

HISTORY DIRECTED:

Cultural Memory and Messianism in Lope de Vega's *El último godo**



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Lope de Vega's El último godo stages the legend of the 8th century invasion of Gothic Spain by Muslim armies. The play follows a messianic structure where the lascivious gothic king, Don Rodrigo, is a condition of possibility for the coming of the chaste initiator of the re-conquest, Pelayo. This binarism present in other versions of the legend, situates the play within a chain of texts creating a cultural memory of the Reconquista. This article problematizes both messianism and cultural memory as recognizable structures in the staging of historical plays. In doing so, it also defines spectatorship as a political collective proposing a critique of Spanish historian Antonio Maravall's theory of Spanish Golden Age as a directed culture.

El último godo is a play by Spanish dramatist Lope de Vega (1562–1635) in which he retells the story of the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula by Muslim invaders during the reign of Visigoth king Don Rodrigo (ca. 711). The play also recreates the formation of an organized resistance led by Pelayo, a Visigoth lord from the northern region of Asturias. Although the full process of conquest and re-conquest lasted roughly eight hundred years and became entangled in all forms of religious, political, and cultural discourses, the play focuses on Rodrigo as responsible for the invasion and Pelayo as responsible for the resistance that materialized in the *Reconquista*¹, making those two moments correlative. Indeed, as it will be explained, in Lope's play Rodrigo's behavior is responsible for what came to be known as the Fall of Spain, while Pelayo is not only the heart and soul behind the *Reconquista* but the condition of possibility for the restoration of a Christian monarchy.

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¹ The Spanish term *Reconquista* refers to a period of over 800 years which ended with the conquest of Granada by the Catholic Monarchs in 1492. By the time Lope de Vega was writing his play, the term had already been established as an event, rather than as the long process involving military campaigns, negotiations and diplomatic partnerships that it really was. I will therefore use the Spanish term in italics here.

Invasion and resistance were naturally inscribed in the historiographical canon of medieval Castile. They were also subsequently transmitted into new contexts and through new means of expression, including popular ballads and, as in the occasion for this article, the theater of Spanish Golden Age. As any process of adaptation, the story negotiated variation but it preserved as a defining feature the simplification of a complex process in the history of Spain into two interdependent moments, namely, the loss of Spain in the invasion and its rebuilding through the materialization of a resistance and the logic of military expulsion. *El último godo*, benefiting from this binary structure already at work in the legendary plot, exemplifies two very important features of Spanish Golden Age playwriting. Firstly, it organizes protagonists, locations and even secondary characters in paired dichotomies, a structure mastered in Lope de Vega's dramatic plots. It also exemplifies how representation and performance engaged dynamically with this kind of structure. This methodology has been recognized as Lope's major contribution to Spanish early modern theater and was described by the dramatist in his *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*². Secondly, the engagement with canonical literary and historiographical sources that feed the plot of *El último godo* show Lope's understanding of the complicity of theater in presenting defining moments of national history to an audience. In this sense, the play proposes a vision of the history of Spain in moral absolutes and ultimately invites a critical inquiry into the role of the performance of historical plays in the construction of a cultural memory, in this case, of the *Reconquista*.

The story of the Fall of Spain during Rodrigo's reign and the resistance to Muslim rule led by Pelayo pervades the copious corpus of medieval Castilian chronicles. It also appears in popular narratives, where it is repeatedly adapted to fit subsequent moments of crisis through history. The reason for this adaptability is its function as a foundational myth. In his study about the foundational status of the story of Don Rodrigo, Alan Deyermond (1986) argues that the legend's ability to adapt is due to its messianic structure of fall and redemption, which made possible its continuous renewal – for there is always the hope for a new messiah – during different moments of crisis. The legend provides a unifying discourse rooted in the notion of a return to the primal greatness of Visigoth Spain. This narrative is elaborated throughout the literary and historiographical canon of medieval Spain, making its way into adaptations from page to stage in the context of the Golden Age

² In *El arte nuevo de hacer comedias* – or new art of playwriting – Lope explains the need for adapting to a new style that includes changes such as the unity of time, space and theme in each act or *jornada*, the reduction from 5 to 3 *jornadas* and the balance between tragic and comic. For the impact of this text see Pedraza Jiménez 2010.

dramatization of *El último godo*. On the stage, however, three conventions charged with symbolic value prepare the story for popular consumption. First, the protagonists – Rodrigo and Pelayo – are presented as models: the former of narcissistic tyranny, the latter of virtuous leadership. Second, the space: the aristocratic courts of Toledo and Córdoba, which concentrate all sorts of temptations, versus the *locus amoenus* preserved in Asturias, the isolated, inaccessible and northernmost region where the resistance started, which appears as a representation of the Garden of Eden. Third, the feminine characters: Florinda, the seductress, and Solmira, the chaste noble woman. While Florinda is the reason for Rodrigo's fall, Solmira, Pelayo's sister, makes possible, through her marriage to a Visigoth nobleman, the birth of a lineage defined first and foremost by the purity of her bloodline. Solmira's role in this structure is to aid in the characterization of Pelayo as a worthy king. The play develops a narrative in which virtue is understood almost exclusively as chastity of the body and as such, Pelayo's celibacy is paramount to achieving legitimacy. Continuity then is at stake, and so it falls on Solmira to take on the task of perpetuating a virtuous lineage defined in opposition to Rodrigo. Rodrigo, after giving into lust amongst other sins, can neither perform as a worthy king nor as the founder of a dynasty.

Asturias versus Toledo, Pelayo versus Rodrigo, and Solmira versus Florinda are the three pillars of a legendary sequence retold with much repetition and very specific variations. Moreover, the combination of these binaries, typical of Lope's dramas, with the messianic structure of the plot transforms the *mise-en-scène* of the historic-legendary play into an important step in the formation of a cultural memory of the *Reconquista*. Cultural memory is then fueled with the dramatic presentation of Rodrigo's sins, which bring about the invasion, his penance, which precedes Pelayo's success in driving the Muslim invaders out of the Peninsula, and the proclamation of Pelayo as the precursor of a restored (redeemed) monarchy.

In the context of the transmission of this legend, and in particular its presence on the stage, the term cultural memory refers to the archive of texts, conceived as a repository of both oral transmission and selected documents, preserved in any form of cultural manifestations (popular, literary and also historiographic) that bring about a sentiment of collective cohesion and a shared identity. I contend that *El último godo* contributes to this process of memory formation and that the critical double binding of theater as a textual and performative product is both essential to the legend's transmission and instrumental for a broader inquiry into the debate over Spanish so-called directed culture during the 1600s. The notion of *cultura dirigida* (directed culture), as proposed by José Antonio Maravall (1975), sees theater as an affair orchestrated by agents of the state and shaped by manipulative

strategies of what we would call today opinion making. Recent reconsiderations of this concept³, however, make possible to see the interaction between culture and politics as a more dynamic process, organically shaped in the moment in which *mise-en-scène* meets a historical and legendary horizon of expectation on the part of the audience. This article proposes that the concept of *cultura dirigida* and, in particular, its problematization of spectatorship as a political collective, allows for a reading of *El último godo* that engages with the transmission of the legend as well as with the symbolic power of a cultural memory of the *Reconquista*.

1. Rodrigo and Pelayo in the cultural archive

When thinking about the legend of Don Rodrigo, there should be an awareness of the two stories implied in its narrative: on the one hand, the tale of the reign of the last Visigoth king and the many internal conflicts that were at the core of his fall; on the other hand, the tale of the resistance, the Christian opposition to a Muslim rule, and the coming of a new monarchy through the character and actions of Pelayo. In reality, these are not two events but two processes. They were separated in historical time by at least a generation and, since the real protagonist was the threat of the Muslim invasion and conquest, establishing a cause-effect relation in the historical narrative became an ideological necessity.

Early chronicles, in particular the *Crónica mozárabe de 754* and the *Crónica de Alfonso III*, recount the decadence and loss of Christian Spain by assigning the responsibility to the lack of a monarchical project that could overcome dissent and treason and prevented the weakening of the Visigoths' ability to effectively respond to an invasion that had been always on the horizon⁴. The narrative organized along the two characters starts taking shape in the accounts of both the *Chronicon Mundi* (ca. 1236) by Lucas de Tuy and the *De Rebus Hispaniae* (ca. 1243) by Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, in both of which anxieties related to the continuity of Visigoth lineage are evident. The need to connect the pre-invasion monarchy with the one responsible for the resistance is fulfilled through the construction of Rodrigo and Pelayo as complementary rather than antagonistic characters. Thus, the two chronicles present Rodrigo as a heroic rebel who has restored order after internal dissension. These historical texts, it is important to notice, avoid referring to

³ *Bulletin of the Comediantes* dedicated in 2013 an edited number to a reconsideration of the concept of directed culture and its impact in the study of Spanish Early Modern culture beyond theater.

⁴ For more on the history of Visigoth Spain and the conquest, see Roger Collins 1991 and also Hilgarth 1976. With regards to the sequence of death and rebirth and the status of this legend as a foundational myth, see Deyermond 1986 and Juan Menéndez 1926.

the lascivious behavior of the king, which becomes a constant in later versions; they do, however, present his reign as a necessary evil, a condition of possibility for the coming of Pelayo. As a second step, once the Muslim conquest has been successful, the chronicles develop the complexity of Pelayo, whose claim to kingship is presented as legitimate because he belongs to the same bloodline as Rodrigo (Ward 2011, 104). Alongside the essential role of consanguinity, the structure of the narrative incorporates the moral and religious elements that typically invest medieval historiography with a political theological logic. Thus, chastity and Christian devotion become the traits that define the character of Pelayo, which evolves in total opposition to a libertine Rodrigo in further versions. It is in the context of the historiography of the 13th century – through the historiographical project of Alfonso X the Wise – where we find a narrative that elaborates this process thoroughly and, consequently, creates a new link between its two crucial moments – fall and redemption – in relation to the moral conduct of these characters.

The legend continues a steady process of transformation that develops in the last years of the 16th century and survives well into the 17th. It combines a variety of alternative versions that navigate freely from fact to fiction and from institutionally-sanctioned historiography to popular versions in the ballad tradition and sentimental romances. These materials, which have been identified as sources for *El último godo*, include Pedro del Corral's 1499 novel *Crónica Sarracina*, the Orientalist take of Morisco author Miguel de Luna in *Historia verdadera del Rey Don Rodrigo* (1592), and the development of a heroic Pelayo in the works of royal chronicler Ambrosio de Morales between 1563 and 1586, in which the new king appears as “el primer rey de una nueva era” (Grieve 2009, 143)⁵.

According to Ramón Menéndez Pidal, proponent of an essential realism in Castilian literature, Lope's selection of influential works is unfortunate. He complains of a taste for exoticism in Luna's novel, which he makes responsible for the “inferiority” of Lope's play. Menéndez Pidal considers the effect of *La historia verdadera* on *El último godo* the “influencia absorbente de una ficción rastrera” (possessive influence of a despicable fiction), explaining that,

...si Lope se hubiera impresionado en la vieja obra de Corral, hubiera hecho muy otra cosa, pero el morisco Miguel de Luna le apartó demasiado de la tradición castellana y ni siquiera le dejó acordarse bien

⁵ “the first king of a new era”. About Corral and *Crónica Sarracina* see the edition of James Donald Fogelquist for Castalia. The works of Henri Berlin 2009 and Marina Brownlee 2006 argue for the status of Corral's work between history and literature. About Miguel de Luna and the morisco context see García Arenal and Rodríguez Medrano 2013.

del Romancero, que en tantas otras comedias sugirió al poeta escenas felices. (Menéndez Pidal 1926, 67)

... if Lope had been inspired by the old work of Corral, he would have done something very different, but the Morisco Miguel de Luna kept him away from the Castilian tradition and did not even let him properly remember the ballad tradition, which in so many other plays suggested felicitous scenes to the poet.

In a recent study of Lope's plays of historic and legendary theme, Geraldine Coates takes issue with this characterization of Lope's influences, noting that the ballad tradition cannot be separated so categorically from other textual manifestations in which, perhaps blurring the lines between history and fiction, the legends of the Reconquista survived. Contrary to Menéndez Pidal, Coates sees in Luna's influence on *El último godo* an essential connection for the historical theater of the Spanish Golden Age. In her opinion, "Spain's chronicles are not, by and large, dry historical artifacts, but literary works which often novelize history or represent it with a particular spin for the edification and unification of the people" (Coates 2010, 132). This "novelizing" through the manipulation of narrative structures and characters in order to move along a specific plot, while at the same time reenacting a version of history from a particular point of view, is no doubt at the core of the theatrical production of the Golden Age. Moreover, it signals the core of Lope de Vega's dramaturgy which, informed by a diverse pool of texts illuminates the process of production and consumption of historical legends, for it brings a mythical past to the present, and, as such, activates the formation of a collective identity. This notion of the importance of the text or of an archive of texts is never too far from a definition of cultural memory, as defined by Jan Assmann:

a form of memory that constitutes the present and makes the future possible through the medium of symbols that are linguistic and extra-linguistic, discursive and non-discursive, and that are permeated by the political structures of power and domination. (Assmann 2006, 27)

The chain of transmission of the legend of Don Rodrigo that I have described corresponds with the idea that the archive – the raw material in the formation of a cultural memory – is determined by political, economic and intellectual movements. This archival potentiality also becomes evident when considering cultural memory and its effects on the spectator, a relation that is never static because it is a "complex, pluralistic and labyrinthine" process (Assmann 2006, 29), a process that brings together time and space and all the tensions and contradictions in which collectivities are formed. The ideal here would be to create what Assmann calls a horizon of knowledge of the past, which is articulated at once and creates a memory of unity based on, as it is

our case, shared legends. It is in this sense that the Baroque comedy allows for the transmission of an ideology and, concurrently, that the Baroque spectatorship makes that transmission dynamic and even possible. An alternative way of thinking about this process is Linda Hutcheson's (2014) definition of adaptation, which considers inter-medial transmission as a creative process and gives it the same weight that is generally assigned to the final product. In this way, some interpretative limitations are lifted when treating the adapted text – *El último godo* versus the versions of the legend in the Romancero, for instance – as an original superior to the final product. The tension of a hierarchy between original and derivative works informs the work of Menéndez Pidal, whose criticism of Lope's sources, as I have noted, is that they are subjected to ideological winds and that they are works that fictionalize, therefore contaminating a historical truth (Menéndez Pidal 1926, 67).

Despite Pidal's aesthetic critiques of *El último godo*, the play demands to be studied in the context of its continuous adaptation, unearthing the different layers of a creative process of becoming. First, we have the process of converting textual sources that are dominated by a partial, if omniscient, vision of historical narrative. The adaptation of sources such as Corral's novel or Luna's morisco version of the story, transforms ink into not only spoken word but a combination of body and language that, in Badiou's terms, affirms the process that makes representation didactic (During 22). Lope himself is aware of this didacticism and its implications when he reflects upon the importance of making history engage with the rules that theater imposes:

La fuerza de la historia representada es tanto mayor que leída, cuanto diferencia se advierte en la verdad á la pintura y del original al retrato; porque en un cuadro están las figuras mudas y en una sola acción las personas; y en la comedia hablando y discurriendo, y en diversos afectos por instantes, cuales son los sucesos, guerras, paces, consejos, diferentes estados de fortuna, mudanzas, prosperidades, declinaciones de reinos y periodos de imperios y monarquías grandes ... nadie podrá negar que las famosas hazañas ó sentencias, referidas al vivo con sus personas no sean de grande efeto para renovar la fama desde los teatros a las memorias de las gentes. (Lope de Vega, *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*, 835)

The strength of history represented is higher than when it is read, as much as the difference one perceives between truth and painting, and between original and portrait; because in a painting figures are silent and characters are frozen in action; and in the comedy they speak and deliberate, with different feeling in each instance, according to the events, wars, peaces, counsels, different states of fortune, changes, prosperities, depositions of kingdoms and imperial periods and great

monarchies... nobody can deny that famous deeds or sayings, retold live through their characters, are not greatly effective for renewing their fame from the stages into people's memory.

The process of adaptation allows for the renovation of fame in the memory of people. In this process of renovation, the relation between original and final product is based on the formation of a palimpsest composed of texts that we can still recognize and with which we are in constant dialogue (Hutcheson, 2014, 8). This becomes evident in Lope's process of combining and working through the similarities and differences of both historical and fictional sources. Likewise, Lope's dramaturgy engages in what can be defined as a process of adaptation assuming a negotiation over what aspects of history get to be modified, amplified, eliminated, reorganized, etc. It is necessary then to note how playwriting forces a series of decisions partly related to the story itself, the plot as it were, and partly related to the medium by which that work is going to be presented to an audience. The medium, in our case informed by performance, scenography, etc, will determine the nuances of the story (Hutcheson 10). This is the main purpose of the reading of *El último godo* that this article proposes: to think through the effects of an adaptation from page to stage because "being shown a story is not the same that being told it – and neither is the same as participating in it or interacting with it, that is experiencing the story directly and kinesthetically" (Hutcheson, 2014, 12). The decisions taken at the time of showing a story, in particular if speaking of the theater of the Golden Age, make it necessary to consider that there is not a direct identification between the dramaturg – in our case Lope de Vega – and what in effect is a collective authorship of the final product. There are several degrees of separation between the written word and the represented work, involving a series of agents who necessarily influenced different aspects of the play. After providing an overview of the editions of Lope's play and considering the impact of a creative collectivity in its staging, I will reflect on how the notion of messianism follows the structure of fall and redemption described above. This is, I contend, the chief reason behind the formation of a cultural memory of the *Reconquista*, and ultimately of the survival of the legend.

2. *El último godo* or the story of an eventful staging

The play, *El último godo*, survives under two different titles: *El postrer godo* as it appears in references to the initial production and as *El último godo* in posthumous editions. Morley and Buerton (1968) suggest a date between 1599 and 1603 for its composition. The newest edition by *Proyecto Prolope* supports the former and provides as context the festivities of Denia, an occasion in which the recently proclaimed Felipe III was entertained by the

Sandoval family, a clan directly mentioned in the play (García López 2008, 728). Lope mentions *El postrer godo* in the second list of his works that he provides in *El Peregrino en su patria*, after 1604, and, finally, it appears as *El último godo* in the Parte XXV (1647) of his collected plays⁶. The 1647 edition seems to have been corrected and given to the printer from a copy used in rehearsals. It includes some minor changes in the versification throughout the play and, of interest for this article, a series of changes in the *mise-en-scène* that culminate in the allegorical apotheosis of the last act.

In this version's ending, Pelayo, once victorious at the Battle of Covadonga and with a strategy to initiate the *Reconquista*, recites a sonnet as an apostrophe invoking Spain. An allegorical female figure of Spain appears in response to this invocation, bringing with her the portraits of the successive monarchs who reigned over the realm, all descendants from the lineage of Pelayo. If, as it is suspected, the play was performed in the presence of the king, this performance of genealogy unifies the king-spectator and the Visigoth lineage that has been preserved by Pelayo. This "nationalistic turn" as García López defines it (2008, 729), might have been echoing or perhaps even containing the effects of the Habsburgs monarchy and the crisis created by the loss of Portugal, the uprising in Catalonia and the unstable balance in which the unity of Spain had been built.

The legend, as it was adapted to the stage, is divided in three *jornadas* or acts, with each featuring its part in the plot structured around a sequence of sin-penance-redemption. The first act starts at the moment when Rodrigo is proclaimed king and almost immediately bad omens shake the legitimacy of this proclamation by unleashing a series of transgressions designed to show the weakness of his moral character. Rodrigo appears as a man consumed by his passions – greed and lust – and unable to assert his kingship through the exercise of prudence. He opens the House of Hercules – a house that is said to contain all kinds of riches and that each king before him has pledged not to open. In there, he finds no treasure but a parchment showing the figures of the Muslim invaders entering the peninsula. He rapes Florinda and misleads her father, Don Julián, to leave the peninsula so as to avoid a confrontation and ultimately to avoid being held responsible. Incidentally, this act of cowardice has the effect of weakening his strategic position in the event of an attack from the North African army, because Don Julián takes his own army with him. The second act shows the consequences of this characterization

⁶ The edition of García López in the context of Proyecto Prolope is dedicated to the comedias included in Parte VIII and logically does not include the changes made to the edition made in Zaragoza in 1647. For this article I followed the latter, in digital version of the Biblioteca Virtual Cervantes available in artelope.uv.es/biblioteca/textesAL/AI0818_El-PostrerGodoDeEspaña.

when Florinda, dishonored by Rodrigo, kills herself, and her father, after ensuring that the Muslim army has taken over the land with his help, recognizes the extent of the damage and goes mad because of grief over his daughter and over Spain, both dishonored. The third act is entirely dedicated to the figure of Pelayo, who appeared perfunctorily in the first act. While the first two acts are mainly set in Córdoba and Toledo, the last one takes place in Asturias, where the Visigoth noble families refusing to live under Muslim rule took refuge.

Agreeing in the basic interpretation of the play, scholarship on *El último godo* has followed complementary lines of research. On the one hand, *El último godo* is a paradigmatic example of Lope's vast corpus of historical and legendary plays (Coates 2010). At the same time, and considering the importance of the popular production as shaped in the Romancero for the formation of a national identity, *El último godo* is a key text to understand the formation of a collective identity and the role that theater and politics played in early modern Spain (Ryjick 2011). Together with the question of national identity, the literature about the play comes back to the issue of genre formation that authors such as Elisabeth Drayson and Patricia Grieve also describe for the legend itself. Such is the view expressed by Teresa Kirschner and Dolores Clavero, who see in the transferring from page to stage "un uso simbólico del cuerpo humano como locus en el que se inscriben las representaciones de los sistemas sociales y sus estructuras de poder" (a symbolic use of the human body as locus in which representations of social systems and power structures are inscribed) (Kirschner and Clavero 1997, 44).

The analysis of the link between theater, absolutism and national identity is at the core of a debate that has been fragmented between the theories of Maravall that I explained at the beginning of this article, and those of his critics. One of these critics is Malveena McKendrick, who also refers to the Rodrigo of *El último godo* as an example of the implicit subversion in presenting a king that lets himself be governed by his passions instead of the virtues invested in the institution he embodies, particularly prudence (McKendrick 2000, 49). Even if the contribution of McKendrick insists in presenting Lope's play as a pendular movement from conformism to non-conformism, between connivance with the monarchical absolutist power and subversive tendencies, the author does not notice the influence that Rodrigo imposes in the characterization by opposition of Pelayo. She does suggest, in line with what I am proposing in relation to the messianism in the play, that Pelayo emerges as the starting point of a historical moment whose finality is still not on the horizon of the theatrical production itself. "The invasion", McKendrick concludes, "is at once an ending and a new beginning as Pelayo emerges to lead Spain on the road to reconquest and greatness" (McKendrick 2000, 51).

Let us follow closely these two characters, then, and unveil exactly how Lope's play transforms legend and history into a shared cultural memory of the *Reconquista*. The first act tells how Rodrigo, after he rebels against the tyrant Witiza and unifies the Visigoths of Spain, rules from Toledo and is regarded as the initiator of a new era and, having been elected as a *primus inter pares*, he is to also initiate a new lineage. This clearly shows the preoccupation with the consolidation of a legitimate Goth lineage, that is, the preservation of an agnatic paternal line that, incidentally, also supports the rebellion that Rodrigo lead against Witiza. In his initial words, Rodrigo explains the necessity of his uprising because King Ervigio “aplica / a su hija el reino, que la habia casado / con el valiente Egica” (applies / to her daughter the kingdom, and marries her / with the brave Egica) (l. 30–32). The reference to a consort king (made king by marrying the female heir) clearly establishes the gender ideology of the text and it plays in the dramatic context when Rodrigo forces courtiers to pledge their loyalty. In preparation for this demand, Rodrigo reminds them:

Rodrigo: Viéndome yo legítimo heredero
Nieto de Resisundo valeroso
Hijo de Todofredo, que primero reinar
Debiera que Betisa odioso,
Con ayuda de Roma, a quien espero
Mostrarme agradecido, no reposo,
Hasta que del tirano, por despojos,
Ofrezca a mi buen padre los dos ojos (ll. 45–52)

Rodrigo: I was the legitimate heir / grandson of the brave Resisundo /
Son of Todofredo, / who should have become king / before the hateful
Betisa /With the help of Rome, to whom I hope / to show my gratitude,
I will not rest / until I can offer the tyrant's two eyes / as booty to my
father.

We see here how Rodrigo provides the audience with a political and social context to the historical events that he is leading. But, while relating the tale of his father's torture – Todofredo was deposed, tortured and left blind – Rodrigo is also starting to blur the lines between the personal and the political, hinting at the development of his failure. The question of agnatic legitimacy also appears in other passages of the first act, all marked by questions of continuity, whether literal or symbolic. The importance of continuity is clear if we consider its political consequences and yet, it is an anxiety that will be put to rest by Pelayo in the last scene. There, as it will become clear, the emphasis is not on the legitimacy of predecessors but on a projection towards the future, and, incidentally, it does not seem to share a preoccupation with the line of descent, as if kinship emanated from belonging to a community

rather than to a particular clan, in this case the political community of the Goths.

To fully appreciate the characterization of Rodrigo as unreliable and ultimately unworthy king, we turn to the scenes of his coronation, which is framed by symbols of adversity. First, he loses his grip and lets both crown and scepter fall in the presence of both courtiers and, let us not forget, audience. The symbolism of the scene and of Rodrigo's reaction could not have gone unnoticed to the latter. The king, aware of the impression that his clumsiness has created and still coming to terms with what exactly provoked him to let go of the symbols of his kingship, offers an alternative explanation in the form of a convoluted prophecy, which is received as illogic and improbable. Rather than putting their concerns to rest, the courtiers grow suspicious of the king and are therefore predisposed to read subsequent events in fearful anxiety, demanding through the advice of Leosindo, Rodrigo's chamberlain, that the king acts with prudence.

In a second event, Rodrigo breaks the prohibition of entering the mythical House of Hercules and breaks the locks that king after king had secured, ensuring that its secrets and the implicit threat for the Visigoths remained sealed. This transgression not only makes evident the tension between the legitimist speech Rodrigo offers at the beginning and his behavior, so contrary to tradition and custom, but also makes explicit the prediction – contained in the House of Hercules – that during his reign the Peninsula will be invaded by the Muslims of Northern Africa. Nevertheless, it is not until a third scene that Rodrigo commits a double moral transgression: in open defiance of Visigoth tradition, he decides to marry the daughter of the King of Argel (modern day Algeria) instead of choosing a wife among the daughters of local noble families. Leosindo signals the predictable consequences:

Rodrigo: Resolución dichosa para todos.
¿No te agrada, Leosindo?

Leosindo: Su hermosura
En extremo me agrada, pero advierte
Que, aunque los reyes godos sean casados
A su modo, no es justo que tu seas
Tan arrojado en esto, porque puedes
De tus vasallos, escoger señora (ll. 458–465)

Rodrigo: Happy resolution for everyone. / Are you not pleased, Leosindo? / Leosindo: Her beauty /pleases me in the extreme / but, you must realize / that, even if goth kings marry /as they see fit, it is not fair that you are / so impetuous in this, because you could have / chosen a spouse amongst your vassals.

To the sound advice of Leosindo, Rodrigo responds that he does not want his offspring to be “hijos de vasallos (ll. 467)” (the sons of vassals) and that Zara is the best possible election because she is the daughter of a king. There is here again a tension between legitimacy – in doubt because the mother’s lineage is Muslim – and Rodrigo’s behavior, for, in his courtship of Zara, he displays all the characteristics of the narcissist womanizer that has become an archetype in Lope’s theater. After his defiance of tradition, the fight against elders and the imposition of his own will, and even the conversion of Zara to Christianity, cutting ties with her own lineage, Rodrigo crosses paths with Florinda, the daughter of Count Don Julián, setting the stage for his final fall. Rodrigo grows infatuated with Florinda and, confronted with her appeals for him to respect her and, by doing so, respecting her father, he reacts by taking her forcefully at the end of the first act and repudiating her at the beginning of the second act. The immorality of a character that follows so faithfully the archetype of the seducer is here threefold: first, he loses the symbols of kingship; second, he disrespects Visigoth traditions and instead of setting his lock upon previous locks, he transgresses the prohibition and unleashes the prophecy of the invasion; and finally, he breaks the conventions of honor that define gender relations. It is in this last instance that Rodrigo shows himself to be willfully oblivious to the consequences that his actions bring on Florinda, while she insistently brings back the core of her disgrace, that the violation of her body brings dishonor to her father and calls for revenge and restoration.

If the first act was structured around the figure of Rodrigo, the second act evolves around the figure of Count Don Julian. He starts by reading a letter from her daughter Florinda, in which she tells about the signs of adversity we had discussed; unlike Rodrigo, Don Julian is able to interpret these events correctly. Florinda shares with her father her sadness over a piece of jewelry belonging to her family that has been broken. It was broken, the letter clarifies, by the “sword of the king” (l. 1125). This cryptic section of the letter is also interpreted correctly by Don Julian, who not only understands the extent of his dishonor but also explains it to Muza, captain of the Muslim army. He sees the threat and rather confirms in his mind than suspects that Rodrigo has dishonored his daughter.

Julian: No lo entiendes, que más fiero
 Dolor me viene aquí guardado
 Esta piedra que desmedra
 Mi honor con violencia estraña
 Ha de costar que en España
 No haya piedra sobre piedra. (ll. 1140–1145)

Julian: Do you not understand, stronger /is the pain hidden here. / This broken stone that weakens /my honor with strange violence /will be the reason for Spain / becoming a ruin with no stone left in place.

The Muslim army invades Spain in this second act, which shows the battle in which all Visigoth noble families are lost and those who survive lose their confidence in Rodrigo. But the laying out of the political contingencies does not stray far from the symbology of Florinda's rape and here, showing the influence of Miguel de Luna over Lope, we learn that Florinda has known since childhood that she would be the cause of the fall of Spain and, in an attempt to hasten the restoration, she commits suicide.

The suicide scene has attracted the attention of several critics, who see it as a paradigmatic example of the complexity of the *mise-en-scène* in Lope's theater. The annotations of the original text explain how and where and to what side the actress interpreting Florinda should fall, advising even to take measures to prevent injuries. Menéndez Pidal (1926) suggests that this kind of commentary indicates the lack of seriousness in the production of the drama. However, as García López (2008) shows, this annotation gives us a glimpse of the production process and the many resources available to the company to create the desired effects. This artifice in the scenography, increasingly complex and sophisticated, enhances the presentation of Pelayo and of Asturias.

At the beginning of the second act, Pelayo appears for the first time and the only in which there is an allusion to issues of consanguinity before the last scene. The scene between Julian and Muza, quoted above, and the dialogue between Rodrigo and Pelayo that we describe here, are to be understood by the audience as happening simultaneously. Rodrigo grows suspicious of count Don Julian, as he knows that he holds high his sense of honor and expects revenge. He also recognizes that the only thing that Julian can take from him, given his disdain for traditions and female characters, is Spain itself. He summons Pelayo to court as his best strategist, a natural leader of the army who is manifestly unconcerned with courtly politics. In his entrance, Pelayo greets Rodrigo by referring to their kinship and their support of each other using the term "Hechura" ("Aquí esta tu hechura" (here is your making) (l. 1370)). According to Covarrubias's *Tesoro*, "hechura" refers to somebody who has been supported or mentored by another person⁷, and therefore to loyalty, gratitude and closeness between mentor and mentee; but here Rodrigo again entangles it with the purity of a shared lineage and responds: "Oh Pelayo gallardo, gloria y honra de la Española sangre! Oh primo mio!"

⁷ "a entender que un señor ha valido a cualquier persona, y le ha puesto en estado y honor, decimos ser esta tal hechura suya" (Covarrubias, s.v. "hechura").

(O dashing Pelayo, glory and honor of the Spanish blood! O cousin of mine!) (ll. 1371–1372). This commitment to kinship performed by Rodrigo and loyally accepted by Pelayo is followed by a description of Asturias as the *locus amoenus* in contrast to the court. It is evident for both characters and also the audience that there exists a purity in the relation between Pelayo and Asturias that is somehow lacking in his relation to the king.

As stated before, *El último godo* has been mostly seen both by critics and editors as a dynamic unity that depends on binaries and dichotomies which are the norm in Lope de Vega's theater. Menéndez Pidal (1926), for instance, describes the play as a "Cinerama" in which some scenes come upon others to simplify and solidify relations between Spaniards/Christianity/austerity and foreigners/Islam/exuberance. The audience navigates constantly between two worlds, arriving at a moment in which the one with which they identify, the Toledan court of Rodrigo, starts crumbling as a consequence of a behavior that does not correspond with Christian morals. The aspect of kinship at this point ceases to be relevant. The notion of stability and the need for recovering a clear moral compass seems to be the priority, accomplished through a double mechanism: on the one hand, the demonization of otherness – the Muslim army is now an invader and they kill, rape, and destroy; on the other hand, there is a search for a locus of purity where a renewal might be possible. While projecting this structure, in his first intervention Pelayo sets some limits and marks a distance:

Pelayo: ...
 A llamarme enviaste a mis Asturias,
 Donde, después que del traidor Betisa
 Huyendo fui, con mis hermanos vivo
 Tan lejos de las cortes de los principes,
 Que solo para verte me he vestido;
 Que hasta Toledo vine con otro habito
 Harto de cortesano diferente. (ll. 1374–1380)

Pelayo: You called me back from my Asturias / where, after I fled the traitor Betisa / I live in peace with my brothers / as far away from the courts of the princes / that I only got dressed to see you / since I came to Toledo dressed in a habit / quite different from a courtier's.

In his speech, Pelayo clarifies different things. First, Asturias is, already and since the times of Betisa, a refuge, far away and safe from the tyranny against which Rodrigo rebelled. Second, the community in which Christians – old Christians "cristianos viejos" (l. 2109) we are reminded later in the play – from Asturias live in fraternity and secluded from the structures and networks that direct courtly life. Ultimately, the purpose of Pelayo's speech is to declare the exceptionality of Asturias by presenting it as a place where "habito" –

here playing with both meanings of the word as dress and custom – is “*harto de cortesano diferente*” (significantly different from that of the court/a courtier’s). The dichotomy in here calls on the question of which alternative visions of Spain, ultimately visions in conflict, will be made to define the nation.

Up to now the binary opposition has been between lust and chastity, between passions and prudence, in part as a commonplace of the Spanish Golden Age drama when it comes to the representation of the monarch. Rodrigo’s character is undoubtedly ruled by passions, while we witness the process by which Pelayo embraces prudence as the virtue leading to his becoming king, in spite of his disdain for the court. Pelayo is presented as a king who will lead a nation in resistance and who will build that resistance on a moral superiority. It is again Leosindo who assists the audience in that transition from one king to the next by identifying Rodrigo’s shortcomings:

Leosindo: Dicen que va como un rayo
Pelayo a Valladolid.
Rodrigo: ¿Pues por qué se va Pelayo?
Leosindo: Anoche dormió en Madrid
Y ha despedido la gente.
Como mandaste se ausente
De que pienso que le injurias.
Rodrigo: ¿Mas que se va a las Asturias?
Leosindo: No hay Corte que le contente:
Allí vive entre peñascos.
Que las sedas y damascos
Le ofenden. (ll. 1725–1736)

Leosindo: They say that Pelayo is leaving at the speed of lightning/
towards Valladolid / Rodrigo: Pray, why is Pelayo leaving? / Leosindo:
Last night he slept in Madrid / and he dismissed his people / since you
asked him to go away / but I think you mistreated him / Rodrigo: so is
he returning to Asturias? / Leosindo: There is no court that would make
him happy / he lives there in the mountains / because silk and damask /
offend him.

Once again, we see the connection between the wilderness of the region – “*allí vive entre peñascos*” – and the sobriety of the character – “*no hay corte que le contente*”. In a now-classic study regarding world view and scenography in the Golden Age theater, John Varey discusses the representation of rural spaces. He suggests that there is a tendency to have these complex spaces represented through the text and not necessarily through stage mechanics and rigging systems. Varey reflects upon the references to rural spaces as landscapes filled with symbols “*cuyos elementos se unen para componer una forma decorativa que al mismo tiempo tiene intención*

transcendental” (whose elements come together to compose a decorative form that has, at the same time, a transcendental intention) (Varey 1987, 39). This phenomenon is at work in *El último godo* in relation to the representation of Asturias and in striking contrast with the representation of Toledo – locus of the court and where all of Rodrigo’s transgressions take place – or Denia or Algiers, places where the exoticism of the Muslim other is also presented as exuberant and problematic. The effect is achieved through the association of costumes and props in relation to a semantic field that refers incessantly to a space in state of nature. Actions are located in “peñas” (crag), “cuevas” (caves), the men are referred to as “montañeses” (hill people), dresses are “pellejos” (animal skin) and “pieles” (fur) and their weapons are “dardos” (darts) and “palos” (sticks). It is also important for these words to fulfill their function to be part of the speech of particular characters. For instance, when used by the Muslim invaders, the references to Asturias are made in arrogant and disdainful speeches in which rusticity is identified as uncivilized primitivism, which makes the Christian resistance evidence of their lack of pragmatism, first, and an unpleasant nuisance, second:

Tarife: Esto me escribió Abraido desde Asturias
 Y que deste Pelayo apenas puede
 Resistir con mil hombres las injurias,
 Porque con ciento a mil vence y accede.
 Dice que de la Cueva como furias
 Sin que en el centro alguna furia quede
 Salen hombres descalzos y desnudos
 Rotos, sin armas, barbaros y rudos
 Mas que pelean como mil leones;
 Muza me escribe que tome a Granada. (ll. 2308–2317)

Tarife: This wrote Abraido from Asturias: / that he can barely resist Pelayo’s attacks /with one thousand men / because [Pelayo] with a hundred man pushes our thousand. / He says that they come out of the caves like animals / and no animals remain inside / they come out barefooted and naked / broken, without weapons, savage and rough / but they fight like a thousand lions; / Muza writes me to take Granada.

In contrast, when the Christians refer the news of Pelayo’s resistance, in particular those participating in it, the tone is of telluric pride, a pride that increases in relevance as it creates a metonymic relation between Asturias and Spain. A clear example of this appears in the last scene, when Pelayo is crowned with laurel and made king by those he before called his brothers:

(Toda la compañía con ramos, ILDERIGO con el laurel, y corónele, y digan luego los MÚSICOS.)
[MÚSICOS] par bien amanezca el sol,

bendígale España
y guarde Dios
el sol de Pelayo,
gran restaurador
de Asturias y Galicia,
Castilla y León,
el que mata moros
con sola su voz,
mas que ellos cristianos
con tanto escuadrón;
el que de Toledo
a San Salvador
trujo las reliquias
de nuestro Señor,
coronado llega
con gran devoción
donde ya le espera
la iglesia mayor. (ll. 2723–2742)

(The company comes out with palms, Ilderigo with the laurel, and they crown him and then the musicians sing this.)

[Musicians] As the sun is rising / may Spain bless him / and may God keep / Pelayo's sun / great restorer/ of Asturias and Galicia / Castile and Leon / He who slays Moors / with only his voice / more than they do Christians / with all their military force; /the one who brought / the relics from Toledo / to San Salvador, / here he comes, crowned / with great devotion / to where the main church / is waiting for him.

I have included the stage directions because here the text hints at how the play could have been manipulated and adapted to the stage. The musicians also appear earlier in the play, in several scenes in which actors perform as exotic Muslims, dancing and singing. It is important to remember that in the editorial process of this drama there are two moments in which it is printed: one in 1617, with the text included in Part VIII of Lope's collected plays, and the other in 1647, with the text included in Part XXV. This second edition presents a series of peculiarities, one of which is a series of scenes and dialogues that either are absent or appear in a different tone in previous edition, in addition to the allegorical ending described above. The collating of these texts suggests that we have material used by a theater troupe and that they have been amended in accordance with stage directions (García López 2008, 738). As textual evidence of the possible representation we can point, for instance, to the verbal variations in the annotations that take the point of view of the actor representing the part or the changes in versification, rime or even syntax that have a correspondence with mnemonic strategies. The most

striking evidence of changes, alterations and modifications from page to stage in *El último godo* is Pelayo's apostrophic speech at the end:

(Váyase y quede Pelayo solo.)

Pelayo España bella que de Hispan te llamas
 y del lucero con que nace el día
 el tronco de los godos fenecía,
 si no quedaran estas pobres ramas
 ves aquí el fénix de sus muertas llamas,
 que nuevas alas de su indicio cría
 para que ocupes con la historia mía
 versos y rosas, lenguas y plumas, famas.
 Yo soy Pelayo, España, yo la piedra
 que te ha quedado, sola en esta vuelve
 a hacer tus torres que no ofenda el rayo,
 las que de sangre vestiré de yedra,
 que puesto que Rodrigo se resuelve
 de sus cenizas nacerá Pelayo.

(España entre, y córrese una cortina en que se vea un lienzo con muchos retratos de reyes pequeños.) (ll. 2703–2720)

(Goes and enters Pelayo alone)

Pelayo: Beautiful Spain, bearing your name from Hispan / and from the morning star with which the day starts, /from the trunk of the Goths that was dying / if we did not have these poor few branches / you would see the phoenix dead in the ashes / that now gives way to new wings / for you to occupy with my story / verses and roses, tongues and pens, fame./ I am Pelayo, Spain, I am the stone / that was left, on this one build / once again your towers that lightning will not touch / which I will dress nit in blood by in ivy / since Rodrigo is gone, / from his ashes Pelayo will be born.

(Spain comes in and it appears a courtain with small canvases showing the portraits of kings)

(Goes and enters Pelayo alone)

In the first quatrain of this sonnet, Pelayo laments the destiny that could have come over Spain had not it been for the “pobres ramas” (few branches), alluding to a new image of Asturias that has been patiently weaved along the play. The second quatrain defines Pelayo as a phoenix. The metaphor is powerful because it brings about the notion of rebirth through purification. It also makes reference to the importance of memory, given that his story will remain in the verses, tongues and pens of fame. These, according to the closing tercet, will tell his story along with that of Rodrigo. The evocation of a past that evolved in a particular sequence is made clear through the reference

to himself as the only standing stone (“la piedra que ha quedado”) alluding to Don Julian’s speech in the second act, when he threatens with leaving no stone unturned in the pursue of his revenge. Lastly, the poetic voice refers to a hypothetical Pelayo whose coming precedes the appearance on the stage of Spain and the images of a Christian monarchical dynasty. It is also here that the character of Solmira, the sister of Pelayo who has been presented as a courageous woman, is given to Ilderigo as his spouse. Pelayo takes here the last turn of a romantic hero whose performance of the apostrophe, together with his virtuous chastity, pairs him to Spain itself, while the duty of preserving the lineage falls to Solmira.

The editorial process, as these changes show, does not completely clarify, however, how was the final staging of the play or what sort of negotiation took place in the moment of the performance. Alain Badiou defines theater as a material disposition (text, bodies, props, music...) that is not immutable and that, by virtue of this capacity of change, is able to transform in reality in the very presence of the materiality (During 22). That is to say, if there were attempts to stage *El último godo*, the performed reality would have more to do with contemporary audiences in the 21st century and our understanding of the past than with the moment in which it was represented for the first time. This should inspire critics to consider carefully the changes of the 1647 edition, because it is an intervention which is at the same time an interpretation of the text, its sources, and its possible reception. In this sense, it is important to notice that the changes in this edition are implemented by a collective – the theater troupe – that opts to portray the violation of Florinda, for instance, together with the effects of destiny and treason on some characters. It is also the version that, in the third act, offers the key to understanding what the reception of the play means for the creation of a new Spain.

3. Don Pelayo, messianic hero?

The story of Rodrigo and Pelayo follows a clear cause-effect structure. The weaknesses in Rodrigo’s moral character become evident in his treatment of Florinda, daughter of count Don Julian. His relationship with her appears represented across different degrees of responsibility, from consented seduction to rape, contributing to a representation of Florinda as a sexual object, with agency only in the process of seducing the king into committing a mortal sin. Conversely, Pelayo is presented as an ideal hero whose chastity, bravery and wisdom provide him with a moral superiority that guarantees his success against the invader. The binary structure is quite clear and in certain versions, including *El último godo*, it is supported by a secondary plotline in which Pelayo risks his life in order to save the honor and chastity of his sister.

This sister appears as Solmira in the play by Lope de Vega. As we have seen, the narrative sequence in the historiographical prose is part of a discursive strategy to establish a Visigoth genealogy that unifies the Spanish monarchy with a mythical past prior to the conquest.

In order to have Pelayo become the hero of a nation renewed in its purity, the messianic sequence of sin, penance, and redemption must be formulated by transforming Rodrigo into a necessary evil. It is in this sense that we are able to speak of the “specter of Don Rodrigo” that haunts constantly and through history the figure of Pelayo, given that without his ghostly presence there would be no place for a new Visigoth hero. This cause-effect relation that creates a messianic tale is ubiquitous in the versions of the legend in which penance is an actual part of the plot. Such is the case of the *Cronica Sarracina* and the *Romancero*, for instance, where the relation between Rodrigo and Pelayo is direct and immediate in time, bringing Pelayo to act successfully against the invasion only after the penance and death of Rodrigo has been described – in all its gruesome details – and a site of burial identified. None of these circumstances is present in *El último godo* and this, in my opinion, conditions the characterization of Pelayo as a messianic hero.

It is therefore necessary to think through the articulation of the messianism responsible for reproducing the biblical structure of the fall from the Garden of Eden: original sin – penance – salvation and second coming of the Messiah. If the legend, as I have explained, is transmitted and reappears in different contexts throughout history, what is the purpose of having at each specific moment a representation of Pelayo as a messianic hero? What interpretation of Pelayo serves the structures of power and authority and therefore conditions the cultural production of the time? Why are there innumerable versions of the story of Rodrigo while Pelayo remains stable throughout the legendary tradition?

In my opinion, the steadiness of Pelayo responds to the convenience of having a messianic structure in the context of universalist historiography, ensuring that there is always a link between the figure that represents the fall and the figure that represents the restoration. The legend, in all its variations and always featuring a Pelayo who incarnates the virtues of the messiah, appears in moments of crisis, in order to restore legitimacy. This manipulation of the narrative functions from the perspective of a political theology that sees Visigoth Spain as a prelapsarian entity whose national history is structured in a sequence of fall, penance and redemption. It is this process, together with the preservation of a Gothic lineage, that ultimately legitimizes the monarchy. In the 16th century, Lope de Vega composes *El último godo* in a moment of political unrest in which the monarchy attempts to show the unity and the purity of the realm as the essence of national character. It can be inferred from

the relation between past and present that the legend presents a Pelayo who does not appear to bring a redemption, a restoration of a previous order, but to announce its coming. It is not Pelayo who comes as the second messiah, but the one that comes to announce that the one to save the motherland is coming. The one who will make possible the atonement of sins and the final redemption is, indeed, the monarch who incarnates sovereignty within the historical reality in which the spectatorship lives.

This explanation of the messianic structure in Spanish conceptualization of national history forces us to reconsider Pelayo's story as the moment of redemption. In other words, the resistance to the Muslim invasion is not the moment of redemption, but its success will be. The question remains, where exactly shall we locate that moment of success? Lope's version of the legend in *El último godo* seems to wrestle to this notion while being utterly clear about the role of Pelayo in announcing rather than producing the victory. In his book *The time that remains*, Giorgio Agamben proposes a recovery of the messianic through the reading of the Letters of Paul to the Romans. Agamben makes a distinction between the alternative functions of the figures involved in the message, in particular that of the prophet and that of the apostle. This distinction is clarified through an etymological definition of the word apostle as emissary, as the one that communicates the arrival of the messiah, the one that announces the beginning of the end of times, and it is always present in the moment of enunciation.

This is what makes the difference between the prophet and the apostle. The apostle speaks forth from the arrival of the messiah. At this point prophecy must keep silent, for now prophecy is truly fulfilled... The work passes on to the apostle, to the emissary of the messiah, whose time is no longer the future but the present (Agamben 2005, 61).

In Agamben's reading, understanding the meaning of apostle as emissary clarifies the message; what is announced is not the end of times but the time of the end. It is the moment when new possibilities open to define and articulate an end that, in reality, will never materialize because there will always be a moment of crisis in which the announcement – that is the announcement of a Messiah – will be more relevant than the coming itself. This is where Pelayo becomes essential for the “propagandistic function” in Maravall (1975). As it has been discussed above, Rodrigo and Pelayo fulfill a didactic function in the work of Lope de Vega, a mechanism that acquires signification in the context of a cultural memory of the *Reconquista*.

Each enunciation of the legend of Rodrigo, whether read or performed, it is fair to assume that there is a negotiation in which the past is recognized as a failure. In this negotiation, there is a moment of sin and penance, and a moment of renewal that is never accomplished in the time and space of the

legend itself but in its extradiegetic context. The Pelayo imagined by Lope, following this logic, takes shape in the theatrical event as an apostle that announces a future arranged around the purity of blood of a Visigoth lineage. This is the message that we are to witness in the last scene of *El último godo*, in which, after the victory of Covadonga against the Muslim invader, an event that marks the beginning of the *Reconquista*, there is an allegorical tableau with a female character representing Spain, who unveils one by one the effigies of Castilian kings. These are the kings of a dynasty that lay in the future of Pelayo in the context of the play, but for the audience they might indeed represent the makers of a glorious past that culminates with the monarch ruling at the moment, perhaps even present and sharing in the theatrical experience. From this eternal present provided by the staging of the legend, Pelayo personifies a notion of time that unifies past and present in a shared destiny.

4. *Cultura dirigida* and Cultural Memory in Golden Age Theater

Amidst the criticism over the lack of archival material made available to the reader in *La cultura del Barroco* (MacKay 2013, 49), Maravall's analysis of Golden Age theater as an integral part of a cultural project directed by the political elites – a *cultura dirigida* – has been the basis for groundbreaking and challenging research on the period. David Castillo, for instance, rightly praises Maravall's take on the definition of "honor" as "a mandate to act in accordance with the principles that sustain the established systems of authority" (Castillo 1998, 179), arguing that taking honor out of individual particularities and explaining it within a system of authority opens the discussion over reception and subjectivity. In this sense, however, the individual subject immersed within a system of authority, out of the possible responses – to obey, to rebel or to ignore –, exercises a degree of agency that this notion of directedness does not seem to properly acknowledge. And yet, a notion of agency is not completely absent, since Maravall understands the audience as participant in a process that he defines as propagandistic and at the service of the power structures. It stands to reason that the same process takes shape in the formation of a cultural memory, which as a normative drive rather than an instrument of propagandistic deceit acts as the building block of a national identity. Maravall explains how authority and theatrical production operate over the will of the spectator:

Hay que aceptar la presencia de las fuerzas irracionales de los hombres, sus movimientos afectivos, conocerlos, dominar sus resortes y aplicarlos convenientemente, canalizando su energía hacia los fines que se pretenden. Hay que operar con los hombres como con los elementos

de la naturaleza, solo gobernable sirviéndose de sus propias fuerzas.
(Maravall 1975, 169–170)

There is a need to accept the presence of irrational forces in men, their affective movements, know them, dominate their mechanisms and apply them conveniently, channeling their energy towards the intended end. There is a need to operate with men as with the elements of nature, which can only be governed by using their own forces.

It can be argued that Maravall allows a level of agency to the audience – which in turn becomes a political collective – through the strengths, movements and reactions that get ignited by the persuasive power of art. Nevertheless, he reduces agency to a non-human category, a pure reaction without reflection and consequently apolitical, in which ideology and political action, that is, the elements that ultimately make a multitude become a political collective, are somehow absent from his definition. In other words, Maravall’s audience is a sum of individualities without the necessary cohesiveness to become aware of their own power and, consequently, prone to act as directed. Maravall goes even further in this separation between emotion and intellect by asserting that the efficacy of the visual arts, amongst which he includes painting and theater, rests in the combination of sensorial exposure (sight, hearing), the physical experience marked by the body occupying a physical space in the *corral de comedias* (staging quarters) where the representation takes place, and how these two inward and outward levels of experience appeal to psychological-emotional structures (Maravall 1975, 500). Rescuing, as it were, Maravall’s *cultura dirigida* as a threefold experience – of the senses, of the body and of the psyche – that represents a form of political and social control demands that we think through how theater opens an ideological dimension that springs out of the audience’s experience and not exclusively out of the drama itself. With all the caveats of speculating on individual or collective experiences of the past, we can still agree with Alain Badiou that

El teatro es independiente del Estado, es una mediación pública entre el Estado y su exterior: la multitud reunida. Y como la circulación se establece en dos sentidos (del poder a la multitud y de la multitud al poder), el teatro es absolutamente ambiguo. (During 22)

Theater is independent from the State, it is a public mediation between State and what is out of it: the multitude brought together. And since the circulation is established in two directions (from power to multitude and from multitude to power), theater is absolutely ambiguous.

The spectatorship, seen as multitude, comes together and transforms itself into an audience through the dynamic relations that are laid out by the social

and economic structures that make a particular theatrical production possible (producers, stage owners, etc.). The agency of the audience, only implicit in Maravall and central in Badiou as a “resource to think intellectually of the collective” (During 22), is, in the end, the agency of the client in a marketplace. Theater is defined as a thing produced and taken to the market but also, for us, as the platform to think through, methodologically, the spectator’s response to the study of the comedy of the Spanish Golden Age.

García Reidy (2012) shows how the relation between text, representation and theater as praxis in the marketplace determines the influence that urban institutions and interest groups have in what gets produced, how it gets produced and how it is staged and performed. Theatrical praxis, according to this view, is a dynamic process, collaborative and inclusive of a wide diversity of social actors; as such, these social actors turn audience engagement into an experience charged with political and ideological dimensions (Carreño Rodríguez 2004, 3). Therefore, when defining early modern audiences as receptors, one must take into account theatrical production as a praxis that creates several meanings because of the variety of different acts of participation present (Connor 2000, 8). It is also true that there exists a shared reality defined by a feeling of belonging to a particular context, in this case a context defined by a shared national history.

The question regarding the effects of representing emotions related to national identity, from the point of view of a spectatorship, in a historical play like *El último godo* are particularly relevant because we are speaking about a play that recreates a story which, deep in the 17th century, is already a national myth and, as such, it is part of the audience’s horizon of expectation. The question I pose, then, is, how can the study of this work, considering the two versions available and the changes accounted for, contribute to the understanding of the formation or rather the transformation of a cultural memory of the *Reconquest*? In particular, when working on *El último godo*, I am interested in how the emphasis on Asturias and in Pelayo subverts the expectation created by a legend that, in its most popular versions, shows certain disdain towards these two aspects⁸. The importance of this legend in the formation of a cultural memory and its role in the creative work of Lope’s dramaturgy, justifies the study, developed here, concerning the transmission chain of the story throughout the Middle Ages and how its reception formed the textual memory that became the primary source for the stage.

⁸ It is interesting, for instance, the absence of a corpus dedicated to Pelayo, as it is the case of the *Romancero Viejo*, equivalent to that of Don Rodrigo. Menéndez Pelayo already discussed this discrepancy when he admitted that “los reyes de Asturias y León, aún los más gloriosos, han dejado muy poca huella”, and also “las tradiciones locales sobre el restaurador D. Pelayo no han sido cantadas” (Menéndez y Pelayo 1906, 476).

5. Conclusions

In *El último godo*, Asturias is seen through the speeches in different *actos* but also through the annotations that refer to it as a primordial space, that is, without sin. This characterization extends to the Asturian characters, centralized in Pelayo and defined in opposition to the court and to the manoeuvres of courtly politics. These are, in turn, seen as the source of the corruption of Don Rodrigo. In this telluric context, the play lays out the moral bases for a nation that is reborn with Pelayo: the *translatio* of the relics transforms the cave of Covadonga into a sacred space. The defense of Solmira's honor (by Pelayo and by herself in contrast to Florinda) guarantees the purity of the bloodline. And finally, the victory itself, is seen by the enemy as nothing short of a miracle which, Pelayo uses to invoke a new Spain. Pelayo's performance then re-signifies the character not as a messianic figure but as an emissary that announces a future Visigoth lineage.

The relationship between Asturias, Solmira and Pelayo acts as a constellation of forces that counteracts the emphasis that the different sources for the legend set on the fall of Don Rodrigo. As I explained, the story of Don Rodrigo in the chronicles and its later assimilation in the context of popular narratives legitimizes a lineage that, being as Gothic as that of Rodrigo, offers a renewal, a glorious second coming. The inherent messianism in the structure of the legend is clear, the dichotomies of its organization along the sequence of sin-penance-redemption justify the definition of Rodrigo as a spectral figure in relation to Pelayo. In the same way that Asturias is defined by opposition to the court and Solmira in opposition to Florinda, the character of Pelayo is defined in opposition to Rodrigo; where the latter initiates the fall in a chain of different forms of treason, the former initiates a renewal through the creation of a lineage – and this is the ultimate message of the play – that will bring the unity of Spain with the Conquest of Granada and the purity of blood through the expulsions of Jews (1492) and the Moriscos (1609).

The adaptability of the legend to a variety of contexts owes much to the politico-theological structure around sin and redemption. This gives to each moment of historical crisis a refuge, the possibility of a messianic redemption that will restore order. Spain, in total symbiosis with the medieval notion of pre-lapsarian state, reproduces the salvation structure as a foundational myth. At the same time that the transmission roots the myth, this messianic sequence fulfills a function in the formation of a cultural memory of the *Reconquista*. In sum, the Reconquista becomes a recurrent discourse that forms a national identity always focused on a unity of destiny that is territorial, political, ethnic and religious. This is the reason why it is important to think through how the performance of *El último godo* informs our understanding of the effect that the legend has on the spectatorship, transforming them into an agent in the

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formation of cultural memory. It is through their presence that the people participate actively in the transmission of the legend and also contribute to give legitimacy to the national identity it proposes. The reading and study of this play shows the primal importance of Asturias and Pelayo in the survival and continuous relevance of the myth. The story of national regeneration is part of the cultural memory and as such of the collective identity that, as proposed by Lope de Vega, is forever linked to the Asturian mountains.

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