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What the quills can tell: the case of John Fletcher and Philip Massinger's *Love's Cure*

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An immediate problem for the study of English Renaissance drama and the history of its reception and early staging is the painful scarcity of handwritten witnesses of the theatrical trade. Promptbooks, authorial drafts, tiring-house plot charts, part scripts, bills of properties, company accounts, lists of members of theatrical troupes, doubling charts, presentation copies—all these are all painfully scarce, and, problematically, what has survived may not be representative of the more general practices. Paul Werstine, in his now seminal study *Early Modern Playhouse Manuscripts and the Editing of Shakespeare* (Cambridge University Press, 2012) analyses twenty-two English play scripts extant from the period. Tiffany Stern traces what we know of other theatrical documents such as plot-scenarios, call-sheets, and actors' parts in *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge University Press, 2009) and, with Simon Palfrey, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford University Press, 2011). Other projects also try to offer a useful compilation of the available material in digital form. This is the case of the Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project, directed by Grace Ioppolo, which offers unrestricted access to Philip Henslowe's and Edward Alleyn's papers preserved at Dulwich College and that amount to over 2,200 pages, including their personal correspondence and their account books and 'diaries'.¹ But the available documentation can only give a partial account of the ways in which the theatre business was conducted. In particular, we still have a limited understanding of how dramatic and theatrical manuscripts operated, and of the processes of textual transmission from authorial draft to final clean script, actors' parts, promptbook, and the textual witnesses behind printed publications. Bibliographers and textual critics have built useful, but sometimes misleading, models for the

¹ <<http://www.henslowe-alleyn.org.uk>>

transmission and dissemination of dramatic texts in this period of English history, a case in point being the contested Gregian concept of ‘foul papers’ that Werstine has painstakingly tried to unpick. The thinness of the corpus can perhaps be attributed to the outbreak of the English Civil War of the 1640s and the subsequent eradication of theatrical performance in the country for almost twenty years. The change of dramatic taste in the Restoration may have done the rest. With the loss of these documents, which seems to have been very substantial indeed, we have lost as well the texts of a vast number of plays that might have survived in manuscript in various stages of development, as well as crucial information about those that are extant, including textual and external evidence that might have helped us date some of them more precisely or to determine their authorship more accurately.

However, this is not the case of other European nations where theatrical performance flourished undisturbed throughout the seventeenth century and beyond, and where documentary evidence of dramatic composition and theatrical practice is much richer. A particular case in point is Spain. For the comparatively few handwritten scripts preserved from the English Renaissance, there is a corpus of no less than 3,000 Spanish plays in manuscript that have survived from the period in libraries and archives across the continent. There is a centralized international project to catalogue these manuscripts in a scientific and systematic way: *Manos*, formerly *Manos teatrales*, a project sponsored by the Biblioteca Nacional de España and led by Alejandro García Reidy and Margaret Rich Greer.² In addition, a wealth of documentation around acting companies has survived in archives across the globe, and has been painstakingly catalogued in a major reference work, the *Diccionario biográfico de actores del teatro clásico español* (DICAT; *Biographical Dictionary of Actors in Spanish Classical Theatre*), coordinated by Teresa Ferrer Valls at the University of Valencia. This database traces the professional career of some 5,000 Spanish theatre makers

² Freely accessible on <<https://manos.net/>>

of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including actors, musicians, prompters, and company managers.³ My belief is that those of us concerned with the study of English plays from the Renaissance can learn much from these databases and from the corpus of plays and acting practices that they record, not just in terms of shared procedures in copying and revising playtexts, and in the composition and management of early modern theatre companies, but also in terms of the study of transnational literary influence.

I will therefore address what is the earliest and perhaps the most interesting case of direct textual influence of a Spanish *comedia* of the Golden Age on an English play of the same period: the extraordinary case of *Love's Cure, or The Martial Maid*, composed by John Fletcher and Philip Massinger, perhaps with a collaborator, most likely in the early months of 1615.⁴ While the two subplots of this play are based on two Spanish picaresque novels that were well-known and widely circulated in print across Europe,⁵ the main plot derives unmistakably from a Spanish play written perhaps just a few years before: *La fuerza de la costumbre* (*The Force of Custom*) by the Valencian dramatist Guillén de Castro. The play presents the extraordinary case of a pair of siblings, a boy and a girl, who have been brought up separately as members of the opposite sex. The girl has grown up with her father among the Spanish troops in Flanders, and has become a daring, brash young soldier. The boy has remained at home with his mother learning how to be a lady. Sixteen years later, the family is reunited and the siblings are instructed to take up the expected gender behaviour of their own sex. However, the two struggle to follow their parents' command, bringing about numerous

³ Teresa Ferrer Valls, ed., *Diccionario biográfico de actores del teatro clásico español*. (Kassel: Reichenberger, 2008); see also <<http://www.reichenberger.de/Pages/b50.html>>.

⁴ Martin Wiggins, *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, 10 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), vol. 6, entry 1779.

⁵ *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1552; first surviving printing is from 1554) and *Guzmán de Alfarache* (*Primera parte*, Madrid, 1599; *Segunda parte*, Lisboa, 1604).

farcical situations. In both versions, the socially anomalous situation is resolved by the intervention of heterosexual love in the form of a romantic attachment to another pair of siblings who represent traditional heteronormativity: Clara, the martial maid of the English play, falls in love with the boisterous womaniser Vitelli, while Lucio, the maidenly youth, finds his lost masculinity in his sudden infatuation with Vitelli's sister, Genevora, whom he defends at sword's point from another suitor, the duellist Lamoral. Except in some specific dramatic situations, and in some variation in the treatment of the topic of maidenly chastity, the Spanish original version tells exactly the same story: Doña Hipólita struggles to give up her military ways and to get used to wearing the garments expected in a gentlewomen of her rank, and falls in love with Don Luis; meanwhile, Félix, her brother, wins the love of Luis's sister, Doña Leonor, fighting a duel against the gallant Otavio. The inclusion of the misadventured parents separated by a family feud and by war, of a comic domestic servant, and of a good number of coinciding dramatic situations, complete the striking similarities between both versions of the story. Given his frequent interest in cross-dressing as a dramatic device, and his recurrent exploration of sexual politics, it is not hard to see why John Fletcher felt attracted to Castro's play. But there is a fundamental chronological problem: *La fuerza de la costumbre* was not printed until the spring of 1625 in a collection of twelve plays under the title *Segunda parte de las comedias de don Guillem de Castro* (Valencia: Miguel Sorolla, 1625); Fletcher died from the plague in August of the same year. This tight timescale makes it almost inconceivable that a copy of the collection could have travelled from Valencia to London in time for Fletcher to have had a hand in adapting one of the works to the English stage. However, the available evidence—a number of clear topical allusions, as well as a remarkable lexical and stylistic proximity to other Fletcher plays of the same period—indicates that *Love's Cure* was composed in the early days of Fletcher and Massinger's writing partnership in the mid 1610s, most probably in the first months of 1615, as Martin

Wiggins has suggested and my own editorial work on the play has corroborated.⁶ If Fletcher had a hand in it—and the available authorship studies are unambiguous about this—then *La fuerza de la costumbre* must have made its way to England in manuscript form. Trying to defend his post-1625 dating of *Love's Cure*, attributing most of the play's text to Philip Massinger, George Walton Williams stated in the introduction to his magisterial edition of the play that 'it seems unnecessary to invent the thesis that a manuscript version had preceded the printed edition to England'.⁷ Given the available evidence, there really is no other way.

The survival of no less than four extant manuscript copies of the Spanish *comedia* enables this theory, and, as we will see, the study of their textual and material features helps to understand the original reception of the play and its possible dissemination beyond the country where it was composed. The fact that so many copies of Guillén de Castro's play are extant is very unusual. There is no other play by Castro of which so many different manuscript versions have survived, not even of his most enduring and better-known works, such as *Las mocedades del Cid* (*The Youthful Deeds of the Cid*). Generally speaking, there are very few other Spanish plays from the period that have survived in so many versions. *Manos* contains very few examples from major Spanish playwrights of Castro's generation whose plays have survived in more than one or two manuscripts. For instance, among the extant *comedias* by Lope de Vega (1562-1635), out of more than 300 authenticated plays, only *La fortuna merecida* (*The Deserved Fortune*) and *El príncipe perfecto* (*The Perfect Prince*) survive in three manuscript copies. A greater number of manuscripts survive from the dramatists of the younger generation. For instance, *El gran príncipe de Fez, don Baltasar de Loyola* by Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600-1681) survives in no less than five manuscript

⁶ Wiggins, *Catalogue*, vol. 6, entry 1779, p. 465-6. My edition is being prepared for publication.

⁷ John Fletcher and Francis Beaumont, *Love's Cure, or The Martial Maid*, ed. by George Walton Williams, in *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, gen. ed. by Fredson Bowers, 10 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), vol. 3, p. 5.

copies, but that is not a typical case. Four manuscripts is, therefore, a remarkably high number that indicates that *La fuerza* was copied often for performance and private reading, probably due to an otherwise unrecorded popularity with its original audiences. Three of the manuscripts of *La fuerza* are held in the Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid, while the fourth was discovered by Margaret Rich Greer in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma. The four extant manuscripts are the following:

BNE¹ Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid, MSS 15623. 49 folios.

BNE² Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid, MSS 17064, 28 folios.

BNE³ Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid, MSS 15370, 49 folios.

BPP Biblioteca Palatina, Parma, CC* IV 28033 Vol. 76, V 2, MS 4615, 55 folios.

The only comprehensive study of the three manuscripts in Madrid and their relation to the text of the 1625 *Segunda parte* was undertaken by Melissa Machit in her 2013 doctoral dissertation at Harvard University, which remains the most up-to-date study of *La fuerza de la costumbre*, as well as the only modern critical edition to have been attempted.⁸ These three manuscripts vary substantially from each other and from the longer text in the *editio princeps*, and, as Machit observes, the relationship between them is not at all clear:

It is difficult to establish a clear relationship or lineage among the three manuscript sources. I believe that the three manuscripts were copied before the 1625 publication or were based on texts that were, meaning that they were based on an unknown source, X. Some variants and omitted lines that are shared by all manuscripts suggest that revisions were made to the play before publication, with the heaviest alterations being made to Act

⁸ Melissa Renee Machit, ‘Bad Habits: Family, Identity, and Gender: Guillén de Castro’s 1625 play, “La fuerza de la costumbre”’ (Unpublished PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2013). The dissertation is free of embargo and is available through ProQuest, <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/1465065270>>.

III. [...] A stemma has not been possible because of the fact that there is no pattern of overlap between the manuscripts that is sustained throughout the whole text.⁹

The 1625 edition, carefully prepared by the dramatist, represents a fuller and more developed form of the play, and the manuscripts seem to contain earlier versions, connected in some form to a common ancestor. That the printed text is meant to supply a fuller dramaturgical representation of the stage business is evident from the stage directions, which are highly descriptive and supply visual and theatrical clues that would not be entirely necessary if the text were to be used as the basis of a performance. In general, all three manuscripts offer briefer stage directions that encode basic staging information, but omit details that a theatre company might have been able to explore independently or to whom instructions on costume and acting choices might have been given in rehearsal. For example, the first time that Félix, the womanish boy, appears in male clothes, as opposed to the long feminising habit he had been wearing previously, the 1625 version specifies what the actor would be wearing and how he would move: ‘Sale don Felix vestido de corto, mal puesto quanto lleua, y el muy encogido.’ (sig. 2C4^v; ‘Enter Don Félix wearing a short doublet, all his garments in disarray, and he [walking as if he were] much shrunk’).¹⁰ At this point, all three manuscripts omit the acting instruction (that he is moving in a certain way) and they alter or abbreviate the physical description: two say that he appears ‘as a gallant’ (‘don felix galan’, BNE¹; ‘felix de galan’, BNE³) and the other one just specifies that he is wearing a short doublet (‘don felix vestido de corto’, BNE²). We can start to assume that some of these manuscripts, particularly BNE¹ and BNE³, indicate some closer connection with performance than the more descriptive *princeps*.

⁹ Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁰ The exemplar cited is the copy at the Biblioteca Nacional, signature U/6740. It is available in full in the Biblioteca Digital Hispánica: <<http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000079146>>

We will now consider what we know of the provenance of these manuscripts and their material features, and what they can reveal about their original purpose. The first two copies at the Biblioteca Nacional, BNE¹ and BNE², were part of the library of the Dukes of Osuna, acquired in 1886 by the Spanish state after the death of the 12th Duke, Mariano Téllez-Girón (1814-1882), who had bankrupted the family.¹¹ It is unknown whether these two copies were already part of the collection in the seventeenth century. However, this seems a reasonable assumption, as Guillén de Castro and his family had strong ties to the House of Girón, heirs to the Dukedom of Osuna. From the time the dramatist moved to Madrid around 1618, he was under the patronage of Juan Téllez-Girón (1598-1656), the son of Pedro Téllez-Girón (1574-1624), 3rd Duke of Osuna, who had been the Spanish Viceroy of Sicily and Naples.¹² The *Gran Duque de Osuna*, as he was known, ‘deeded a small farm and its income to [Castro] in 1619’, though he had to mortgage it in 1623 to satisfy his ever-pressing debts.¹³ In 1626, when his patron had become the 4th Duke on his father’s death, Castro married Ángela de Salgado, who was ‘a member of the household of the Duchess of Osuna’.¹⁴ According to Javier Ignacio Martínez del Barrio, the private library of the Duke of Osuna ‘was formed thanks to the accumulation of books purchased following personal interests, as well as those dedicated to him’.¹⁵ It is not unthinkable, then, that either or both of these manuscripts may

¹¹ The date of the purchase appears in the catalogues that were compiled when Osuna’s library arrived at the Biblioteca Nacional; the signature for the catalogue of printed books is MSS 18848, and for the manuscripts, MSS 21272.

¹² Edward M. Wilson, *Guillén de Castro* (New York: Twayne, 1973), pp. 14-15.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-16.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁵ Javier Ignacio Martínez del Barrio, ‘Educación y mentalidad de la alta nobleza española en los siglos XVI y XVII: la formación de la biblioteca de la Casa Ducal de Osuna’, *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna*, 12 (1991), 74; my translation.

have been presentation copies gifted by the dramatist to his wealthy patron.¹⁶ It is also interesting to note that the only verified holograph in Castro's own hand, *Ingratitud por amor* (*Ingratitude for Love*), was also part of the Osuna collection.¹⁷

Both of these manuscripts are undated, though the hands are Spanish seventeenth-century italic. The most striking feature of BNE² is that the stage directions are very close in phrasing to those found in the 1625 *princeps*.¹⁸ For example, the opening stage direction in the 1625 text, announcing the appearance of the womanish Félix and of his mother, is 'Salen doña Gostança, y don Felis en habito largo de estudiante' (sig. 2C1^v; 'Enter Doña Costanza and Don Félix wearing the long habit of a student'), while in BNE² it is given as 'Sale doña constança Y don felix / en auito de estudiantte' (fo. 1^r; 'Enter Doña Costanza and Don Félix wearing the habit of a student'). The stage direction in the manuscript lacks the specification that the habit that Félix is wearing is long, which is an important fact, as the length of the costume is what makes it skirt-like and quasi-feminine. In any case, it is fuller and more descriptive than the other manuscripts of *La fuerza* and than other extant Spanish manuscripts with a provable theatrical provenance. The text, like the *princeps*, seems to be meant, therefore, primarily for private reading rather than performance. This copy, produced by a single hand, is remarkably clean, with no cancelled passages or emendations, and uses a fairly consistent spelling and the etymological forms of some names: the Latinate *Felix* and *Constança* in numerous instances, instead of the relaxed variants *Felis* and *Costança* that

¹⁶ All details of the genealogy of the Dukes of Osuna are from Francisco Fernández de Béthencourt, *Historia genealógica y heráldica de la Monarquía Española: Casa Real y grandes de España* (Madrid: Teodoro Jaime Ratés, 1900).

¹⁷ Biblioteca Nacional de España, MSS Vitr. 7, No. 2. It is reproduced in full in the Biblioteca Digital Hispánica: <<http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000100307>>.

¹⁸ BNE² is reproduced in full in the Biblioteca Digital Hispánica: <<http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000198734>>

prevail in the other manuscripts and in the *princeps*; this may indicate that it was produced by an educated person, perhaps a professional scribe. The dialogue, as Machit observed, is almost identical to the *princeps* in acts I and II (only 17 lines are missing from the manuscript), and only differs significantly in act III, where 124 lines are missing.¹⁹ As the manuscript is undated, we cannot know whether it predates the 1625 *Segunda parte*, but if it does, as Machit suggests, then the coincidences in the phrasing of stage directions throughout the text might suggest that BNE² represents a version of the play that is closer than the others to the authorial manuscript that served as the basis of the *princeps*. Even if it did derive from a pre-1625 authorial source, the manuscript is not an autograph copy, as a comparison with Castro's handwriting and signature in the holograph of *Ingratitud por amor* reveals.²⁰ These features—its fuller text, its textual closeness to the authorial source, and the tidiness of the hand—are consistent with the supposition that this manuscript may have been a presentation copy commissioned by the dramatist to be given to the Duke of Osuna.

The other manuscript from the library of Osuna, BNE¹, is perhaps more interesting. It is also undated, and, apart from the many textual variations in the dialogue, it differs significantly from both the printed text and BNE² in that the stage directions are scater and much less detailed. For example, in the opening stage direction the 'long habit' has disappeared: 'salen doña costanza y don felis destudiante' (fo. 1^r; 'Enter Doña Costanza and Don Félix as a student').²¹ It was produced mostly by a main scribe with a second hand completing the last two leaves, and, among numerous other variants and omissions, it adds three passages: one that had been left out by the first scribe but that features in the 1625 text and BNE² (fo. 8^r), and two new interpolations (fos 10^r and 12^v). All in all, BNE¹ contains

¹⁹ Machit, 'Bad Habits', p. 23.

²⁰ See note 17.

²¹ BNE¹ is reproduced in full in the Biblioteca Digital Hispánica:

<<http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000099793>>.

some 424 lines less than the *princeps*, and, as Machit describes, a whole character, Inés, is missing.²² Machit also concluded that when the scribe changed from fo. 48^r, the textual source changed as well: the last line of the previous page is given at the top of the next in a completely altered form.²³ There is, therefore, some reason to think that the text was being prepared for performance: lines were cut, the dramatis personae was adjusted, additional passages were introduced, and the stage directions give the minimum to clarify the basic traffic of actors on stage. If the copy behind it was a fuller manuscript, then the stage directions may have eroded when the text was copied out, but it seems perhaps more plausible that it derives from an independent source predating by some years the revised text of the *princeps*.

The last manuscript in Madrid, BNE³, belonged to the bibliophile Agustín Durán (1789-1862), member of the Real Academia Española and director of the Biblioteca Nacional, whose personal papers and rich literary collection was donated by his widow to that library in 1863.²⁴ He noted the existence of the two other manuscripts of the play extant at the Biblioteca Nacional in his handwritten catalogue of the library of the Duke of Osuna.²⁵ However, in spite of his notable bibliographic care, he did not note the origin of BNE³ in any of the detailed catalogues of his personal library that survive among his papers. It is, by far, the most interesting of the three copies in Madrid. It was produced by two scribes who took turns at irregular intervals, using different spelling conventions even in the names of the

²² Machit, 'Bad Habits', p. 21.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²⁴ BNE³ is reproduced in full in the Biblioteca Digital Hispánica:

<<http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000009298>>

²⁵ *Catálogo de las comedias que existen en la biblioteca de la testamentaria de Osuna*, Biblioteca Nacional de España, MSS 21423/8. It must have been when compiling this catalogue that he added a loose sheet before the Osuna manuscripts indicating the author of the play in his own hand.

characters. The text is generally clean, though there are several cancelled passages and crossed-out individual lines, as well as emendations, indicated either *currente calamo* by the same scribe, or by a second hand at a later stage. Interestingly, as in BNE¹, the character of Inés is also entirely missing. Eduardo Juliá Martínez, who edited the play in 1927, noted its textual proximity to BNE¹ and suggested that this manuscript probably derives from the other, ‘because it contains almost the same errors and the same lines are missing’.²⁶ Even conceding that it is likely that both manuscripts ‘descend from a common source’, Machit corrected Juliá Martínez’s statement, saying that ‘[BNE³] presents lines that are consistent with [BNE²] and [the *princeps*] but omitted in [BNE¹], and [BNE¹] lacks twice as many lines as [BNE³]’.²⁷ The stemma is, again, unclear but it seems likely that, as with BNE¹, the manuscript predates by some years the printed text. In addition, the stage directions are generally even briefer and less descriptive than those in BNE¹: for instance, the opening stage direction is simply given as ‘felis y costansa solos’ (fo. 1^r; ‘Félix and Costanza, alone’), without mentioning the crucial detail of costume. However, the most interesting feature of BNE³ is that it bears traces of having been prepared for a performance. Apart from the cancelled passages that may indicate theatrical cuts, there are a number of meaningful alterations, particularly on the first page, that modify some of the visual clues given in the text. For example, the substitution of the line ‘trenzas de oro, entera saya’ (‘golden plaits, full smock’; line 6, crossed out) with ‘a la ermosa rropa y saya’ (‘to the beauteous raiment and smock’), could indicate that the line had to be changed because the actress playing Doña Costanza had dark hair.

²⁶ Guillén de Castro, *Obras de don Guillén de Castro y Bellvis*, ed. Eduardo Juliá Martínez (Madrid: Real Academia Española, 1927), III, p. X; my translation.

²⁷ Machit, ‘Bad Habits’, p. 26.

A further proof of the theatrical origin of BNE³ is a statement found on the last page of the manuscript after the end of the play in the hand of the first scribe: ‘escribiola Osorio y es suya a pesar de uellacos’ (fo. 49^v; ‘It was written by Osorio and it is his/hers in spite of knaves.’)²⁸ It is a strong statement of ownership, rather than authorship, and it seems likely that this Osorio was one of the *autores de comedias* (company managers) of the period, rather than an actor or dramatist. If the identity of this Osorio could be ascertained, this detail could help to date the manuscript and establish whether this version of the play predates the 1625 *princeps*. However, a search on the DICAT database does not provide conclusive information: there were four *autores* with that surname who were active before 1625, and one, Diego Osorio de Velasco, who was active between 1623 and 1662. The four are Juan de Osorio, actor and *autor*, active in 1587-1606; Pedro de Osorio, actor and *autor*, active in 1609-25; Baltasar de Osorio, actor and *autor*, active in 1614-21; and Vicente Osorio, *autor*, active in 1614-20. It seems statistically more probable that it was one of the four, but we cannot know whether it might have been Osorio de Velasco before or after 1625, or indeed another *comediante* whose career has not been recorded. Given that the Spanish possessive determiner ‘su’ is common for male and female possessors, it is possible that the person alluded to was a woman, perhaps a female member of a theatre company. The possibilities, then, are four actresses, two on either side of the 1625 watershed: Mariana Osorio and Magdalena Osorio, both active in 1588-1607; Catalina de Osorio, active in 1621-33; and Eugenia Osorio, active in 1613-46. A much less likely candidate is the famous Elena Osorio y Velázquez, who was Lope de Vega’s lover in the mid 1580s.²⁹ The data, however, remains inconclusive.

²⁸ This image is available in the Biblioteca Digital Hispánica; see note 24.

²⁹ See Alonso Zamora Vicente, *Lope de Vega: su vida y su obra* (Madrid: Gredos, 1961).

Apart from the textual features explained above, and Machit's claim that all three manuscripts in Madrid predate the *princeps*, there is only one piece of evidence that would date BNE³ to the early part of the century, and therefore before the publication of the *Segunda parte*. Agustín Durán provided an approximate date for this copy in one of his private catalogues: 'Fuerza (1a) de la Costumbre = de D. Guillen de Castro / MS de la 1^a. 4^a pte del 17 =' (i.e. 'Manuscript from the first quarter of the seventeenth [century]').³⁰ Based on his extensive knowledge of Spanish Golden Age drama in print and manuscript, his acquaintance with his enormous collection of playbooks, his unlimited access to the holdings of the Biblioteca Nacional as its director, and his experience in cataloguing the other great collection of drama in Spain, the library of the Osuna family, Durán did not hesitate to assign a pre-1625 date to this manuscript. We cannot know, however, how he arrived at this conclusion, and we cannot take this estimation as an absolute dating of BNE³. But if Durán was right, this manuscript would have been copied between the composition of the play around 1610-15 and the publication of the *princeps* in 1625. If this copy is related to BNE¹, then it is also likely that that manuscript was in circulation in the relevant period.

I have only been able to see a small sample of pages from the manuscript in Parma (BPP), sent in digital form by kind permission of its director—fos. 1^r-5^r and 54^v-55^r, that is, the opening of the play and its final two pages. By the style of the hand, I can ascertain that the copy was similarly produced in the early seventeenth century, though, as far as I can see, it is also undated. *Manos* indicates that the manuscript contains corrections by the *Licenciado* Francisco de Rojas and that it may be an autograph copy, although I do not think this is the case, comparing it to the holograph of *Ingratitud por amor*.³¹ The opening stage direction is

³⁰ *Colección de comedias manuscritas de varios autores, anteriores al año 1750*, Biblioteca Nacional de España, RES 122/10.

³¹ See note 17.

given as ‘Sale doña Costança y don felix destudiante’ (fo. 1^r; ‘Enter Doña Costanza and Don Félix as a student’), a minimal variation over BNE¹, to which it seems to be related. A comparison between the portion of the dialogue that I have been able to access and that of the other four witnesses, reveals a notable coincidence of BPP with the text of BNE¹: most individual textual variants coincide in both texts, while, most importantly, four brief narrative passages in the opening scene are missing in both, but present in the other three.³² This confirms the proximity of BPP and BNE¹, although, interestingly, some individual readings are closer to the other versions: for example, in the fourth line of the play, the nun’s habit that the matriarch, Doña Costanza, has been wearing is said to be ‘pardo’ (‘brown’) in the *princeps* and in BNE¹, while it is ‘largo’ (‘long’) in BNE²; in BNE³, the word ‘pardo’ appears crossed out and replaced with ‘negro’ (‘black’), which is the reading in BPP. The textual variants and material features of this manuscript need further investigation if a complete edition of the play is to be attempted in the future. In any case, the manuscript at the Biblioteca Palatina seems to be intimately connected with BNE¹, and therefore with BNE³, so we can suspect that it also predates the 1625 edition, and it may also have been in circulation at the time of the composition of *Love’s Cure*. We do not know how long the manuscript has been in Italy, but perhaps it was already out of Spain in the early 1610s.

In conclusion, there are three main implications of this study at large that are relevant to tracing the textual transmission of *La fuerza*, and that support the interrelated dating of both plays that emerges from the available evidence. The first interesting implication is that the dating of Fletcher and Massinger’s English adaptation to the early months of 1615 crucially establishes a lower limit for the date of composition of *La fuerza*. In the absence of any other external record, only one systematic study has attempted to date this *comedia* and the rest of Castro’s canon. Courtney Bruerton, based on a statistical study of the patterns of versification

³² In Machit’s edition, lines 62-5, 79-72, 93-96, and 110-11.

throughout Castro's career, assigned the following dates: '1610?-20? (1610?-15?)'³³ Though, according to Bruerton, *La fuerza* was written at some point between 1610 and 1620, the first five years of the decade seem more probable. This dating is thoroughly compatible with that of *Love's Cure*, and suggests that it seems likelier that *La fuerza* would have been composed towards the earlier part of the decade to allow for its circulation and dissemination beyond Spain. If at least three of the manuscript witnesses of *La fuerza*, if not all four of them including BNE², predate the *princeps* edition, then it is possible that the play was already in circulation in the early 1610s, facilitating Fletcher's access to its text.

The second implication is that the high number of extant manuscripts of this *comedia* allows for the assumption that there would have been many more in circulation in the early part of the seventeenth century. As Felix Raab memorably wrote, 'Manuscripts and printed books are like snakes: for every one you see there are a hundred others hidden in the undergrowth'.³⁴ No less than four copies have survived, and others may be still lurking in archives or private collections yet undiscovered. In fact, the extraordinary degree of interrelation and interdependence between the four extant manuscripts, and the difficulty in establishing a definite stemma due to this genealogical complexity, seem to suggest that the number of intermediary manuscripts that could explain how these specific four variants originated must have been indeed very great. The comparatively high number of surviving copies, and this inferred abundance of necessary textual intermediaries, certainly enable the theory that Fletcher could have been able to access this Spanish play in manuscript. Revising George Walton Williams's statement, I would say that it seems unnecessary to invent the thesis that the printed edition was the source of textual influence when the chronological

³³ Courtney Bruerton, 'The Chronology of the *comedias* of Guillén de Castro', *Hispanic Review*, 12 (1944), 150.

³⁴ Felix Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli: A Changing Interpretation, 1500-1700* (London and Toronto: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), p. 53.

evidence disables that theory, and when the existence of these manuscripts enable the transmission of this *comedia* to an interested English readership in pre-printed form.

The third implication is that this relative abundance of textual evidence indicates that the play was very popular in its own time, clearly more so than the more celebrated and more frequently performed *comedias* in Castro's canon. An unrecorded early popularity of *La fuerza* with its first audiences in Spain may have brought the play to the attention of someone in Fletcher's circle. Of course, the name of James Mabbe, first translator of *La Celestina* and *Guzmán de Alfarache* into English, comes easily to mind: as secretary to John Digby, the English ambassador to the court of King Philip III of Spain, Mabbe had lived in Madrid from April 1611 until 1613, with possible shorter visits thereafter,³⁵ his acquaintance with Fletcher is well attested by the fact that he contributed a prefatory verse to Mabbe's *The Rogue, or The Life of Guzmán de Alfarache* (London, 1622). Mabbe is not the only candidate, and further research is needed to try to ascertain the scope of some of the untraced networks of mutual literary influence in Europe through diplomacy, private travel, and even household employment. For example, Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña (1567-1626), the celebrated 1st Count of Gondomar, who served twice as the resident Spanish ambassador in London (1613-18 and 1620-22), had extensive contacts in the book trade and the theatre profession in Spain and in England, and even employed two English librarians to curate the enormous collection of books held in his private residence at the Casa del Sol in Valladolid, the largest library in Spain at the time; the traffic of books in print and manuscript between his libraries in London and Valladolid was constant during his ambassadorship, and it is not unimaginable that he may have granted access to his large collection of plays and other works of fiction to

³⁵ David Kathman, 'Mabbe, James (1571/2–1642?)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2010) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17319>>, accessed 28 June 2016.

interested English parties, as was the case with his Spanish collection, demonstrably frequented by writers and scholars.³⁶ In any case, it seems reasonable to think that these available networks enabled that an agent would have got hold of a manuscript copy of *La fueza* in Spain and would have brought it to London. Alternatively, that agent might have chosen to produce a closely-worded written or verbal account of a performance of the play in Spain that the English dramatists would have accessed, perhaps with some distortion in the order of the episodes that the original play narrates that may account for some of the structural differences. Jonathan Thacker is inclined to think that the transmission was not realized via a copy of the full text, but rather through this kind of partial account of the play.³⁷ However, this theory would fail to explain the striking structural parallels between both plays, the similarities in the dramaturgical devices employed, the significant number of verbal echoes, and perhaps even the recurrence of the word *custom* as a textual *Leitmotiv* throughout *Love's Cure*, replicating the title of the *comedia* and the recurrent use of the word 'costumbre' in its dialogue. Based on the available evidence, we cannot know in what precise form and in what specific circumstances the Spanish play travelled to England, but the existence of these manuscripts make that process a real possibility, especially since one is to

³⁶ See Carmen Manso Porto, *Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, Conde de Gondomar (1567-1626): erudito, mecenas y bibliófilo* (Santiago de Compostela: Xunta de Galicia, 1996); José García Oro, *Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, Conde de Gondomar y Embajador de España (1567-1626)* (Santiago de Compostela: Xunta de Galicia, 1997); Fernando Bartolomé Benito, *Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, Conde de Gondomar: el Maquiavelo español* (Gijón: Trea, 2005); and Juan Durán-Loriga, *El Embajador y el Rey: El Conde de Gondomar y Jacobo I de Inglaterra*, Biblioteca Diplomática Española, Sección Estudios 27 (Madrid: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación, 2006).

³⁷ Public discussion at the Association for Hispanic Classical Theater conference *The comedia: translation and performance*, Theatre Royal, Bath, November 2013.

be found in Parma, outside the country where the play originated. If it travelled to Italy, it may have travelled elsewhere.

This kind of research, that only set out to address a long-standing chronological crux, does not constitute a methodology that can be followed with very many English Renaissance plays—after all, there are only three other plays which have been identified so far as having been based on Spanish dramatic material of the same period.³⁸ But it exemplifies the kind of comparative work that remains to be done, and that can enrich and illuminate the dramatic history of Renaissance Europe by correlating data from different theatrical contexts, and searching for the interrelations between different practices and traditions across the enormously permeable borders of the different nations. All too often we read scholarship of English Renaissance drama considered as an insular body of work, cut off from the continent by the seemingly impenetrable fogs of the English Channel. But the people who produced it were multi-lingual, educated, and culturally open: men and women who were deeply engaged with a shared European theatrical and literary culture beyond the borders of their native England, a nation that was only then starting to become a global power and whose language had only yet gained a limited influence. And it may be more important now than ever to take up this cultural cosmopolitanism in the scholarly work that we do.

³⁸ Namely, Philip Massinger's *The Renegado* (1624), partially based on Cervantes's *Los baños de Argel*, and two plays by James Shirley: *The Young Admiral* (1633), based on Lope de Vega's *Don Lope de Cardona* (pub. 1618), and *The Opportunity* (1634), based on *El castigo del penséque* (1613-14) by Tirso de Molina.