys' mother, so the audience is left to wonder about her whereabouts.<sup>2</sup>

This omission of the mother was not unique to García Gutiérrez or *El trovador*; in fact, the protagonist's mother does not appear in any of the canonical plays from this period. The only time the hero accounts for his mother's absence is in Martínez de la Rosa's *La conjuración de Venecia*, when Rugiero informs his lover Laura that his mother died years before (213). One notable exception to this pattern is García Gutiérrez's *El paje*: Ferrando's biological mother Blanca is very much alive, and she becomes an unwitting object of her son's affection and the primary cause of his tragic suicide. Nonetheless, the woman whom Ferrando believes to be his mother, the woman who raised him after Blanca abandoned him, died a few years earlier.

According to Labanyi, eradicating the mother from the Spanish Romantic hero's trajectory allows him to exorcise her "powers by separating from origins and creating himself from zero, in an act of rebirthing that writes the mother out of the story" (18). In *El trovador* Jimeno, Nuño's eldest male squire, achieves this when he confidently "gives birth" to the story that unfolds, stating "nadie mejor que yo puede saber esa historia" (111). Notably, this is a story that never includes Manrique or Nuño's biological mother.

In her absence, Jimeno names and describes the main characters—Nuño, Manrique, Leonor and Azucena—before they emerge in subsequent scenes.

The Romantic heroine's mother is likewise absent from most Spanish Romantic dramas. When heroines and other characters recall their mothers, moreover, it is often unfavorably. *El trovador's* Leonor curses her mother for having given birth to a tyrant instead of a brother (118); in *Don Álvaro* Leonor's mother is remembered as vain, haughty, and ill-tempered (Rivas 75). Isabel's mother is alive in Hartzenbusch's *Los amantes de Teruel*, but she is an adulteress, and her sin—combined with the Muslim woman Zulima's scheming—causes the lovers' separation and eventual deaths. Consequently, while the Romantic hero often reunites with his father or father-substitute, with whom he ultimately identifies, “the heroine attempts femininity by identifying with the mother as a devalued object and [by] renouncing the self,” and this often leads to her demise (Labanyi 19).

Leonor appears in the second scene of the play, where she argues with her brother about her refusal to marry Nuño. Guillén reminds his sister that he has a right to dispose of her as he sees fit, “o soy o no vuestro hermano” (118). She can either accept Nuño's proposal or she can spend the rest of her life in a convent. Manrique, “un simple trovador,” is not a viable husband for a woman of her social class (117). Despite her love for Manrique, Leonor does not insist on marrying her beloved against her brother's wishes. Instead, she tells him that she prefers living in a convent to having Nuño, a man she does not love, as a spouse. Guillén, however, has already promised the Count that Leonor will marry him (118).

During the second act of the play, when she decides to become a nun after she believes Manrique has died, Leonor commits the ultimate act of self-denial. Indeed, Leonor disobeys Guillén through her continued refusal to marry Nuño. Still, she does not critique the ideology that governs his actions, nor does she endeavor to rebel against the Christian patriarchal order. Instead, she sees her impending marriage to God as a symbolic death, stating, “[y]a no hay en el universo nada que me haga apreciar esta vida que aborrezco [. . .] ya no hay felicidad, ni la quiero en el mundo para mí; sólo morir apetezco” (138). Her words echo Leonor's in *Don Álvaro* when she enters a monastery disguised as a man and confesses to the priest, “vengo resuelta, lo he dicho, a sepultarme por siempre en la tumba de estos riscos” (Rivas 104). Neither *El trovador's* nor *Don Álvaro's* heroines seek to disempower the Christian patriarchy that limits their agency. Instead, both women seem to accept that their love for Manrique and don Álvaro, respectively, and their decision to act upon this love, signifies their social nonexistence (Kirkpatrick 119).

In the Aragonese aristocracy, women are either absent or they exist solely as instruments of exchange between men. Manrique has no ties to other men—he has no last name or noble title—and because of this Guillén does not recognize him as a legitimate suitor for his sister. Although he has noble carriage, Manrique is nonetheless “un hombre sin solar,” or a man without noble lineage, with no last name or coat of arms (116).<sup>3</sup> Nuño initially refuses to engage in a duel with him because to do so with an “hidalgo de pobre cuna” would be undignified for a man of his social class (124). Manrique himself confesses

that he longs for a last name (148) and he implores Leonor to abandon him because he is the fatherless son of a gypsy woman (171).

Manrique is not the only Romantic hero who lacks paternal heritage, and who is marginalized socially because of this deficiency. In the fourth act of *Don Álvaro*, Leonor's brother Carlos reminds don Álvaro that in addition to dishonoring the de Vargas family, the protagonist is “un desconocido [. . .] Sin padre, sin apellido,” and therefore not worthy of his friendship (139). *La conjuración de Venecia*'s Rugiero laments to his lover Laura that he is “solo, huérfano, sin amparo ni abrigo. . . sin saber a quiénes debo el ser, ni siquiera la tierra en que nací” (Martínez de la Rosa 213). Likewise, in *El paje*, one of García Gutiérrez's plays, Ferrando laments that he cannot tell his beloved Blanca his grandfathers' names (88). In all the aforementioned plays, the heroes are secretly noble or legitimate members of the society to which they hope to belong and this accounts for their noble gait and character. Nonetheless, because they are unaware of their origins (or, in don Álvaro's case, he is forced to conceal them), they have to earn social stature. In Manrique's case, he attempts to become a legitimate member of Aragonese society by defending one of the pretenders to the throne.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, the Count and his soldiers still refuse to recognize Manrique's obvious nobility.

Nuño's treatment of Manrique and Leonor underscores the tyrannical and corrupt nature of the *Antiguo Régimen*, particularly when it comes to its treatment of women. During the second act of *El trovador*, Nuño and Guillén discuss how Leonor, believing that Manrique died as a result of a duel with Nuño, is planning to take her vows as a nun. Enraged by Leonor's continued refusal to wed, Nuño plans to visit the convent, to kidnap her, and to force her to marry him. Guillén explains that his sister is resolute in becoming a nun and he has been unable to convince her otherwise, not even with threats, to which Nuño responds angrily:

Pues bien: la arrebataré  
a los pies del mismo altar.  
Si ella no me quiere amar...  
yo a amarme la obligaré. (132)

For Nuño, acquiring Leonor, even violently and by force (“la arrebataré”), is preferable to allowing her to exercise her limited agency in a patriarchal society. When Guillén begs his friend not to dishonor his noble family by kidnapping Leonor, Nuño falsely promises that he will not carry out his threat. As soon as Guillén is out of earshot, however, Nuño sends his soldiers Guzmán and Ferrando to spy on Leonor and asks them to prevent her from professing. He assures them they will not be punished for their actions because he is the newly appointed Chief Justice of Aragon (134). Nuño's abuse of his recent political appointment further highlights the ignoble and corrupt nature of the *Antiguo Régimen* and those who fight to maintain it (Guardiola 173).

Sadly, Manrique likewise fails to recognize Leonor's subjectivity. During the lovers' first dialog on stage, he describes his beloved as an ideal—an “ángel hermoso”—as opposed to “a subject of equal standing” (Labanyi 17). In her role as angel she must constantly assure her lover, as Manrique's own words suggest: “[M]e amas, ¿es verdad? Lo creo porque

creerte deseo para amarte y para existir. Porque me fuera la muerte más grata que tu desdén” (122). During the second act of the play, when Manrique sneaks into the convent to see Leonor, he seems, at least initially, to understand and respect her wishes. His main objective is to remain unseen—“que no me encuentre” (141)—and not to disrupt her taking the veil. Manrique is initially committed to this decision, despite his longing for Leonor: “[S]i supiera que aún existo para adorarla...No, no...Ya olvidarte debo yo, esposa de Jesucristo” (140).

Nonetheless, when he realizes that Nuño’s men are trying to kidnap Leonor, and that she still loves him, Manrique determines that not even God Himself can prevent the lovers from reuniting (156). Moments later, when Manrique approaches Leonor, she begs him to leave her in the convent so she is not tempted to capitulate to their “pasión infernal” (154). Manrique, sadly, is dismissive of her spiritual turmoil. When Leonor faints he immediately takes her from the convent, making her an instrument of his own social, political, and existential rebellion.

In Labanyi’s analysis, once the heroine has submitted herself completely to the Romantic hero and his rebellion she begins to live entirely through him “at the expense of having no life without him” (22). Leonor submits to Manrique immediately after she leaves the convent. When she learns that Manrique is a gypsy woman’s son, she refuses to reject him, even though Manrique admits that a woman of her social stature would be justified in doing so. Instead of rebuffing her lover, Leonor repeatedly offers to lay down her own life to save Manrique’s. First, when Manrique states that he will avenge his beloved mother’s death, Leonor declares, “[S]i necesitas mi sangre, aquí la tienes” (172). Subsequently, when Manrique insists on rescuing his mother from the Count, Leonor plans to accompany him, and she assures him:

Yo opondré mi pecho al hierro  
que tu vida amenazare;  
sí, y a falta de otro muro,  
muro será mi cadáver. (172)

She offers her own body as a shield so Manrique may live, and if her lover is to die anyway she wishes to die by his side (173). Even after Manrique abandons Leonor, she follows him to Zaragoza and agrees to marry Nuño if he will pardon Manrique. Unbeknownst to the two men, Leonor has poisoned herself so that she does not have to fulfill this promise and she dies beside Manrique outside his prison cell. Leonor’s suicide is arguably a rebellion against God since suicide is taboo within Catholic doctrine. Nonetheless, like don Álvaro, Leonor “does not cry out in protest against a God of anguish, suffering and death” (Cardwell 571) in her final moments on earth, although she does lament that her life was short-lived and full of suffering (194). Instead, she tells Manrique that she is dying young “para amarte consagrada” (194). Therefore, her suicide is not only the ultimate expression of idolatry, it is also, in Labanyi’s words, “the ultimate self-debasement of condemning herself to hell by committing suicide to save him” (20).

Leonor’s unhappy trajectory underscores women’s limited agency in both the *Antiguo Régimen* and the incipient bourgeois capitalist order. In both cases, Leonor exists solely as

an object of exchange between men or as a way that Manrique can defy the Christian patriarchal order. As a result, Leonor's sole refuge is the convent, where she can become a bride of Christ in the hopes of attaining salvation through God. Unfortunately, neither man is content to allow her to live undisturbed on the margins of the competing sociopolitical orders. Eventually, Nuño's and Manrique's harassment of Leonor drives her to suicide, which not only alienates her from society but also from God. Such is the fate of the woman who attempts to survive in both the Christian patriarchal and the incipient bourgeois capitalist social orders. Her counterpart Azucena lives outside Aragonese society and her trajectory diverges greatly from her prospective daughter-in-law's.

**“Por una madre morir, Leonor, es muerte envidiable”**

Azucena's presence is felt from the outset of *El trovador* as Jimeno recounts the tragic tale of how Nuño's brother died at the hands of a gypsy woman. During her visits, Azucena's mother was so powerful that she was able to forge a bond with the young boy “sin decir palabra” and merely by looking at him while he slept (112). By usurping the gaze—a traditionally male privilege, since the female is the “object of beauty, created and appreciated by the male” (Six 201)—and by taking advantage of the young boy's passive, sleeping state, Azucena's mother presented an immediate threat to the patriarchy. Before the narrative continues, Ferrando interrupts Jimeno to insist that this older gypsy woman must have been a witch (112). Ferrando's interjection brings to mind Gilbert and Gubar's argument that male authors, when presented with an intransigent, autonomous female, often allay their anxieties by calling this type of character derogatory names like “witch, bitch, fiend, [or] monster” (28).

Following the gypsy woman's visit, which was curtailed when the servants found her and ejected her from the Count's home, the young boy's physical and emotional state worsened dramatically—“empezó a enflaquecer el niño, a llorar continuamente, y por último, a los pocos días cayó gravemente enfermo”—leading the Count's men to conclude that the gypsy woman must have cast a spell on him (112). To punish her, and in the hopes of restoring the young boy's health, the Count's soldiers captured Azucena's mother and burned her at the stake, and the young man's health improved (113). In retaliation, Azucena kidnapped the Count's son and threw him in a fire. Since then, her mother still haunts the Aljafería palace where Nuño lives. Guillén's squire, Ortiz, reports that he sees her regularly taking the form of an owl or a raven, haunting him as he desperately tries to recite the Our Father (114).

Azucena finally surfaces in the third act of *El trovador*, when Manrique returns home to visit her. This is the middle of the play—the third of five acts—and Azucena narrates her own family tragedy. The structure of the work allows the audience to establish parallels between Azucena's community and the Count's and to be conscious of the salient differences between them. To begin with, the opening act of *El trovador* takes place in a palace of historical significance for Christians—Aljafería, which was a Muslim stronghold that became the official residence for the Kings of Aragon after the Christians conquered the region in the late ninth century (111). Aljafería represents the men's history—it is now the home of a Christian king, whose ancestors conquered a Muslim king (111). Moreover,

as previously stated, the characters make no mention of late Count's wife, the boys' mother.

Conversely, the setting for the third act of *El trovador* is a place of personal significance for Azucena: she lives in a shack that she constructed upon the site where her mother died years earlier (146). The history of her home—in addition to the house's conventional symbolic association with the feminine, wisdom, and tradition itself—exemplifies how important Azucena's matriarchal lineage is to her (Cirlot 153). Indeed, she discusses her mother obsessively while omitting her father and her son's father from her family narrative.

As an enclosed space tied strongly to the maternal history, Azucena's shanty can also be read as a symbolic womb to which Manrique returns to learn, inadvertently, the true story of his origins. This is also the place where, thanks to a similar bonfire to the one burning in the third act of *El trovador*, Manrique was “reborn” as Azucena's son. In this space, Azucena reaffirms his false identity as her son, and this causes Manrique to confess his complete submission to her: “mi objeto era para haceros feliz” and, later, “yo no quiero ser sino vuestro hijo” (146; 149). The bonfire—the only illumination in the dark cabin—is arguably a symbol for Azucena herself: standing over this blaze, she represents the singular source of light or truth about Manrique's identity.

Azucena's recounting of her family narrative bolsters Labanyi's argument that Romantics unconsciously associated non-Christian culture—such as the Medieval Muslim Spain or, in this case, gypsy territory—with places of unchecked female power. By contrast, Christian Spain, or Aragon in *El trovador*, could be interpreted as a space where “the roles of the sexes were clearly opposed” (Labanyi 15). In the cabin, where the roles of the sexes are clearly inverted, Azucena asserts her textual authority by uttering the first words of the third act and by recounting and recreating Jimeno's narrative from the first act. She does so using similar words to establish her authority: “[T]ú no conoces esta historia” (145). However, she simultaneously undermines her own narrative authority by adding “aunque nadie mejor que tú pudiera saberla” (145). She further betrays herself by involuntarily confessing Manrique's true identity and subsequently denying it vehemently. All of this calls to question her insistence that her mother “nunca había hecho daño a nadie” and that others falsely accused her of being a witch and of having given the evil eye to a nobleman's son (146).

While Jimeno's narrative focuses on how a gypsy woman separated a father from his son, Azucena complains to Manrique that he has allowed a Christian soldier, don Diego de Haro, to sever the mother-son bond: “[T]e separaste tan niño de mi lado, ¡ingrato! Abandonaste a tu madre para seguir a un desconocido” (145). For Azucena, this man who has a title (don) and a last name (de Haro) is a stranger or an unrecognizable person precisely because she does not recognize noble titles and last names; they do not exist in her social imagination. For Manrique, conversely, a last name has tremendous significance, for it was his primary motivation for abandoning his mother in the first place: “[A]mbiciono un nombre, un nombre que me falta. Mil veces digo para mí, si yo fuese un Lanuza, un Urrea...” (148).

For Guardiola, Manrique's desire for a last name and his wish to provide material comfort for his mother who lives in poverty demonstrate that, although he spent his childhood outside the Aragonese aristocracy, he "ha sido educado según las máximas de la sociedad del antiguo régimen," in which one's last name, social position, and material wealth determine one's worth (173). He can only realize his social ambitions by leaving his childhood home, where he has lived alone with his mother, and by becoming a soldier in de Haro's army: a male-dominated, Christian community. Military service allows Manrique to assert his prowess and subjugate the Other (in this case, a political enemy), which is essential for attaining subjectivity and he is able to do this under de Haro's leadership (Labanyi 15-6). De Haro's role, therefore, is a substitute father: he enables Manrique to move from his primary identification with this mother to an emulation of the paternal authority which has hitherto been absent.

Although Manrique has attempted to differentiate from his mother, his bond with Azucena will prove difficult to dissolve. Even before he returns to Aragon to rescue Leonor, Manrique foretells his eventual return to his mother and his rejection of the Christian patriarchal order when he asks her "¿Qué me importa un nombre?" (149). Later, after Manrique and Leonor have escaped the convent, Manrique has a prophetic dream in which he and Leonor are nearly engulfed by a hurricane, which is brought about by a "feroz fantasma" who cries out for Manrique to avenge her (169). At the conclusion of this dream, Manrique reaches for Leonor, "y al tocarle osado en polvo se deshizo, que violento llevóse al punto retronando el viento" (169).

In his dream, Manrique unconsciously associates Azucena with death; the phantasm in his dream is presumably Azucena's mother or Azucena herself, for Manrique has recently heard a tale about his grandmother's spirit crying out for vengeance. His fears of being engulfed in the oncoming hurricane, which formed spontaneously just moments before the phantasm appeared, out of a tiny lake, also calls attention to this relationship between death and the maternal, since dangerous waters (such as oceans), hurricanes, and the underworld, are the more destructive symbols of the maternal, according to Carl Jung (15).<sup>5</sup>

The danger of the maternal is emphasized again in the final scenes of *El trovador*, when Manrique is found in a dungeon—a dark, enclosed, womb-like place—with Azucena. Just as the child is completely dependent upon the mother during birth to escape from the womb, during these final scenes Azucena is the only one who can rescue Manrique from Nuño's executioners by revealing the truth about his identity. For Nicholson B. Adams, these final mother-son moments demonstrate Azucena's selfishness. Although she tells Manrique that she loves him, she has been praying for him, and she dreams of running away to the mountains with him, "all the while she knows that a word from her can save him from don Nuño, a word she withholds from him until it is too late" (92).

Instead, Azucena chooses to suppress the truth about Manrique's identity until moments after his death, allowing for Nuño to order his own brother's execution. For Adams, Azucena's final words—"estás vengada" (198)—directed towards her mother and not Manrique, suggest that her desire for revenge, and not her love for Manrique, governs

her actions. For Labanyi, Azucena's parting words "suggest alarmingly that her primary loyalty is to her mother, who can be avenged only by the sacrifice of her 'son'" (17). Charnon-Deutsch reinforces Labanyi's assessment in her study of the gypsy in European literature and art when she concludes the gypsy woman represents a threat to the family, the social system, the nation, and "even sexuality itself, since the man who falls prey to her seductions is often portrayed as a castrated, feminized figure no longer in control of his actions" (240).

Indeed, Azucena's kidnapping of Manrique is a threat to the family, which the Aragonese aristocracy defines as a relationship between a father and his sons. Azucena raises Manrique without a last name or a father-figure. She re-creates his family, and in this new family fathers (and men in general) are absent or incidental; the bonds between the mothers and the daughters are of primary importance. Furthermore, when Azucena conceals Manrique's identity, leading him to believe he is her son, she also prevents him from being a part of the Christian patriarchal order, to which, by virtue of being the Count's son, he "naturally" belongs. She also rears Manrique in an environment where women usurp male privileges, such as the gaze and narrative authority, and they re-create society based on their own (false) foundational narratives. All of this makes Azucena and her mother guilty of posing a pernicious threat to the Aragonese aristocracy, or what Charnon-Deutsch calls "the social system" (240).

The gypsies' threat extends even further than the social system, because Azucena and her mother do not owe allegiance to anyone except each other. While a war of succession rages in Aragon, Azucena does not align herself with any of the seven pretenders to the throne. In her own words, she prefers the liberty of the mountains where her parents have always lived to the Kingdom of Aragon (146). By contrast, Manrique and Nuño defend the Conde de Urgal and Fernando de Antequera, respectively. As I have argued elsewhere, the Romantic hero rarely endeavors to become an independent ruler himself. Rather, he often fights on behalf of a legitimate contender to the throne or against an ethnic or religious outsider who has usurped or threatened to usurp political power (Blackshaw, "Don Álvaro" 67-68). Accordingly the Romantic hero's military service legitimizes monarchical authority. Even when the hero becomes a soldier solely to realize his social ambitions, which is arguably the case with Manrique, he nonetheless affirms the monarchy because he fails to imagine or defend an alternative political system. Therefore, because Azucena is not loyal to a king or emerging nation-state she is a threat to the nation, which in this case is fifteenth-century Aragon.

Azucena's actions culminate in creating a castrated Manrique with limited agency (Labanyi 17-18). Although he exhibits a noble character—the Count's men themselves concede this in the opening scene of *El trovador* (116)—Manrique nonetheless lacks the appropriate last name that would ennoble him in the eyes of the Aragonese aristocracy. Lacking paternal ties, Manrique's sole filial bond is with his mother, and this love causes him to sacrifice his psychological and social ambitions. Manrique's reluctance to differentiate from his mother is foreshadowed even before he leaves the gypsy shanty when he assures her: "[Y]o no quiero sino ser vuestro hijo. ¿Qué me importa un nombre?" (149).

When he is finally reunited with Leonor after forcibly removing her from the convent, Manrique immediately abandons her to return to his mother, even though this means that Nuño and his men will kill him. Leonor presents him with the opportunity to escape his death sentence—an opportunity she afforded him, notably, by sacrificing her own body and soul in the process. Still, Manrique chooses to die with his mother, and it is she who occupies his thoughts during his final moments on stage: he begs the executioners not to tell Azucena that her son has died and he cries out to his mother as the men take him to the guillotine (197). Manrique's tenacious bond with his mother—and his willingness to abandon Leonor to save Azucena—bolsters Charnon-Deutsch's conclusion that the gypsy represents a threat to sexuality itself, since Manrique's love for his mother never allows him to consummate his relationship with Leonor through marriage.

For Guardiola, however, Manrique's inextricable connection to his mother, rather than being destructive, could potentially aid in the creation of a new sociopolitical order that could combine his “sensibilidad [. . .], tanto en la esfera familiar privada, como en el entorno público masculino” (173). Through Manrique's relationship with Azucena, he receives “la protección maternal como alternativa al antiguo código aristocrático bajo el cual se propagaban actitudes negativas en el ambiente familiar” (173). One key characteristic of this alternative society is a rejection of materialism. When Manrique confesses to his mother that his ambitions include rescuing his mother from poverty, Azucena reminds him: “[N]o ambiciono alcázares dorados; tengo bastante con mi libertad y las montañas donde vivieron siempre nuestros padres” (146). Like Nuño, Azucena prefers to live where her family has always lived. Unlike Nuño, Azucena clings to her family history, not because it brings her material or political gain, but because it provides her with emotional sustenance.

Azucena is more dependent on Manrique, however, than on her own family history. When Azucena recounts the story of how she allegedly murdered the Count's son, for example, she confesses to Manrique that, instead of being coldly committed to avenging her mother's death, she was moved by the young boy's pleas for mercy: “¿Quién no se doliera, quién de aquel acerbo dolor? [. . .] ¿No era yo madre también?” (146). During this critical moment in her quest for vengeance, in other words, Azucena's innate maternal compassion caused her momentarily to confuse the Count's son with her own, and this same maternal instinct led Azucena to raise the Count's son as her own, as she later reveals in her monologue: “¿Por qué le perdoné la vida sino para que fuera mi hijo?” (150).

Even Azucena's tragic mistake—concealing Manrique's true identity—is one committed because of filial love as opposed to an unmitigated desire for vengeance. In fact, Azucena never cites vengeance as a motive for concealing Manrique's identity. Instead, she repeatedly expresses a fear that Manrique will abandon her should he ever learn the truth: “[S]i yo le dijera: ‘Tú no eres mi hijo, tu familia lleva un nombre esclarecido, no me pertences’... me despreciaría, y me dejaría abandonada en la vejez” (149-50). Moreover, as Jerry Johnson has rightly observed, if she were interested in avenging her mother's death, Azucena would encourage Manrique to stay in Aragon and murder Nuño.<sup>6</sup> Instead, she prefers that Manrique stay with her in Biscay and that he never return to Aragon, and that is why she is so angry with Manrique at the beginning of the

third act. In view of that, her society is antithetical to the Count's and could be interpreted as an indirect threat to it. However, Azucena does not endeavor to pose a direct threat to the Christian patriarchal order. Like Leonor, she prefers to live outside of it, in the mountains of Biscay where she seldom interacts with anyone and has only her memories. Azucena is even willing to sacrifice her relationship with Manrique, at least in the eyes of the Christian patriarchy, if his denial of her will bring him happiness. Before they part in the middle of the third act, she tells her adoptive son, "[N]o temas: yo no diré que soy tu madre, me contentaré con decírmelo a mí propia y en vanagloriarme interiormente" (149). Ironically, she is willing to deny she is his mother if it can aid Manrique in realizing his social ambitions.

Later in the play, Azucena's love for Manrique and her fear of being "abandonada en la vejez" motivate her to leave the safety of Biscay and to search for Manrique, crossing the imaginary border between gypsy society and the Count's. Azucena's easy ingress into Aragon underscores the fluidity of the boundaries between Christian and non-Christian Spain, and the self and the Other, which is so essential for the Romantic definition of the individual, according to Labanyi (16). As a result, like Zulima's entrance into Christian Spain in *Los amantes de Teruel*, Azucena's travel to Aragon "underscores the cultural crisis which she embodies along with her gender" (Rauch, "Mothers and Other Strangers" 63). For this reason, the Count's men immediately look upon her with suspicion and accuse her of being a spy.

Zulima, however, disguises herself as a Christian male, seeks vengeance on Diego Marsilla, who has rejected her sexual advances, and tells Isabel a false tale of Diego's infidelity to her. By contrast, Azucena neither disguises herself nor denies that she is a gypsy woman when the Count's men identify her as one. Moreover, Azucena expresses no desire for vengeance. She travels to Aragon in search of Manrique, whom she describes as "el consuelo de mi alma [. . .] y el único apoyo de mi vejez desdichada" (164). Her love for her adopted son has the same absolute value as the love Spanish Romantic heroes exhibit for their heroines. Indeed, her description of her filial love is highly similar to Manrique's declaration of love for Leonor when he declares: "[M]i amor, mis esperanzas, tú para mí eres todo" (155). Azucena's love for Manrique is so profound that she is willing to risk losing the freedom she has enjoyed for years in the mountains of Biscay, and even to risk being discovered and punished with death for the crime she committed years before (164). In other words, she is willing to submit to the Christian patriarchy to which she supposedly poses such a threat. Her fear of losing Manrique is deeper than her fear of death because, as she herself proclaims to Nuño, without Manrique "no tengo otra esperanza" (164).

Azucena's maternal love for Manrique is most evident during the final moments of *El trovador* when Nuño informs Azucena of Manrique's impending execution. Realizing that her continued concealment of Manrique's identity will lead to his death, Azucena cries out to her mother's spirit, "[Y]o no puedo; perdóname, le quiero con el alma" (197). She then begs the Count to stop the execution and to allow her to divulge "un secreto terrible" (197), knowing that this revelation will likely lead Manrique to detest her and that she will still be murdered. Although Azucena remains fearful of losing her son to the Count, during the final moments of the drama she prefers losing Manrique to her enemy,

the Count, to losing him to death. This also signifies her submission to the Christian patriarchal order, since her confession will certainly mean that she will die in Aragon, never returning to her beloved Biscay.

From the beginning of Azucena's relationship with Manrique, when he is a helpless child begging for his life, to the conclusion of their relationship, when Nuño forces her to witness Manrique's execution, Azucena remains loyal to her adopted son at the cost of betraying her mother repeatedly. Her devotion suggests that her love for her adopted son is more tenacious than her love for her biological mother. As Azucena herself states, she loves Manrique with her soul, and this forces her to abandon her quest to avenge her mother's death. Sadly though, it is too late for Manrique. Her final words to her mother—"estás vengada," uttered with "un gesto de amargura"—do not imply that she feels triumphant for finally having avenged her mother's death (198). Rather, they reflect the bitter irony of her decision.

Azucena's hesitance in revealing Manrique's true identity surely contributes to the play's tragic denouement. Nonetheless, to blame her entirely is to overlook the role that Nuño, as part of the *Antiguo Régimen*, performs in Manrique's demise. Despite Manrique's noble gait and deeds, Nuño refuses to recognize him as a legitimate member of society because he lacks paternal origins and because Leonor loves him. What is more, Nuño's unremitting hatred for Manrique and his obsession with demonstrating his social superiority leads him to harass Leonor continually—to the point of threatening her with violence—and to ignore, fatefully, Azucena's pleas for him to reveal the "secreto terrible" before continuing with Manrique's execution (73).

Manrique dies at the hands of his brother who stands in for their late father and carries out his vengeance. Likewise, most Spanish Romantic heroes' fathers are directly or indirectly responsible for their sons' deaths. *La conjuración de Venecia*'s Pedro Morosini realizes that Rugiero is his long-lost son only moments before the latter's death (which he himself had decreed); *El paje*'s Rodrigo's complicity in Blanca's deceptions of Ferrando makes him an accessory in his tortured son's suicide. For Rauch, the reversal of the Oedipal paradigm also underscores the overall pessimism of Spanish Romantics who believed that Spain was caught in a "tenacious past which dooms its future" ("A Spanish Oedipus" 493). Consequently, although the mother (Azucena) prevents Manrique from attaining subjectivity and recognition from the Aragonese aristocracy, Nuño, the stand-in for the father, ultimately makes the fateful decision to ignore Azucena and to proceed with the execution.

## Conclusion

*El trovador*'s success in Spain was largely because it depicted, on a symbolic level, the political, social, and existential struggles that the Spaniards were facing in the wake of Fernando VII's death in 1833 and during the First Carlist War (1833–1839) that immediately followed the monarch's demise. The Spanish Romantic hero, who tended to be a self-made man by virtue of his Oedipal ignorance of his origins, appealed to Spanish audiences which were largely comprised of "precisely the 'bourgeois men' who were struggling to understand their place in the new society and anxious to see themselves

reflected, and resolved, on the stage” (Gies 106). For these audiences, a resolution would not occur until a decade later when the prodigal Romantic son submits to the paternal authority in Zorrilla’s *Don Juan Tenorio* and Rivas’s *El desengaño en un sueño*. Certainly, García Gutiérrez does not reconcile the tension between former and emerging sociopolitical orders. On the one hand, Nuño’s actions underscore the destructive, inflexible nature of the traditional sociopolitical order. On the other hand, Manrique confesses that he longs for a father, if but in name. He also defends a prospective monarch and affirms the Christian patriarchal order through his repeated desire to be recognized by its members. All of this suggests, according to Labanyi, that “the [Spanish Romantic] hero would not have challenged the paternal order had he recognized it as such” (16).

Azucena, as a gypsy and a woman, becomes a focal point for García Gutiérrez’s ambivalence towards the social and political transformations taking place in Spain during the time of *El trovador*’s staging. Up until *El trovador*’s final moments, the depiction of Azucena wavers between that of a vengeful harpy and of a “ser superior” (in Guardiola’s assessment) who rejects the materialism of the *Antiguo Régimen*. Throughout *El trovador* Azucena enjoys more freedom—of expression and movement—than her Spanish counterpart Leonor. Ironically, however, unlike her prospective daughter-in-law, who dies outside of the Christian patriarchal order by committing suicide, Azucena yields to it moments before her death when she chooses Manrique over her mother. Her submission allows for the possibility of her salvation and possibly foreshadows a later salvation in Spanish Romantic literature: that of *Los amantes de Teruel*’s Zulima in Hartzbusch’s 1848 revision of his masterpiece.<sup>7</sup>

*Mount Saint Mary’s University*

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The citations in the main body of this article are from Carlos Ruiz Silva's Cátedra edition of *El trovador*.
- <sup>2</sup> In the 1851 version of *El trovador*, García Gutiérrez edited this first scene to add the following explanation about the boys' late mother: "El señor conde vivía comúnmente en Zaragoza, viudo entonces, con dos hijos de su malograda esposa" (187). This citation from the 1851 version is from the Alhambra edition of *El trovador*, which was edited by Jean-Louis Picoche.
- <sup>3</sup> According to Carlos Ruiz Silva, the word "solar" in this case signifies "linaje noble. Un hidalgo de solar era el que poseía una casa solariega o descendía de familia que la tenía" (115).
- <sup>4</sup> *El trovador* is set in fifteenth-century Aragon, when the May 1410 death of Martín I, El Humano, provoked a civil war of succession, with seven family members competing for the throne. Nuño and Guillén fight on behalf of Fernando de Antequera, the nephew of the deceased king, and the eventual king of Aragon. Manrique defends the Conde de Urgal, great-grandson of Alfonso V of Aragon, who, by custom, had the more "legitimate" claim, but who would surrender his claim in 1412 (Ruiz Silva 57).
- <sup>5</sup> *El trovador* is not the only play in which the characters associate water and death with the maternal. In the final scenes of *Don Álvaro*, immediately before the protagonist's maternal origins are revealed on stage, don Álvaro describes himself as being "como el naufrago que sale por un milagro a la orilla" (Rivas 167). Likewise, before don Álvaro and Alfonso leave their monastery to meet their deaths, don Álvaro's colleague Hermano Melitón comments "va a llover a mares," and later "estamos de marea," as water pours heavily down over Alfonso and don Álvaro (Rivas 171).
- <sup>6</sup> In Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Il trovatore*, which was based on the Spanish play, Azucena implores Manrique (Manrico in the opera) to murder the Count. Azucena never expresses such a desire in *El trovador* but, as Johnson has pointed out, this has not prevented critics from believing that the Spanish Azucena has the same desires as her Italian counterpart (119).
- <sup>7</sup> As I have discussed in a previous publication, Zulima transforms from a stereotypically lusty and vengeful Muslim woman in the 1837 version of *Los amantes de Teruel* to a confused victim in need of Christian redemption in the 1848 revision (Blackshaw, "It is the East and Zulima is the Sin" 15-6). Though Zulima and Azucena are of different ethnicities, Charnon Deutsch has argued that gypsies and Muslims often occupy the same psychological space in the Spanish cultural imagination (10). Moreover, Hartzenbusch's revision of Zulima is contemporaneous with Rivas's and Zorrillas's Prodigal son plays, *El desengaño en un sueño* (1844) and *Don Juan Tenorio* (1844), respectively.

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