

FITÓN Y LA MOVILIDAD CULTURAL TRANSATLÁNTICA:
UNA LECTURA CRUZADA ENTRE *EL LAUREL DE
APOLO* DE CALDERÓN DE LA BARCA Y *LA ARAUCANA*
DE ALONSO DE ERCILLA

UNDERSTANDING TRANSATLANTIC CULTURAL
MOBILITY: FOR A CROSS-READING OF FITÓN
IN CALDERÓN DE LA BARCA'S *EL LAUREL DE APOLO*
AND ALONSO DE ERCILLA'S *LA ARAUCANA*

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Abstract. This essay focuses on the intertextual origins and depiction of Fitón in Calderón de la Barca's play *El laurel de Apolo*. After contrasting Calderón's depiction of Fitón with those in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Alonso de Arcilla's *La Araucana*, I demonstrate the special significance Calderón's variations on the classical myth of Fitón acquires when considered within the context of the intersection of Early Modern Spanish literature, history, arts, and politics. Here, I argue that Calderón's recasting of Fitón serves as propaganda, the origins of which can be found in the four Titian paintings commissioned by María de Hungría in 1548. These paintings, like Calderón's Fitón, served as warnings to those who challenged established authority. The essay concludes by examining the transatlantic cultural mobility of Calderón's conception of Fitón, which enables the playwright to both reinforce the authority of Philip IV and comment on the myth and mythmaking of his Privado, or prime minister, the Count-Duke Olivares.

Keywords. *Laurel de Apolo*; Fitón; ekphrasis; *The Furies*; Titian; *La Araucana*; Count-Duke of Olivares; María de Hungría; propaganda; cultural mobility; cultural object; transatlantic cultural networks; Palacio del Buen Retiro; Torre de la Parada; Mythography.

Resumen. Este ensayo se centra en los orígenes intertextuales y la representación de Fitón en la obra *El laurel de Apolo* de Calderón de la Barca. Después de contrastar la descripción calderoniana de Fitón con las que aparecen en *Las Metamorfosis* de Ovidio y *La Araucana* de Alonso de Ercilla, este estudio muestra el significado especial que adquieren las variaciones de Calderón sobre el mito clásico de Fitón cuando se las considera dentro del horizonte de interpretación formado por la intersección de la literatura, la historia, las artes y la política de la Edad Moderna española. Este ensayo sostiene que la reformulación de Fitón por parte de Calderón sirve como una forma de propaganda, cuyo origen se pueden encontrar en las cuatro pinturas de Tiziano encargadas por María de Hungría en 1548. Estas pinturas, como la recreación de Fitón por Calderón, sirvieron como advertencias para quienes desafiaban la autoridad establecida. El ensayo concluye examinando la movilidad cultural transatlántica de la concepción calderoniana de Fitón, la que le permite al dramaturgo reforzar la autoridad de Felipe IV y comentar tanto el mito surgido como la creación de mitos sobre su Privado, el Conde-Duque Olivares.

Palabras clave. *El Laurel de Apolo*; Fitón; écfrasis; *La sala de las Furias*; Tiziano; *La Araucana*; Count-Duke of Olivares; María de Hungría; propaganda; redes culturales transatlánticas; movilidad cultural; objeto cultural; Palacio del Buen Retiro; Torre de la Parada; Mitografía.

El laurel de Apolo is a zarzuela; it was first staged, on March 4, 1658, at the palace of Buen Retiro to celebrate the birth of Prince Felipe Próspero¹. In the zarzuela, Calderón de la Barca provides a definition for this new musical genre. During the loa, or long salutation, a character named Zarzuela describes the forthcoming performance as «no es comedia, sino solo / una fábula pequeña / en que, a imitación de Italia, / se canta, y se representa»². Following Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch's annotations to *El laurel de Apolo*³, Valbuena Briones claimed that this zarzuela was a recasting of *La fábula de Daphne*, Calderón's earlier *comedia* first staged on June 1, 1635, and again on July 29 of that same year⁴. According to John Cruikshank, the *comedia* performed in El Retiro on June 1, 1635 was «perhaps the first performance of a version of Don Pedro's *El laurel de Apolo*»⁵. *La fábula de Daphne* has

¹ Felipe Próspero de Austria was born in Madrid in 1657 and died in 1661.

² Cruikshank, 2009, p. 258. It's not a comedia but only a little fable, in which there is an imitation of Italy, there is singing and acting (Translation are mine unless otherwise indicated).

³ Hartzenbusch, 1850, p. 706.

⁴ Valbuena Briones, 1985, p. 16.

⁵ Cruikshank, 2009, p. 165.

unfortunately not yet been found⁶. Thus, there is no way to compare that *comedia* with the *El laurel de Apolo* (1658). For Valbuena Briones, the most important difference between *La fábula de Daphne* and *El laurel de Apolo* was the *loa*⁷. It is also important to note that *El laurel de Apolo* appeared in the third volume of Calderón's *Tercera parte de comedias*, published in 1664⁸. Moreover, Calderón rewrote *El laurel de Apolo* in 1678 to celebrate the seventeenth birthday of Carlos II, the new king⁹. In the prologue to his edition of Calderón's *Tercera parte de comedias*, published in 1687, Juan de Vera Tassis noted that «the zarzuela, *El laurel de Apolo*, lacked more than two hundred lines when it was first published in the editio princeps of the *Tercera parte* in 1664»¹⁰.

If all of this evidence shows the complexity behind composition and authorship in Spanish Golden Age *comedias*, it also helps to prove that the story presented in *El laurel de Apolo* was not new in the court of Philip IV. The fact that for some critics *La fábula de Dafne*, mentioned in various documents of the period, was probably Calderón's *El mayor encanto, amor*¹¹ or *El Amor enamorado* by Lope de Vega¹² proves that there was a certain familiarity with the story of Apollo and Daphne. Indeed, the pictorial representation of the fable «Apollo and the Serpant Fitón», painted by Paul Rubens for Philip IV, shows that this fable was not strange but known to the «Planet King»¹³. This painting

⁶ For details, see Cotarelo y Mori (1917, p. 173), Hartzenbusch's «Catálogo cronológico de las comedias de don Pedro Calderón la Barca» (1850, p. 671b), Greer (1991, p. 204, note 10), and Valbuena Briones (1981, 1985).

⁷ Valbuena Briones, 1985, pp. 230-231. Critics agree that a standard edition of *El laurel de Apolo* should start with the *loa*, or long salutation, toward the end of which appears *Zarzuela*. This personification is asked about the genre of the drama to follow. She claims that it is «una fábula como fiesta en dos jornadas». Calderón de la Barca scholars have traditionally pointed to this passage as the birth of the zarzuela. Julio Vélez Sainz (2010) studies the content of this *loa*. Nonetheless, Cotarelo y Mori (1917), Stein (1983), Randall (2003), and other critics agree that *El golfo de las sirenas* (1657) was the first to be staged at the Zarzuela, and so it is the earliest of Calderón's works identified as a zarzuela.

⁸ Two printed editions of this *Tercera parte de Comedias* circulated in 1664. For details, see Herman Hesse's article «The Two Versions of Calderon's *El laurel de Apolo*» (1946).

⁹ Cruikshank, 2009, p. 329. See also Valbuena Briones, 1981, p. 231.

¹⁰ Hesse, 1946, p. 213.

¹¹ Ulla Lorenzo, 2013, pp. 26-27.

¹² Iopoli, 2006, pp. 12-17.

¹³ The painting is today at Museo del Prado (<<https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/apollo-and-the-python/c6cc2852-72c4-435c-be4c-17fae314fa38>>).

was part the redecoration of the Torre de la Parada, the last major commission undertaken by the Rubens workshop. La Torre de la Parada was a hunting lodge located near the Royal Palace of El Pardo in Madrid, «a resting place for the royal party during the chase», which both Philip IV and the Count-Duke of Olivares decided to work on and renovate after the completion of the Palace del Buen Retiro¹⁴. Indeed, in the same year that the renovation contract for La Torre de la Parada was signed (1636), Philip IV approved the one for the Palace of La Casa de la Zarzuela: «A small hunting lodge in the grounds of the Pardo, [...], conceived as an elegant country house set in a small garden»¹⁵.

All of this suggests that the fable of Apollo and Daphne was a familiar, if not well liked, story in Philip IV's court. This essay, however, does not aspire to study the details and testimonies surrounding the different versions of Calderón's play, nor does it center its attention on its music, production, or performance¹⁶. Rather, it focuses on the intertextual origins of its composition. My goal here is to address a specific modification made by Calderón to the portrait of Fitón (Spanish for Python) in his retelling of the myth of Apollo and Daphne. This modification is a recreation for which Calderón composed another 150 verses, but that has yet to be addressed by critics; I expect this essay to begin to rectify this oversight.

I argue that in *El laurel de Apolo* Fitón acquires a special significance once it is considered within the context of the intersection of literature, history, arts, and politics in Early Modern Spain. Thus, I will demonstrate this recasting of Fitón serves as propaganda, the origins of which can be found in Titian's four paintings commissioned by María de Hungría in 1548. These paintings portraying Ticius, Sisyphus, Tantalus, and Ixion (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) were held in a room known as «La Sala de las Furias» in her palace in Binche, and after her death in 1558, they were passed to her nephew Philip II. Because of the damaged condition in which the paintings arrived in Madrid, in 1564 Philip II asked Alonso Sánchez Coello to copy and restore them¹⁷. Once the paintings were ready, Phillip II placed them

¹⁴ Brown and Elliot, 2003, p. 233.

¹⁵ Brown and Elliot, 2003, p. 231.

¹⁶ See, for example, Stein, 1983, Acuña, 2017, and Gascón, 2017.

¹⁷ Falomir, 2014, p. 59.

in El Alcázar de Madrid, in a room next to his chambers called the «Salón Grande.» This room has since also been known as «La Sala de las Furias»¹⁸. These paintings remained there until 1623, when Philip IV moved them to «La Sala de los Espejos,» also in El Alcázar, and remained there until a fire destroyed the palace in 1734.

Moreover, in the tradition of classical literature, late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century readers immediately connected the name *Fitón* to the image of a dragon or a snake. In Europe, through the mid sixteenth century, the name was not associated with a human figure. It is not until 1578, the date of the publication of the second part of Alonso de Ercilla's epic on the Spanish conquest of Chile, *La Araucana*, that *Fitón* appears as the name of a magician¹⁹, as also happens in Calderón's *El laurel de Apolo* and in others of his plays, such as *Apolo y Clímene*²⁰. In *La Araucana* (part one was published in 1569, part two almost ten years later, and part three in 1589), *Fitón* is an indigenous magician whose advice and help become crucial to Ercilla²¹.

After contrasting Calderón's version of *Fitón* with that depicted by Ovid in *Metamorphoses* and by Ercilla in *Araucana*, I demonstrate the transatlantic cultural mobility that is evident in Calderón's conception of *Fitón*. This cultural mobility provides the playwright the

¹⁸ Falomir, 2014, p. 65.

¹⁹ «¡Oh gran *Fitón*, a quien es dado / penetrar de los cielos los secretos, / que del eterno curso arrebatado, / no obedecen la ley a ti sujetos! / Tú que de la fortuna y fiero hado / revocas, cuando quieres, los decretos, / y el orden natural turbas y alteras, / alcanzando las cosas venideras. // Y por mágica ciencia y saber puro / rompiendo el cavernoso y duro suelo, / puedes en el profundo reino oscuro, / meter la claridad y luz del cielo; / y atormentar con áspero conjuro / la cátedra infernal, que con recelo / tiembla de tu eficaz fuerza, que es tanta / que sus eternas leyes le quebranta» (Canción XXIII, p. 150. For a translation, see appendix c).

²⁰ Alexander Parker claims this *comedia* was written around 1660 (1988, p. 35), while Fausta Antonucci argues it was probably composed by 1661 («*Apolo y Clímene*», in *Calderón Digital. Base de datos, argumentos y motivos del teatro de Calderón*). Don Cruikshank does not provide a date for this play, and Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch states it was the first part of *El hijo del Sol*, which was staged in the palace of Buen Retiro in 1639 (1850, p. 673). In *El Castillo de Lindabridis*, «*fitonisa*» is the name of the sorceress.

²¹ Mejías-López, 1992, p. 283. William Mejías-López argues Ercilla's *Fitón* resembles a «shaman araucano». Thus, he sees in *Fitón* traces or characteristics linked to the «huecubyes o sacerdotes araucanos» who used to live alone in caves carved into a mountain.

opportunity to make a commentary on the myth and mythmaking of Philip IV's Privado, the Count-Duke Olivares.

I. PYTHON AND THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

In Book One of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the story of Python precedes that of Daphne²². The narrator tells us that Python is a beast born of the discordant harmony —*discors Concordia* in Latin— between water and fire/heat. Python is one of the *nova monstra* created from a new genesis. He is a monstrous kind of animal that had never before been seen: a serpent. Since he physically takes the space of a large portion of the mountains, his presence contorts, disturbs, and horrifies people and towns due to his disproportionate size:

[...] When moisture
 Unites with heat, life is conceived; all things
 Come from this union. Fire may fight with water,
 But heat and moisture generate all things
Their discord being productive. So when the earth,
After that flood, still muddy, took the heat,
Felt the warm fire of sunlight, she conceived,
Brought forth, after their fashion, all the creatures,
Some old, some strange and monstrous.
 One, for instance,
 She bore unwanted, a gigantic serpent,
 Python by name, whom the new people dreaded,

²² During the sixteenth century, four Spanish translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* appeared. The first one is by Jorge de Bustamante, *Libro del Metamorphoseos y fabulas del excelente poeta y filosofo Ouidio, noble cauallero Patricio romano: Traduzido de latin en romance*. Although it does not show the date of publication, critics believe it belongs to the first half of the century (probably ca 1542). The second edition of Bustamante's translation appeared in 1546. The second translation appeared in 1580 and was composed by Antonio Perez, the Secretario to Phillip II, published by Juan Pernier in Salamanca in 1580. The third, by Felipe Mey, appeared in 1586. The last of these four was made by Sanchez de Viana and appeared in Valladolid in 1589. For details about each of these works see Díez Platas and Monterroso Montero, 1998.

A huge bulk of the mountain-side
 (*Metamorphoses*, pp. 22-23)²³.

It is then that Apollo's story is told. He kills Python, and his victory is not only highly praised but recognized and crowned with an oaken garland. It is at the end of this ceremony that Cupid appears. When Apollo sees him carrying bows and arrows, he immediately exclaims:

[...] «O silly youngster,»
 He said, «what are you doing with such weapons?
 Those are for grown-ups! The bow is for my shoulders;
 I never fail in wounding beast or mortal,
 And not so long ago I slew the Python
 With countless dart; his bloated body covered
 Acre on endless acre, and I slew him!
 The torch my boy is enough for you to play with,
 To get the love-fires burning. Do not meddle
 With honors that are mine!»

(*Metamorphoses*, pp. 24-25).

Cupid finds himself insulted and humiliated by Apollo and decides to take revenge. He sends his arrow with its deadly gold tip into Apollo, making him fall in love with the nymph Daphne. In contrast, he shoots Daphne with an arrow «deadly tipped with lead», provoking in her disdain and all that is contrary to love or desire. What follows is well known to all. Apollo seeks Daphne's favors, and the nymph, of course, refuses his advances. Finally, Apollo, burning with desire, takes her, emboldened by the constant refusal of the nymph and the assistance of Cupid. When the nymph finds herself embraced by force, she asks the gods for help and so her body— which has brought her

²³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Rolfe Humpries, rev. W. Davies, annotated by J. D. Reed, Bloomington (Indiana University Press, 2018). All references to *Metamorphoses* are to this edition, which I selected because its treatment of the verses that describe Python somehow resemble the Spanish translation by Jorge de Bustamante, the first of the four translators mentioned in n. 8: «Después la tierra crió entre ellas una espantable serpiente llamada Phiton. Esta no era conocida de la nueva gente ni nunca oída, de grandeza les ponía de gran temor a todos» (*Libro del Metamorphoseos y fabulas del excelente poeta y filosofo Ouidio, noble cauallero Patricio romano: Traduzido de latin en romance*, 1546, fol. xvii r).

so much misfortune and harm —is transformed into a laurel tree (*Metamorphoses*, pp. 26–32).

During the Middle Ages, the story of Apollo and Daphne began to be seen as more than a tale read for pleasure. It was considered —like many of Ovid's stories in the *Metamorphoses*—an instructional tale meant to inspire one to lead a moral life²⁴. This kind of interpretation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the Middle Ages materializes into a form of commentary called *Ovide Moralisé*²⁵.

Thus, *Ovide Moralisé*²⁶ is the name of a very popular kind of translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It is a translation from Latin lyric into Romance (Old French) verse with a moral commentary in prose. The first *Ovide Moralisé* appeared in the first quarter of the fourteenth century and can be considered a hybrid text²⁷. Its author enriched his translation with numerous comments, which can easily be linked to the encyclopedic and scholarly literature of the time. Soon this style of translation was followed by many and not only in French or in France. These translations began to appear mostly in English, Italian, and Spanish, and circulated throughout Europe. They were copiously illustrated and were the main, though not exclusive, source for the mythologies and their interpretation²⁸.

Many of the stories in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* became sources for books on the education of princes. Moreover, in such texts, the story of Apollo and Daphne was constantly delivered as an example of the conquest of the spiritual over the flesh, virtue over passion.²⁹ In the

²⁴ The *Ovide Moralisé* is a text which translates, amplifies, and moralizes Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: «it transforms Ovid's text into revelations of Christian truth» (Griffin, 2012, p. 41).

²⁵ Clark, Coulson, and McKinley, 2011, p. 2.

²⁶ For details about the translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in France and their relationship with the *Ovide Moralisé*, see *Metamorphosis: The Changing Face of Ovid in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Allison Keith and Stephen James Rupp (2007).

²⁷ The first and most famous is an anonymous French translation done by «a poet writing in the French Burgundian vernacular» that appeared at the end of the first third of the fourteenth century (Pairet, 2009, p. 83).

²⁸ Lord, 1975, p. 162.

²⁹ For Marylynn Desmond, the *Ovide moralisé* assimilates the women in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* into a Christian moral system. Thus, «in the *Ovide moralisé* the story of Daphne is moralized so that the Roman category of Chastity becomes equated with the elite Christian ideal of virginity» (2007, p. 72). See for example, the Roven manuscript, where the story is illustrated with two images: «The first depicts Apollo's pursuit

various portrayals of Apollo killing Python circulating during the late Middle Ages, one can see that Ovid's *nova monstra* is mostly portrayed as a dragon and not as a serpent. This is one example of Phytón's transformations wrought by mythography. In Spain, Alfonso el Sabio's *General Estoria* (thirteenth century) is a good example of this trend³⁰.

During the Renaissance, artists and intellectuals were not only looking for Ovid's stories, but for different versions of those stories. According to Don Cameron Allen, this search and compilation results in the creation of a new literary genre, mythography, and a new kind of writer, the mythographer³¹. He sees Giovanni's Boccaccio as the first mythographer of the Renaissance and claims that Boccaccio's *Genealogia Deorum Gentilorum* (1360) served as a model for the composition of other mythographies. Spain, of course, was no stranger to this process, although the first mythographies in Spanish would only appear much later, in the sixteenth century, since during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Italian mythographies were circulating in the Iberian Peninsula. The *Philosophia secreta* (1599) written by Pérez de Moya is the first and most famous example from the sixteenth century, along with Juan de Piña's *Epítome de las fábulas de la antigüedad* (1635). Diego de López's 1615 Spanish translation of Andrea Alciato's *Emblemata* (1531) and Baltasar de Vitoria's *Teatro de los dioses de la gentilidad* (1620) are the best examples from the seventeenth century³².

of Daphne and his embrace of the laurel tree after her transformation [...]. This image is juxtaposed to an image of the Annunciation that illustrates the glose in which Daphne's desire to follow Diana is allegorically read as an allegory for the conception of Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit» (2007, p. 72).

³⁰ Cuesta Torre (2007) studies the role of these mythological tales in *General estoria*.

³¹ In *Mysteriously Meant*, Allen asserts, «The professional mythographer was a Renaissance creation, and the manuals he wrote were closely consulted by artists, men of letters, and all educated men. His primary sources were the literary texts of Greece and Rome, the earlier commentaries on these texts, the curious mythologies of the Middle Ages, and the newly discovered classical interpreters» (1970, p. 201).

³² According to Jean Seznec, Baltasar de Vitoria's *Teatro de los dioses de la gentilidad* is a compilation based on «French and Italian manuals: the *Officina* of Textor, the *Discours de la religion des anciens Romains* of du Ghoul; the emblem books of Alciati and Valeriano, with the glosses added by their commentators; lastly the *Mythologiae* of «Natal Comite» (Natale Conti) and the *Imagini* of Cartari». This is how, affirms Seznec, Baltasar de Vitoria «harvests the classical tradition, encumbered with all its medieval accretions» (1972, p. 318). For more details about these Spanish mythographers and mythographies, see Green, 1970.

As one may expect, in each of these books, the story of Apollo, Daphne, and Python appears, but in none of them is the story altered or modified from the one Ovid wrote in *Metamorphoses*. A *glossa* or commentary explaining the meaning of the Apollo–Daphne story was frequently added after its presentation. In *Philosophia secreta*, for example, the story praises the value of chastity³³. Regarding Fitón, the subject of this essay, little or nothing is said, except for the fact that it is a serpent, following Ovid’s description. This representation of Fitón as a serpent became common practice during the period, as one can see in many of the Spanish Golden Age texts where the myth is mentioned, although it would not be strange to find it also described as a dragon³⁴.

For these reasons, it is noteworthy that in his *El laurel de Apolo* Calderón composes more than one hundred and fifty verses to describe Python, a task that in the classical accounts takes no more than twenty (and only if we start counting from the moment of the creation of Earth). Nonetheless, it is not only the number of poetic lines that makes Calderón’s description of Fitón remarkable, but also the compositional art that he exercises to represent the monster. Nevertheless, Fitón is a character that has received almost no critical commentary, and what follows will begin to fill this gap in the literature.

2. FITÓN IN *EL LAUREL DE APOLO*

In Valbuena Briones’s view, Daphne’s long speech about Python in *El laurel de Apolo* interrupts the development of the story, and through this interruption, a number of anecdotes are offered to the public for their entertainment³⁵. I would add that this pause also works as

³³ Pérez de Moya, *Philosophia secreta*, p. 269.

³⁴ For example, Baltasar de Vitoria refers to Python as a serpent in his *Theatro de los dioses de la gentilidad*: «Sea como fuere, que el coronarse de laurel en estos juegos, sea por haber muerto aquella serpiente Pytón» (p. 512). In the same way, the beast is recalled by Pérez de Moya, in his *Philosophia secreta*: «Después de haber Apolo muerto a la serpiente Phitón, estando por la victoria muy levantado en soberbia...» (p. 267). However, Juan de Pineda, in his *Diálogos familiares de la agricultura cristiana*, describes Python as a dragon: «Fitonisas se llaman las sacerdotisas del dios Apolo, autor de las adivinanzas, por haber él muerto al gran dragón Python o Pitón...» (p. 343).

³⁵ Valbuena Briones, 1959, p. 2172.

a rhetorical device by which a more complete and complex image of Fitón is delivered:³⁶

Ya sabéis [...]
Que este enmarañado monte
que en Tesalia, nuestra patria,
es verde columna, en quien
del cielo el eje descansa
albergue fue de Fitón,
aquel mágico, que en varias
diabólicas ciencias diestro,
quitó a los dioses la sacra
adoración de sus doctos
simulacros pues que en claras
voces habló en esqueletos
mejor que ellos en estatuas.
Oráculo, pues, de todas
las gentes destas montañas,
ya no eran Apolo y Venus
sus auxiliares, con tanta
desestimación que habiendo
en esas dos cumbres altas
dos templos suyos, apenas
vimos por edades largas
en sus piadosos umbrales
ni aun huella de humana planta,
porque a la lógreba gruta
de Fitón era a quien daban
la fe y el voto, teniendo
sus respuestas por más sabias.
Los sacerdotes de Apolo,
y de Venus, las sagradas
sacerdotisas, en vez de
dar abrigos a sus ansias,
les intimaron sentencia
de muerte: con que cerradas
las puertas de entrambos templos,
reconocieron ser causa

³⁶ Calderón chose the spelling Fitón over Pytón, Phytón or Phitón, which were at the time common spellings for the word.

de su estrago la ojeriza
 de los dioses; y trocada
 la estimación de Fitón
en ira, en cólera, en rabia,
 en su mal vivo cadáver
 ensangrentaron las armas (pp. 2174–2175)³⁷.

This first part of the story offered by Daphne informs us that Fitón was first a magician skilled in dark magic, a characteristic that is not in Ovid and likely Calderón's invention. He was well liked by the people of Thessaly since he knew how to predict the future with his science without using riddles, as in the traditional religious practice. However, his popularity aroused the wrath of the gods, who decided to punish not only the magician but also the people of the island. Thus, the jealousy of the gods not only brought death to Fitón, but also desolation and destruction to Thessaly, after a deluge came over the city. As a result of this flood, all sorts of new creatures appeared, including the one described in these lines:

Fue una escamada serpiente,
 que abrigándose en la estancia
 de la cueva de Fitón,
 motivó a las siempre vagas
 supersticiones del vulgo,
 ser de su cadáver alma.
 Esa pues ni ave ni fiera
 ni pez, siendo así que en agua,
 en tierra y aire, pez, fiera
 y ave, corre, vuela y nada;
 sirviéndose para todo,
 en el aire de las alas
 en la tierra de los pies
 y en el mar de las escamas;
 con su anhélito el ambiente

³⁷ When citing *El Laurel de Apolo*, I use Valbuena Briones's edition found in Pedro Calderón de la Barca, *Obras completas* (1959). The loa, however, does not appear in Valbuena Briones's edition. It does appear in Calderón de la Barca's *Comedias III*, edited by Don Cruickshank. All emphasis in the texts is mine unless otherwise specified. Translations in English for this and other quotations from the Spanish text are offered in the appendix.

infesta, siempre que brama;
 y siempre que pace o bebe,
 con su espuma, ondas y plantas:
 tanto que apenas hay flor,
 que no sea avienada
 cicuta, siendo ya en todo
 el orbe ponzoña amarga,
 para el abuso de hechizos,
 de ilusiones y fantasmas,
 la menos tocada yerba
 de los montes de Tesalia (vv. 2175–2176)³⁸.

In Calderón's play *El laurel de Apolo*, Fitón is first a magician and a priest whose fame aroused the envy of the gods. The people find out that they are being punished because of the gods' jealousy of him and so they, without the agency of Apollo, decide to kill him. However, his death caused him to be mythologized not as a hero but as a monster. In the story, Fitón, as a magician and priest, is first seen as the intermediary between the people and the gods, thus he is someone who deserves great esteem. Later, however, people began to pay more attention to him than to the gods, and that is what arouses their jealousy. Being wounded in their pride, or feeling offended, the gods' ire or wrath (in Spanish, «ira, furia, rabia») produces disasters in the area, and the people blame Fitón for everything that befalls the island. In the end, he is killed by the same people who once praised and esteemed him. However, because now there is a serpent living in Fitón's cave, villagers assume that this is none other than Fitón himself, who has come to seek revenge for his death.

As Valbuena Briones suggests, Daphne's account of Fitón is a rhetorical device that introduces a pause in the narration and offers a long description of him³⁹. Here, Daphne's intervention works as an ekphrasis, i.e., as a detailed description of a work of art that is offered to shed light on the main characters of the story and enlighten its readers. More specifically, it is a notional ekphrasis because in her description, a work of art with no existence outside the play is described⁴⁰. This

³⁸ For English translation see Appendix, letter b.

³⁹ Valbuena Briones, 1959, p. 2171.

⁴⁰ The term «notional ekphrasis» was coined by John Hollander (1988). Yet, we can also refer to it as hypotypose because «[the] theory of the description in the Spanish

is a rather extreme form of notional ekphrasis. In this particular case, the fictional work of art is about Fitón, the transformations his image undergoes and the emotions or passions («*Ira, furia, rabia*»: ire, fury and wrath) he arouses in the gods and the people. Her narration invites the listeners and readers to imagine and paint Fitón in their minds. The focus of the story is not just Fitón, the magician or the serpent, but the transformations endured by the character as a single entity. The notional ekphrasis used by Calderón in his *Laurel* presents the story and image of a magician, a priest, a character of high esteem who, willingly or not, first offended the gods and then was turned into a beast or a monster by public opinion. He became the object of their passions. It is this manipulation of the figure of Fitón that I find *sui generis*, or unique to Calderón's interpretation of the myth, particularly when it is read in the context of Titian's cycle of four paintings known as the *Furias*.

The name of this cycle can be misleading since it does not refer to the Greco-Roman female figures who personified punishment and vengeance and were responsible for ensuring that those in Hades underwent their punishments,

Strictly speaking, the Furies —also known as the Erinyes or Eumenides— were female creatures of the underworld (three according to Virgil: Alecto, Megaera, and Tisiphone) who personified punishment and vengeance⁴¹.

In the Court of the Hapsburgs, the name «*Furias*» was applied to both the story of the four figures who dwelled in the Graeco-Roman Hades as a punishment for defying the gods, as retold by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*, and to Titian's cycle of paintings commissioned by María de Hungría⁴². These four figures were:

Golden Age was indeed much more flexible and dynamic, so that there was no clear distinction in Cervantes' time between ekphrasis —verbal representations of objects of art—, and hypotypose, understood as the vivid and evident description of reality as a work of art» (Posada, 2020).

⁴¹ Miguel Falomir, 2014, p. 158.

⁴² Elvira Barba y Carrasco Ferrer (2018, p. 47). This is why these four paintings are also referred as the «*Four Condemned*» by art critics (Falomir, 2014, p. 165).

Tityus, whose liver was constantly pecked at by a vulture for attempting to rape one of Zeus's lovers; Tantalus, condemned to vainly trying to obtain food and drink for serving up his son at a banquet of the gods; Sisyphus, who had to endlessly roll an enormous rock for revealing Zeus's infidelities; and Ixion, obliged to turn forever on a wheel for attempting to seduce Hera⁴³.

In 1548, María de Hungría commissioned Titian to complete these four paintings to decorate her palace at Binche. Indeed they were conceived as part of an ambitious iconographical program which included other paintings, sculptures, and tapestries that decorated the Great Hall at Binches⁴⁴. It was María who gave these characters their political significance, which the characters did not have before her: «her choice of the *Furias* as a political allegory was wholly without precedent»⁴⁵. She aimed to use this cycle of paintings to warn those who were coming to the festivities organized to honor the visit of her brother, the Emperor Carlos V, and his son, the young prince Philip II, to Binches, about what could happen to those who, as the priest-turned Python was accused of, subvert the established order. The main day for these festivities in Binche was set for May 22, 1549.

María's commission was intended as propaganda supporting Carlos V. *The Furias* served as a visual cautionary tale warning other subordinates or world leaders against uprisings. The cycle reminded these same leaders about the Emperor's «ire, fury and wrath» for those who do not remain faithful to him⁴⁶.

After María de Hungría's death, Philip II moved these paintings to Madrid via Joanna de Portugal⁴⁷. They were located in the Alcázar, in a room next to his chambers known as the «Salón Grande.» This room was also later known as *Sala de las Furias*. Moreover, since the late sixteenth century, Titian's *The Furias* was considered the model for illustrating supreme mastery in art. They appealed to the baroque sensibility and were in tune with an aesthetic of horror developing in

⁴³ Falomir, «The "Furias." From Titian to Ribera».

⁴⁴ Falomir, 2014, p. 161.

⁴⁵ Falomir, 2014, p. 160.

⁴⁶ Falomir, 2014, pp. 25-34.

⁴⁷ Puttfarcken, 2005, p. 81.

Europe that in the case of the Spanish Golden Age *comedia* can be traced to Lope de Vega's *tragedias*⁴⁸.

This commission by María de Hungría exemplifies the fact that during the Spanish Golden Age paintings served as signs of love, jealous passion, and royalty, but also of marriage negotiation and political manipulations, as Laura Bass has claimed⁴⁹. Furthermore, Calderón's ekphrasis of Fitón through Daphne clearly works in the same way. Daphne's ekphrasis establishes a link between Fitón as a magician and Fitón as a serpent, and also offers a statement on art understood as painting and poetry as well as suggesting the contemporary political parallels drawn above. Calderón's description of Fitón illustrates the torment, torture, and punishment inflicted on those who dare to defy the gods, as Titian did for María de Hungría by painting the *Furias* to terrify those who revolted against Carlos V. Calderón's portrayal of Fitón through Daphne's speech resembles the poetics of tragedy proposed by Lope de Vega following Titian as Frederick De Armas has shown. Thus, Apollo's erotic passion for Daphne hides the real tragedy, one that is told by Daphne herself, and who nonetheless is able to escape from Apollo's lust. Fitón's story, as delivered by Daphne, is about a tragedy in the most classical meaning of the term, since it is the story of a human being encountering the «ira, cólera y rabia» of both the gods (Venus and Mars) and the people whom he first served.

Regarding Fitón as a serpent, there are plenty of references in classical Roman sources that circulated during the Renaissance; about Fitón as a magician, there are very few, so why is such a connection established in the text by Calderón? Even more significantly, could the name of Fitón have passed unnoticed by the reader?

3. A TRANSATLANTIC FITÓN

In the tradition of classical literature, the name Fitón immediately brought a snake to the minds of late sixteenth- and early

⁴⁸ For Frederick A. de Armas (2008), Lope de Vega finds inspiration in Titian's painting for Philip II to compose and structure his view on tragedy. Like Titian, Lope tried to hide the tragic through the erotic. In this way, the public is asked to remember not only the fable or story but also the painting (or paintings) inspiring the plot (2008, pp. 98-101).

⁴⁹ Bass, 2008, p. 1.

seventeenth-century readers. It is the beast that Apollo kills, creating the situation in which Apollo meets Daphne in *Metamorphoses*. It is not until 1578, as noted above, the date of the publication of the second part of Alonso de Ercilla's epic on the Spanish conquest of Chile, *La Araucana*, that *Fitón* appears as the name of a magician⁵⁰. In this epic, *Fitón* is an indigenous magician whose advice and help became crucial to Ercilla.

The nature and purpose of *La Araucana* is still being debated⁵¹. The reason for this conflict is the complex structure of the poem itself⁵². Nonetheless it became a Spanish Golden Age bestseller and a model for the Spanish epic to follow⁵³. Thus, it is not fortuitous that in the novel *Don Quijote*, Ercilla's *La Araucana* is the book that is saved and kept out of the fire prepared by the priest and the barber after the examination of Don Quixote's library because it is deemed «Christian and very honorable», two of the main values of the Spanish epic hero⁵⁴.

There are at least two perspectives on Ercilla's complex epic. In *The Poetics of Empire in the Indies*, Nicolopulos claimed that in part two, «The events of the war in the Arauco are carefully interwoven and balanced with material that is proper to either classical epic or the *romanzi*, or both»⁵⁵. For Nicolopulos, the visions offered by Ercilla of Python's cave are there to exalt the Spanish Empire⁵⁶. Similarly, Onetto argues, «Ercilla's poem claimed that whoever can read these corners would be able to control the world himself»⁵⁷. However, David Quint has found that this is an epic that embraces the cause of the politically

⁵⁰ «¡Oh gran Fitón, a quien es dado / penetrar de los cielos los secretos, / que del eterno curso arrebatado, / no obedecen la ley a ti sujetos! / Tú que de la fortuna y fiero hado / revocas, cuando quieres, los decretos, / y el orden natural turbas y alteras, / alcanzando las cosas venideras. // Y por mágica ciencia y saber puro / rompiendo el cavernoso y duro suelo, / puedes en el profundo reino oscuro, / meter la claridad y luz del cielo; / y atormentar con áspero conjuro / la cátedra infernal, que con recelo / tiembla de tu eficaz fuerza, que es tanta / que sus eternas leyes le quebranta» (Canción XXIII, p. 150. For a translation, see appendix c).

⁵¹ See chapter 4 of Miguel Martínez's *Front Lines: Soldiers' Writing in the Early Modern Hispanic World* (2018).

⁵² Davis, 2000, p. 68.

⁵³ Davis, 2000, p. 20.

⁵⁴ For a study of Python's cave and necromantic practices, see Nicolopulos, *The Poetics of Empire in the Indies*.

⁵⁵ Nicolopulos, 2000, pp. 13-14.

⁵⁶ Nicolopulos, 2000, p. 15.

⁵⁷ Onetto, 2018, note 1.

defeated, one that is inspired by Lucan's *Pharsalia* and that presents itself as an alternate model⁵⁸. For Karina Galperin, Fitón's prophecy shows a contradictory and problematic identification⁵⁹. David Quint describes this identification «as the one between the Spaniards in Lepanto and the Araucanians in Chile»⁶⁰.

In *La Araucana*, Fitón is a magician who, like Calderón's Fitón, lives in a cave and practices necromancy. He is able to offer Ercilla, the main character, or hero, named after the author, a foreshadowing of the events to unfold. Fitón is, therefore, not only a magician in the common sense of the term, but also one who, thanks to his unique ability of prophesy, serves as an adviser to the ruler. He offers insights into the outcome of wars, is able to read the signs, and is crucial in deciding, for example, whether or not to go to war. Thus, this magician or priest serves as an adviser to the Caesar in Ancient Rome. Indeed, during the Roman Republic and Empire, witches and magicians are shown not only in fictional epic, like Virgil's *Aeneid*, but also in real life⁶¹. Moreover, Lucan describes in his *Pharsalia* the different practices of magicians in times of war. This is why it is important to emphasize that in *La Araucana*, Fitón delivers his vision without revealing the outcome of the Chilean war, contrary to the practice of the magician in Ancient Rome described by Virgil, Lucan, and others⁶². The fact that Fitón avoids announcing the outcome of the war has led Barbara Fuchs⁶³ to suggest that in *La Araucana*, Fitón's prophecy is not a positive one, but rather, it provides a dim view of the empire in the time of Philip II, as David Quint has also pointed out.

In *La Araucana*, Fitón is not killed for not foretelling the outcome of the war. Contrarily, in Calderón's *El laurel de Apolo*, where Fitón is the wizard, his role as intermediary between the gods and the people coupled with his ability to predict the outcome of wars (he gives advice to those who rule) upsets both the gods and the people⁶⁴.

⁵⁸ Quint, 1993, p. 133.

⁵⁹ Galperin, 2009, p. 38.

⁶⁰ Quint, 1993, pp. 157-159.

⁶¹ Burton and Grandy, 2004, p. 151.

⁶² Edmonds, 2019, Chapter 1.

⁶³ Fuchs, 2006, p. 379.

⁶⁴ Hernando, 2020, p. 229. For Isabel Hernando Morata, oracles are present in Calderón's mythological plays, and they have the ability to generate intrigue and mystery and so to intensify the drama.

Moreover, Calderón depicts Fitón as a magician who in many ways fulfilled the role of a *Privado* (Prime Minister), a particularly fraught occupation that during the reigns of both Philip III and Philip IV. Although the impact left by the execution of Rodrigo Calderón, the Duke of Lerma's secretary, in Madrid's main square in 1605 might not have been so powerful by the second half of the seventeenth century, it might well still have been in the air, especially after the fall of the Count-Duke of Olivares, the *Privado* to Philip IV in 1642, and this could be seen as reiterating, if subtextually, the execution of the priest-turned-Fitón. Indeed, if we follow Ricardo Padrón's reading of the General Caupolicán in *La Araucana*, we find echoes of his execution in Calderón's Fitón's tragic end⁶⁵.

Is Ercilla's Fitón the one that Calderón had in mind when composing the *Laurel de Apollo*? The links presented above invite us first to see the story of Fitón in Calderón's *Laurel* as an ekphrastic description of the decline and fall of a *Privado* and warning to those seeking that position. This ekphrasis of Fitón as a magician and priest who is first venerated and later vilified could certainly have provoked reflection on the performance of political figures in the Court of Philip IV. In particular, it could remind the audience of those who are first celebrated but then vilified by something very close to what nowadays would be called public opinion, the voice of the mob. This voice could find its shape and strength in «el mentidero»: the space in which actors used to meet to practice or rehearse their lines, criticize performances, etc., that was visited by authors and poets but also by soldiers and those with a role in military affairs. From these meeting places commentaries or criticism of different national affairs were transformed into wild gossip⁶⁶. It is important to note that this was a voice born outside the Court, fueled by those who were in constant contact with the members of the Court. Moreover, this voice openly expressed its disagreement with the economic measures taken by the Count-Duke of Olivares, who finally was removed from his position in 1642, mostly for his centralizing view of the administration which led to the empire's economic crisis. This was a very important move, if we also keep in mind that by the time this play was presented, some members of the court were seeking appointment as Prime Minister.

⁶⁵ Padrón, 2000, pp. 562-564.

⁶⁶ Defourneaux, 1979, pp. 69-70.

The reference to Ercilla's *Araucana*, however, should also invite us to think of the implications of bringing the epic back to Philip IV and Queen Mariana de Austria. This epic both exemplified the transatlantic dimension of the empire and criticized it, a dimension that was clearly materialized in 1644 through the royal funeral of Philip IV's first wife, Queen Isabel de Borbón. These funeral rites added a new perspective of the empire as they were celebrated around the world in places such as Lima, Mexico, Quito, Puebla and Puerto Rico in the Americas, and in Europe, in cities such as Rome, Milan and Naples. Many of the accounts or *relaciones* of such funeral services held in American cities became a material testimony of a transatlantic voice indicating that the anguish over the death of the queen, represented not just the loss of the king's consort but that of the one who was able to properly rule the empire, Queen Isabel⁶⁷.

It is evident that the Early Modern Iberian literary circle and its canon were forged by constant contact with the empire, which was trying to duplicate itself across both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and the Mediterranean Sea. Calderón's reference to Alonso de Ercilla's *La Araucana* in his *Laurel de Apolo* clearly reflects what A. Robert Lauer has identified as «the Iberian encounter of America in the Spanish theater of the Golden Age», a contact in which the conquest of Chile inspired at least six plays⁶⁸. Calderón's reference to Ercilla's Fitón in *La Araucana* was neither unintentional nor explicit to his contemporary readers, maybe because of the political consequences obvious references would bring.

Calderón's ekphrasis of Fitón through Daphne appealed to the baroque sensibility. Fitón was held in high esteem by the gods and the people, but that sentiment soon turned to «ire, fury, wrath» (Spanish *Ira, furia, rabia*). Moreover, Daphne's ekphrasis establishes a link between Fitón as a magician and Fitón as a serpent, and so it offers a statement on art understood as painting and poetry as well as of its use for political manipulations. Calderón's description of Fitón illustrates the torment, torture, and punishment inflicted on those who, having been trusted with power, dare to upset not only the rulers to whom they should remain faithful, but the people whom they should serve. In this regard, in *El laurel de Apolo*, Calderón emulates Titian's *Las Furias*

⁶⁷ Mattza, 2017, pp. 103-142.

⁶⁸ Lauer, 1993, p. 32.

by offering a warning to remain faithful to the king and by highlighting and recognizing the existence of «the voice of the people». Thus, if *La Araucana* represents «Ercilla's efforts to transport epic to the New World»⁶⁹, in his *El laurel de Apolo*, Calderón echoes and materializes the cultural and literary mobilization provoked by those efforts in Spain.

APPENDIX

- a) Daphne: You already know [...] (that), in Thessaly, our homeland, this dense mountain forest, a green column, where the sky axis lies, lodging was of Python. That magician skillful in several diabolical sciences, took away from the sacred gods longing – people's longing for riddle for (he) clearly and better expressed the future with skeletons what they through the statues. Oracle, therefore, of all the people of these mountains, Python was; no longer were Venus and Apollo their divinities—the gods who used to assist them [...] no sign of human feet could be found in their temples any more [...] because it was to Python's dark cave to whom they start to bring their faith and sacrifices taking his responses by more wise. [...]
- Looking Venus & Apollo their torches already without flame, their altars, without offerings and without victims, their tables very offended, they decided, in religious revenge that Peneo, my father, in whose silver waves a sea nymph gave birth to me, sent an embryo of fire and water,

⁶⁹ Fuchs, 2006, p. 380.

to break the margin of the coast,
brutally destroying all the barbaric people
in this region:

[...]

When people saw the catastrophe,
they ran into the priests of Apollo
and the sacred Priestesses of Venus,
who instead of consoling their anxieties,
announced them their death and
closed the doors of the two temples
This was enough for them to recognize
the cause of their struggles:
the anger of the gods,
And so they transformed
their esteem for Python
in anger, in cholera, in rage,
and in his poor living corpse (old body)
they bloodied their weapons.

(El laurel de Apolo, vv. 2174–2175)

- b) [...] a flaked snake
that sheltering in Fitón's cave,
led to the ever vague
Superstitions of the vulgar,
[To believe that in] the serpent
was the soul of Fitón's corpse,
and being it neither bird nor beast nor fish,
for in water, on ground and air,
this creature is a fish,
a beast and a bird,
[since it] runs, flies and swings;
using wings in the air,
in the land, feet
and in the sea, flakes;
With his breath
the environment infests
whenever he brams;
and provided that the creature paces or drinks,
with its foam floods plants and more:
so that there is no little flower alive,
than *avenenada*
hemlock, and being around

the world ponzoña bitter,
 Spell for abuse,
 illusions and ghosts
 the least touched grass
 the mountains of Thessaly.

- c) O great Fitón, who has the magic
 to unseal the welkin's secrets,
 Ravished from their course eternal,
 Lawless thralls to thee subjected,
 Thou, who hazard's whim revokest,
 Floutest Fate wheme'er thou wishest,
 And disturbest natural order,
 Thetering tomorrow's torments;
 Thou, through science occult (magic science) and learning
 Breaking cavernous, global strata,
 Canst in deep and darksome kingdoms
 Pour clarity of sun-tide
 And torment with conjurations
 Flocks infernal, which with loathing
 Tremble at thy force effective,
 Warping their eternal statutes;
 (*The Araucaniad*, Song XXIII, pp. 214-215)

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