

THE SECOND SOPHONISBA:

Figurality and Counterfactuality in Calderón's *The Second Scipio*



By Sofie Kluge

*The Spanish dramatist Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600-1681) never engaged directly with the figure of Sophonisba. However, in his late play about the elder Africanus' Spanish campaign he exploited the Golden Age conflation of the different Scipios into a single, polysemous 'Roman commander' figure to suggest a number of thought-provoking parallels not only between two historical events and locations but also, I argue, between the play's "beautiful African"—Arminda—and Sophonisba. The outcome of this intriguing procedure, relying on figural historiography, is a history play about the Roman siege on Carthago Nova in 209 BC that is simultaneously a counterfactual history play re-writing the events that transpired in Carthago in 203 BE. Thus, I argue that *The Second Scipio* suggests an alternative Sophonisba story where virtuous action secures a happy ending, imparting a useful lesson of kingship to its royal audience.*

Sophonisba in Spain

Considering the contemporaneous popularity of the Sophonisba figure in other major European dramatic cultures, it is striking that there should not be a single extant sixteenth or seventeenth-century Spanish play about the ill-fated Carthaginian noblewoman. None of the numerous Golden Age dramatists apparently looked her way even as they wrote plays about the Scipiones and were presumably familiar with Trissino's groundbreaking 1524 tragedy.¹ Miguel de Cervantes' *Numancia* (1585) and Francisco de Rojas Zorilla's *Numancia sieged* (*Numancia cercada*, c. 1630), for example, both favoured the Scipiones' role in Spanish history over their North African exploits, dramatising Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus Minor's Iberian campaign in the 140-130s BCE.² Indeed, it seems

¹ A fragment of Trissino's poetry was translated by Fernando de Herrera in the introduction to his commentary on Garcilaso de la Vega's famous third eclogue in *Obras de Garci Lasso de la Vega con anotaciones de Fernando de Herrera* (1580), suggesting the familiarity of Spanish authors with the Italian humanist and his work.

² For a discussion of these two plays in their European context, see Gil-Osle 2017.

Sophonisba did not appear on Iberian stages until the late 18th century when she featured in today little known neo-classicist pieces by Antonio Furmento Bazo (*Sofonisba*, 1772), José Joaquín Mazuelo (*Sofonisba: Tragedia española*, 1784) and Luciano Francisco Comella (*Sofonisba*, 1795).

Pedro Calderón de la Barca's little studied Scipio play, *The Second Scipio* (*El segundo Escipión* first performed 1677 and published 1683) changes this picture, albeit in an oblique and intriguing way.³ For one thing, it focuses on the 'right' Scipio, that is on Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus Major – the first of the Scipiones to earn the appellation "Africanus" because of his defeat of Hannibal at the battle of Zama and the one involved in the Sophonisba affair. Furthermore, it approaches the North African setting, staging the Roman siege on New Carthage or Carthago Nova (present-day Cartagena) in Southern Spain in 209 BCE. Like Cervantes and Rojas Zorilla before him, Calderón thus combines 'Scipiography' with a domestic perspective. Unlike his predecessors, however, he gestures time and again toward that other Carthago, variously suggesting his play as a veiled Sophonisba play. In this sense, despite its title, *The Second Scipio* aligns with the dramatist's 'exotic female plays'.

Indeed, as plays such as *The Great Cenobia* (*La gran Cenobia*, 1624), *The Sibyl of the Orient and the Great Queen of Saba* (*La Sibila del Oriente y gran reina de Sabá*, 1659) and *The Daughter of the Air* (*La hija del aire*, 1653) demonstrate, Calderón was no stranger to exotic females. Yet he refrained from engaging directly with Sophonisba whom so many of his contemporaries courted. Instead, he exploited the Golden Age conflation of the different Scipios into a single, polysemous 'Roman commander' figure to suggest a number of thought-provoking parallels not only between two historical events and locations but also, I argue, between his play's "beautiful African", Arminda, and Sophonisba.⁴ The outcome of this intriguing procedure, relying on figural historiography, is a history play about the Roman siege on Carthago Nova in 209 BC that is simultaneously a counterfactual history play re-writing the events that transpired in Carthago in 203 BE. Thus, in this article, I argue that *The Second Scipio* suggests a

³ As a matter of fact, besides Valbuena's two-page introduction, I have been able to find only three critical essays that mention *The Second Scipio* (Arellano 2014; Gil-Osle 2017; Herreros González 2002). Seeing that none of these provide interpretations of the play, which they use to illustrate themes such as staged violence (Arellano) and imperialistic ideals (Herreros González), I will not enter into a detailed discussion of their findings.

⁴ On the "Escipiones históricos que se solapaban en una sola alegoría usada didácticamente en espejos de virtudes, galerías de hombres ilustres y celebraciones" [historical Scipios who merged into a single allegory used didactically in mirrors-of-virtues, galleries of illustrious men and celebrations] in European Renaissance theatre, see Gil-Osle 2017.

“second Sophonisba”, or a Sophonisba story where virtuous action secures a happy ending.

Figural Historiography

In his 1938-essay “Figura”, the twentieth-century literary scholar Erich Auerbach (1892-1957) discussed “figural” interpretation, or the perception of historical persons and events as duplications of other historical persons and events, previous and posterior. As the German *Literaturwissenschaftler* explained, in figural interpretation, an historical event or person is either pre-saging something or someone that will come after or “fulfilling” something or someone that came before:

Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life.⁵

Figural interpretation thus links historical persons and events to each other across time and space in a complex network of correspondences. Yet, historical persons and events are not merely figures of other historical persons and events in an eternal return of archetypical occurrences. They are also prefigurations of the “actual, real, and definitive” person or event that will eventually end the chain and reveal the deeper meaning of all the echoes and reflections, recurrences and duplications. Thus, while it relies on recurrence, the conception of history underlying figurality is not cyclical but linear and “prophetic”:

Figural prophecy implies the interpretation of one worldly event through another; the first signifies the second, the second fulfills the first. Both remain historical events; yet both, looked at in this way, have something provisional and incomplete about them; they point to one another and both point to something in the future, something still to come, which will be the actual, real, and definitive event. [...] Thus history, with all its concrete force, remains forever a figure, cloaked and needful of interpretation. In this light the history of no epoch ever has the practical self-sufficiency which, from the standpoint both of primitive man and modern science, resides in the accomplished fact; all history, rather, remains open and questionable, points to something still concealed, and the tentativeness of events in the figural interpretation

⁵ Auerbach 1984, 53.

is fundamentally different from the tentativeness of events in the modern view of historical development.⁶

In Auerbach's account, figural interpretation connects historical persons and events in order to suggest a larger picture: History seen from its end point, or the point when the transcendental significance of the historical world is finally disclosed and the underlying divine masterplan becomes clear. Thus, the Christian reinterpretation of the Jewish tradition as a prefiguration of the New Testament is the classic example of figural reading. The "Figura" essay accordingly presents a theory of the pre-modern view of historical development or, at least, of a historical paradigm "fundamentally different" from the modern ditto. Yet, although it was conceived in dialogue with pre-modern literature, and more particularly with Dante, Auerbach's concept of figural interpretation finds deep resonance also in Spanish Golden Age drama and in that of Calderón in particular, steeped as it is in figural or allegorical interpretation of physical and historical reality.

As discussed by James Porter, Auerbach distinguished "allegorical" reading, which by his account erased the concrete historical event in favor of its symbolic and extra-temporal meaning, and "figural" reading, which purportedly maintained the reality of the historical event while reframing it as the symbolic announcement of some later event.⁷ In the present context, however, I use these terms interchangeably. For one thing, Calderón in various places specifically used the term "allegory" to describe his own symbolic interpretation of historical reality.⁸ Second, in Calderón scholarship, the accepted term for his view of the historical world as shot through with transcendental significance is "allegorical".⁹ Finally, while figural and allegorical interpretation may have marked two distinct hermeneutical approaches in pre-modern periods, their categorical distinction applies rigorously neither to the Renaissance nor to the Baroque.¹⁰ Indeed, following Auerbach's contemporary and compatriot, Walter Benjamin, who in his 1928 book about seventeenth-century drama famously emphasized the historical side to Baroque allegory, the hypothesis could even be advanced

⁶ Auerbach 1984, 58-9.

⁷ Auerbach 1984, 49-60.

⁸ Calderón explicated his understanding of allegory in the *loas*, or theatrical prologues, to *La segunda esposa y triunfar moriendo* [The Second Wife and Triumph in Death, 1649] and *El sacro Parnaso* [The Sacred Parnassus, 1659], among other places.

⁹ Parker 1943 and 1962; Arellano 2001; Kluge 2010 and 2022.

¹⁰ Though it cannot be tested in this context, the hypothesis may be ventured that Auerbach formed his pejorative concept of allegory under the influence of Goethe who, in *Maximen und Reflexionen* (pub. 1833), memorably juxtaposed symbol and allegory to the disadvantage of the latter emphasizing the conceptual and moralistic qualities of allegorical interpretation. See Goethe, 128 et al.

that figural reading eventually developed into allegorical interpretation or at least fused with it, as allegory gradually became less notional and more sensual or more secular.¹¹ Thus, writing about Calderón's *autos sacramentales*, epitome of his engagement of this technique, Barbara Kurtz has proposed their "secularization of typology", a point taken up by Stephen Rupp in his examination of the Madrid playwright's allegorical representation of historical kings in his secular drama.¹²

The long and short of it, Auerbach's theory applies very well indeed to *The Second Scipio*. As I will try to demonstrate, Calderón paradigmatically rehearses what the German scholar termed the figural reading of history, linking the (purported) first and the second Scipio Africanus with each other and eventually with the "actual, real, and definitive" person who fulfills them both: The last Habsburg ruler Carlos II "The Bewitched" of Spain before whom the play was performed in the Royal Palace in Madrid on 6 November 1677.¹³ However, while Calderón's Scipio play can plausibly be understood as complex allegory of kingship and, more particularly, as a piece of advice to "the second Carlos" addressed in the dying lines of the play, I believe that it is simultaneously a covert engagement with the figure of Sophonisba. What follows thus tests the hypothesis that *The Second Scipio* is also a "second Sophonisba". I begin with a brief glance at the historiographical traditions forming the basis of Calderón's sophisticated cryptogram.

Scipio, Good and Bad

The plot of Calderón's play is based on Livy's account of Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus Major's Hispanic campaign in *History of Rome* 26.42-50. More particularly, it focuses on the episode in chapter 50 which shows the Roman general magnanimously returning a beautiful female captive to her fiancée, the Celtiberian prince Allucius. The Roman historian recounts this episode, which subsequently gave rise to the widely branched moral-historiographical tradition known as the Continenice or Magnanimity of Scipio, in the following manner:¹⁴

[...] then there was brought to him as a captive by the soldiers a grown maiden of a beauty so extraordinary that, wherever she went, she drew

¹¹ As Benjamin formulates it, in the 17th century, "Die Geschichte wandert in den Schauplatz hinein" (1996, 271), suggesting a close connection between this 'historical turn' in seventeenth-century drama and allegory.

¹² Kurtz 1991: 147-55. Rupp 1996.

¹³ See Valbuena Briones' "Nota preliminar" in Calderón 1969: 1411.

¹⁴ To the Continenice or Magnanimity of Scipio tradition, see Kunzle 2002. Besides Livy, another important source for the post-antique life of this tradition was Valerius Maximus' *Facta et dicta memorabilia* 4.3 (1st century CE)

the eyes of everyone. Scipio, upon enquiring about her native city and her parents, learned among other things that she had been betrothed to a leading man of the Celtiberians. The young man's name was Allucius. Accordingly he at once summoned parents and fiancé from home, and as soon as he had arrived, Scipio, having heard meantime that he was desperately in love with his betrothed, addressed him in more studied language than he had used towards the parents. “[...] Your betrothed has been in my camp with the same regard for modesty as in the house of your parents in law, her own parents. She has been kept for you, so that she could be given you as a gift, unharmed and worthy of you and of me. This is the only price that I stipulate in return for that gift: be a friend to the Roman people [...]”. The young man, overcome by embarrassment and at the same time by joy, holding Scipio's right hand, called upon all the gods to compensate him on his own behalf, since he was far from having sufficient means to do so in accordance with his own feeling and with what the general had done for him. Whereupon the parents and blood relations of the maiden were summoned. They began to entreat Scipio, because the maiden, for whose ransom they had brought, as they said, a considerable weight of gold, was being restored to them without price, to accept that gift from them, assuring him that they would feel no less gratitude for his acceptance than for the restoration of the maiden unharmed. Scipio, since they so earnestly besought, promised that he would accept it, ordered the gift to be laid before his feet, and calling Allucius to him, said: “in addition to the dowry which you are about to receive from your father in law, this will be added by me as a nuptial gift to you.” And he ordered him to take up the gold and keep it. Delighting in this gift and courteous treatment he was sent away to his home, and he filled his countrymen with the well-earned praises of Scipio, saying that there had come a most godlike youth, conquering everything by arms and especially by generosity and favours. And so, after conducting a levy among his clients, he returned within a few days to Scipio with fourteen hundred picked horsemen.¹⁵

Though immensely popular with contemporaneous poets and musical composers, who found in it a positive example of sexual restraint and mercy during warfare, the Continenence or Magnanimity of Scipio was, however, not the only Scipio tradition which flourished in Renaissance Europe. As testified by the numerous dramatic and artistic adaptations of the events recounted in *History of Rome* 30.12.11–15.11 – the passage about the Second Punic War and the death of Sophonisba – there was also a more equivocal Scipio figure in circulation. This was the military and political mastermind who destroyed African opposition through a *divide et impera* tactic which not only alienated

¹⁵ Livy, 26.50. Unpaginated internet text quoted at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>

the local princes Syphax and Massinissa but also the lovers Massinissa and Sophonisba, resulting in the latter's suicide when Massinissa chose the alliance with Rome over his relationship with her. All the way from Livy, the elder Africanus was thus a complex and versatile figure. In the siege of Carthago Nova, he was the vehicle of 'comedy' in the broad understanding of this term as a story which ends in marriage and laughter. In the Second Punic War, he furthered tragedy provoking tears and death.¹⁶ Thus, Renaissance dramatists could put Scipio into play to create a variety of dramatic plots according to their own artistic ideas and the demands of their different audiences. The general could be both a good, gallant, princely, sometimes indeed Christ-like saviour; and a morally ambiguous, controlling, cynical character willing to sacrifice everything to achieve his own military and political ends.¹⁷

Of these two Scipios Calderón primarily based his play on the former, presenting the general as the perfect gentleman and a paragon of princely virtue.¹⁸ However, as I understand the play, a one-sidedly 'comic' reading of *The Second Scipio* is reductive. The 'bad' Scipio and the tragedy of Sophonisba must be understood as hovering everywhere in the background, adding depth and an understated element of ambiguity to the play's immediately jubilant message about kingship.

Second Scipio and Second Carthago

The title *The Second Scipio* in combination with the opening stage direction "[the scene is within and outside the city walls of Carthago Nova]" kindles curiosity.¹⁹ Why did Calderón call his Scipio the "second" when it was actually the first Scipio Africanus who laid siege on Cartagena? Did he simply ignore the details of the – admittedly bewildering – Scipiones family tree (appendix 1)? Had he not read his Livy carefully enough? While answers to these questions remain essentially speculative, what can be said for certain is that, through his emphatic use of the ordinal adjective "second", Calderón draws

¹⁶ Whether Renaissance poets and dramatists accentuated 'comic' or 'tragic' aspects of the Scipio-material likely depended on their use of additional sources other than Livy. Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliotheca historica* 27.7), Appian (*Punic Wars* 27–28), and Cassius Dio (*Zonaras* 9.11), Polybius (*Histories* 14.4), and Boccaccio (*De casibus virorum illustrium*, bk. 5), for example, all wrote about the Second Punic War emphasizing tragic elements. The Continnence or Magnanimity of Scipio tradition, on the other hand, rested largely on Livy and Valerius Maximus.

¹⁷ While *The Second Scipio* provides a Spanish example of the 'comic' Scipio tradition, Cervantes' *Numancia* can be seen as an example of the tragic. To the relation between the Scipio of this play and tragedy, see De Armas.

¹⁸ To Calderón's use of the Continnence or Magnanimity of Scipio tradition in *The Second Scipio*, see Valbuena.

¹⁹ Calderón 1969, 1413: "[La escena pasa dentro y fuera de los muros de Cartago Nova]".

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attention to the recurrence of historical events and persons, stimulating figural interpretation and historiographical speculation of the kind proposed here.

Confirming this impression that the dramatist means his audience to engage in figural interpretation of the historical persons and events represented, the character Flavia – a local woman who has been expelled from Carthago Nova following the “severe law of war” that “whosoever does not fight, does not eat” and should therefore “leave the premises” to spare the food for those who must fight²⁰ – soon explicitly links not only the (purported) two Scipios but also the two Carthagos:

FLAVIA	atiende,	FLAVIA	listen,
	Segundo Escipión [...]		Second Scipio [...],
	Segundo Escipión, segunda		Second Scipio, I say a
	vez digo, sin ofenderte,		second time with no offense,
	pues ser segundo a tu padre		for being second to your father
	es ser primero a tus gentes:		is being first to your people:
	esa inmensa población		this immense city
	que entre villajes silvestres		which among small forest towns
	yace por su planta altiva,		lies upon this high field,
	por sus abundancias fértil,		fertile in its abundances,
	por su puerto inexpugnable		unassailable because of its port,
	y por sus murallas fuerte,		and strong in its city walls,
	es la segunda Cartago; [...]		is the second Carthage; [...] ²¹

As can be seen in this quote, *The Second Scipio* first confuses the two Africani (who, furthermore, were adoptive grandfather/grandson, not father and son as claimed in the quoted passage) placing Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus Minor, or the second Scipio, outside the city walls of Carthago Nova. Then it goes on to suggest their interconnection as presage respectively fulfilment of each other: Whereas the “first” Scipio “could triumph so gloriously/ in Africa over the first Carthage/ [...]”, the “second” Scipio comes “to conquer in Spain/ the new Carthage [...]/ wanting that Fame should/ celebrate you as the Spanish Scipio/ after his example”.²² All through the play, this idea of Scipio being “second” but simultaneously “first” is

²⁰ Calderón 1969, 1415.

²¹ Calderón 1969, 1414. Here as subsequently my translation.

²² Calderón 1969, 1414-1415: “FLAV. pues si él en Africa pudo/ triunfar tan gloriosamente/ de la primera Cartago/ [...] / a conquistar en España/ la nueva Cartago vienes,/ queriendo con su ejemplar/ que la fama te celebre/ por español Escipion.”

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repeated over and over again, turning into a virtual refrain chanted by ALL (and, subsequently, by SOLDIERS):

TODOS	¡Viva el valiente Escipión, Que a honor del romano imperio Nació segundo para ser primero!	ALL	Long live the valient Scipio Who to the honour of the Roman Empire Was born second to be the first! ²³
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Judging by modern standards, Calderón's historiography is certainly staggering. Yet, bearing Auerbach's notion of figural historiography in mind, its blatant inaccuracies after all make a certain sense. As already mentioned, one reason why the dramatist may counterfactually have insisted on calling his Scipio "the second" could be to make the reference to Carlos clear and secure that his primary audience – the young king – would decode his allegory of kingship correctly. Yet, there may be an additional motive.

As the American historian Katrina Olds noted of contemporaneous "invented histories", these belonged to a historiographical paradigm where individual historical detail was not of paramount importance and where "moral exemplarity" took "precedence over factual accuracy *sensu stricto*".²⁴ To the eyes of a contemporaneous public, the most important thing for a historical account to convey was in other words moral edification, not – as we would expect today – precise knowledge of historical persons and events. Seen in this light, the play's counterfactual use of the Scipio figure comes to exemplify the interplay of malleability or elasticity of historical fact and moral edification that was the basis for Golden Age writers' and dramatists' sometimes wildly creative interpretations of historical persons and events: As long as their conjectures had an edifying purpose, they could manipulate historical details as they found best.

Following this train of thought, the "second Scipio" may mean the 'improved' or 'morally superior Scipio': The better version of the general, as opposed to the morally ambiguous person involved in the Sophonisba affair. And if this understanding of "second" is accepted, then *The Second Scipio* everywhere presupposes the (alleged) "first" and morally ambiguous Scipio as the negative backdrop against which the proposed ideal of virtuous princely conduct embodied in the "second" Scipio shines all the brighter. Thus, with his emphasis on a good "second" form of kingship and implicit suggestion of a bad "first", the dramatist conjures up a virtual Herculean cross-roads before the eyes of his young sovereign who, like the mythological hero, must choose his path wisely.²⁵

²³ Calderón 1969, 1441.

²⁴ Olds 2015, 25.

²⁵ Cf. Xenophon's biographical anecdote about Hercules in *Memorabilia* II.1.21–34.

This overall interpretation of the play as an ‘improved’ Scipio play may appear somewhat fanciful and speculative. However, there is more evidence in the play that Calderón actually wanted his audience to activate their imagination and play with links between historical persons and events; that he wanted them to sense the Sophonisba story as an ominous exemplum hovering in the background of his *comedia*. Thus, the play’s striking emphasis on images and more particularly portraits of the female protagonist, Arminda, elicits figural speculation in the same way that the recurrence of the ordinal adjective “second” suggested there was more to Scipio than just Scipio.

Second Sophonisba

In accordance with Livy’s account of the siege on Carthago Nova, *The Second Scipio* narrates the story of a beautiful maiden taken hostage by the Roman troops but subsequently handed over to her betrothed by the famous general in a marvellous display of magnanimity. Building on the proposed figural and moral interpretation of the “second” Scipio and second Carthage, I suggest that this “African” princess be construed as a figure of the Carthaginian noblewoman, her amorous alliance with the Celtiberian prince Luceyo reflecting Sophonisba’s union with the Numidian king Massinissa.

Several elements back this reading of Arminda as a second Sophonisba. For one thing, Arminda is repeatedly celebrated as “the beautiful African” even though the ancient sources do not talk about a provenance other than Iberian.²⁶ Moreover, different portraits, mirror images and statues of her proliferate suggesting the theme of confused identities, first and second, original and copy, presage and fulfilment or, in short, figurality. First, there is the statue of Venus that Luceyo invents to have created when he lies to Scipio about who he really is for fear that his kinship with Hannibal will be held against him, and which is finally revealed as Arminda herself.²⁷ Then there is the portrait “in a mirror” of Arminda kept by one of Scipio’s trusted soldiers, Lelio, who has purchased it at an auction in Rome and fallen in love

²⁶ Calderón 1969, 1425. In the quote above, Valerius Maximus described her as “an adult maiden of most surpassing beauty” whereas Livy called her “a female captive, a grown-up virgin, of such exquisite beauty, that whichever way she walked she attracted the eyes of every body” (26.50).

²⁷ Calderón 1969, 1424: “LUCERO [...] labrar intenté una estatua/ [...] / Tan hermosa, tan perfecta/ salió [...]”. [“LUCERO I wanted to make a statue/ [...] / So beautiful, so perfect did it/ turn out [...]”. Cf. 1449: “Y, en fin, si dije que era/ aquí mi venida a efecto/ que con Arminda vendría,/ para llevarla a mi templo,/ de Venus la hermosa imagen,/ ¿en qué te mentí, supuesto/ que con Arminda ha venido/ la hermosa imagen de Venus?” [And so, if I said that/ I came here with Arminda/ to take her to the temple,/ beautiful image of Venus,/ in what did I lie, given/ that I have come with Arminda,/ beautiful image of Venus?”]

with it.²⁸ This portrait not only becomes the centre of rivalry between Lelio and his friend and fellow soldier, Egidio, who is also in love with Arminda after he has captured her at sea at the beginning of the play. It is furthermore coveted by Scipio who is secretly aflame with desire for the African beauty from the moment he lays eyes on her but nobly suppresses his passion and in the end canalises it into virtuous action.²⁹ All through the play, numerous reflections and duplicates of Arminda thus circulate stimulating the audience's figural interpretation of her character.

As already anticipated, I believe the young female captive in *The Second Scipio* can be read as a "second" Sophonisba in the same sense that Calderón's Scipio is "second": A figure which presages and/or fulfills Sophonisba, reversing her tragic destiny and revealing her full potential. Had Sophonisba not encountered the "first" Scipio but instead the "second" one, her life could very well have turned out otherwise. Then perchance her story might not have been a tragedy but instead a comedy. Instead of forcing Massinissa to choose between his loyalty to Rome and his love for Sophonisba, Scipio might have married the two off, magnanimously disregarding his own interests. Indeed, following this train of thought, *The Second Scipio* may be seen to illustrate Aristotle's brief but acute account of the relation between history and poetry in *Poetics* 1451 b which famously prioritised poets' potentialistic or hypothetical writing of history over the historian's factual account of what the person actually did say or do.³⁰ In this interpretation, Calderón's play is simultaneously a history play dramatising what did happen (as far we know), and a counterfactual history play meditating what might have happened.

Thus far, Calderón's allegory of kingship would seem to have been decoded. However, with its roots in the Christian prophetic conception of history, figural historiography not only implied a link between different historical figures but also their eventual fulfilment in the "actual, real, and definitive" person ending the chain of duplications and figurations. I have proposed to see Scipio I and II as prefigurations of Carlos II. But does

²⁸ Calderón 1969, 1427: "LELIO. Un extranjero pintor/ murió en Roma: y yo, por ver/ cuánto el pueblo encarecía/ el primor de su pincel,/ fui a su almoneda, y entre otras/ curiosidades noté/ en un espejo el retrato/ de una divina mujer". ["LELIO A foreign painter/ died in Rome, and when I saw/ how people valued/ the delicacy of his brush,/ I went to the auction and among other/ curiosities noted/ in a mirror the portrait/ of a divine woman".

²⁹ Calderón 1969, 1429: "ESCIPIÓN ¡Otro torcedor, fortuna,/ a una pasión tan cruel,/ que yo solo he de sentir/ y nadie la ha de saber!" ["SCIPIO Another twist, Fortune,/ to that cruel passion/ that I only feel/ and noone must know!"]

³⁰ Cf. Aristotle's words that the poet explores what Alcibiades "would or could have said or done" (*τὰ ποῖα συμβαίνει λέγειν ἢ πράττειν*), being the kind of person that he was, rather than what he "actually did say or do" (*τί Ἀλκιβιάδης ἐπραξεν ἢ τί ἔπαθεν*).

Arminda, as Sophonisba II, also point to some historical woman from the playwright's own time?

A 'Feminist' Reappraisal?

There may be several reasons why the Spanish playwright would covertly re-write Sophonisba's tragic destiny, counterfactually giving the Carthaginian princess the happy ending denied her in history. One explanation could be the so-called Golden Age "tragic taboo".³¹ However, though this is clearly pertinent, especially given the ominous and omnipresent resonance of the events of the Second Punic War in the background of the *Carthago Nova* play that I have been tracing here, it is a very big question to take up in such short space. My final remarks therefore go in a different direction. For there is another, somewhat surprising element of *The Second Scipio* which could provide us with the final clue to solving Calderón's allegory of kingship that I will now briefly consider, rounding off this discussion with some conjectures on Calderón's 'feminist' Scipiography.

As already intimated, the play presents its Scipio in a thoroughly positive light as an exemplum of gentlemanly behaviour, all in accordance with the Continenence or Magnanimity of Scipio tradition. Thus, when he learns about his soldiers' abuse of the group of local women who have been expelled from Carthago Nova by their compatriots, for example, the general reacts with violent indignation and rebuke.³² Like a knight in shining armour, he comes to the rescue of the local women thereby securing their loyalty toward himself and explicating what appears to be a cardinal point in the play, namely that whosoever acts respectfully with women will be duly rewarded.³³ Indeed, the

³¹ See the description of this taboo in Kluge 2014, 184, as "the systematic, conscious, and critical confrontation and even repression of deterministic and pessimistic patterns of thought."

³² Calderón 1969, 1415: "ESCIPIÓN [...] Pues ¿como, villanos, cómo,/ infames, viles, alevos,/ ignoráis el natural/ respeto que se les debe/ a las mujeres en todo/ trance, sean las que fueran?" ["SCIPIO How, villains, how/ wretches, despicables, traitors,/ can you ignore the natural/ respect owed to/ women at any cost whoever they are?"]. Cf. also 1416: "ESCIPIÓN [...] pues no puede ser valiente/ con los hombres quien no es/ cobarde con las mujeres." ["SCIPIO For he who is not a coward with women / cannot be valiant with men."]

³³ Calderón 1969, 1433-1434. This is a longer passage of which I will only quote the last part: "FLAVIA [...] y todas en tu defensa/ moriremos; porque el mundo/ [...] / vea cuánto miente quien,/ de cobardes nos moteja/ y de desagradecidas;/ pues verá cuánto resueltas,/ ya fieramente apacibles,/ ya apaciblemente fieras,/ damos asunto a la fama/ para que en plumas y lenguas/ diga en nuestro manifesto/ a las edades eternas/ que en favor de quien nos honra/ y contra quien nos afrenta/ hubo mujeres que lidien/ y mujeres que agradezcan." ["FLAVIA. [...] and we all will die defending/ you, so that the world/ [...] / may see how that person lies who/ labels us cowards/ and ungrateful;/ for they will see how decisive,/ sometimes fiercely peaceful,/ sometimes peacefully fierce,/ we give Fame things to report/ so that in feathers and in tongues/ she will proclaim/ to the eternal ages/ that in favour of those who honour us/

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local women saved by Scipio in various ways prove essential in his final taking of Carthago Nova. Slighted by king Magón, who underestimated not only their strategic perceptiveness but also their physical power and not the least their vindictiveness, Flavia and her female companions provide Scipio with the local know-how he needs in order to set in just the right attack. Yet this victory is not enough for the women of Carthago Nova. After the surrender of their city, they presumably attack and kill their male compatriots in a state of frenzy.³⁴

TODAS	¿Dónde vais, cobardes?,	WOMEN	Where are you going, cowards?
MAGÓN	Adonde puestos a los pies de Escipión, queremos que su real pecho a merced nos dé las vidas.	MAGÓN	To place ourselves at the feet of Scipio, hoping that his royal chest will mercifully save our lives.
FLAVIA	Pues nosotras no queremos sino que todos muráis a nuestras manos, primero que sus piedades escuchen vuestros míseros lamentos.	FLAVIA	Well, we women want that all you men die at our hands, before his piety listens to your miserable laments.
MAGÓN	¡Vosotras contra la patria!	MAGÓN	You against the fatherland!
TODAS	No es patria la que del seno nos arroja.	WOMEN	That which cast us from its bosom is no fatherland.
FLAVIA	Ahora veréis si somos para el manejo de las armas.	FLAVIA	Now you will see if we can manage arms.
TODAS	Mueran todos.	WOMEN	Let them all die.
FLAVIA	A ellos, Libia.	FLAVIA	Take them, Libia.
LIBIA	Flavia, a ellos.	LIBIA	Flavia, take them. ³⁵

Like wild Amazons, the women of Carthago Nova revenge themselves on the men who thought little of them and instead they assist the enemy in his imperial enterprise. Scipio in turn repays them by raising their social and political status, declaring that “from this day, the women of Carthago shall have

and against those who insult us/ there were women who battled/ and women who were thankful.”]

³⁴ I say “presumably” because there is no stage direction describing such a massacre yet the Carthaginian men do not appear on stage after this point.

³⁵ Calderón 1969, 1440.

special privileges".³⁶ In *The Second Scipio*, the courtesy and magnanimity toward women that was a central element of the Continenence or Magnanimity of Scipio tradition thus goes hand in hand with a mind-blowing vindication of women's significance which, in turn, ties in with the play's covert engagement with the destiny of Sophonisba.

For though it does not once mention this great tragic female character by name, the play's figural-counterfactual historiography and 'feminist' reappraisal of the place of women in history surreptitiously vindicates the ill-fated Carthaginian. Whereas other European dramatists feasted on the suffering and death of the magnanimous but helpless African heroine, variously holding her up as an example to be pitied or despised, Calderón's figural and counterfactual take on the Scipio-material allowed for a potential re-potentialization of the figure, not only redeeming her presage – Arminda – but also investing her sisters with the power to take charge of history. In *The Second Scipio*, the message to the royal audience seems to be that male decision-makers should take heed of the women surrounding them. With this recognition, we may at long last have the final clue to decoding Calderón's fascinating allegory of kingship: The "actual, real, and definitive" person presaged by the first and the second Sophonisbas.

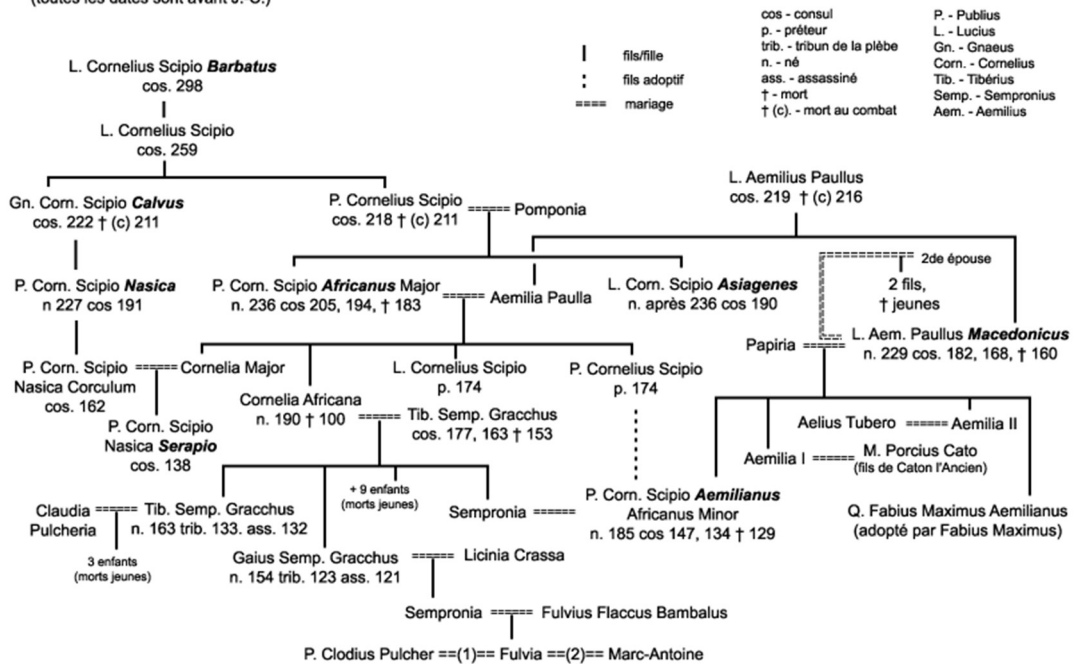
Carlos II – who had just turned 16 when the play was performed before him in the Royal Palace in Madrid on a November evening in 1677 – would certainly have been expected to marry soon and indeed he did, tying the knot with the daughter of the French king, Marie Louise d'Orléans, in 1679. As a piece of advice to the young man, the elderly dramatist may have wished to suggest to him that he look to the "second" Scipio's noble behaviour toward women in order to have the "second" Sophonisba, the one with the happy ending. Calderón most likely did not know whom Carlos' elder brother, Juan José of Austria, who conducted the marriage negotiations, projected as the future queen of Spain, but with his sophisticated court play he delivered this essential coming-of-age message.

³⁶ Calderón 1969, 1441: "ESCIPIÓN [...] tendrán desde hoy/ especiales privilegios/ las mujeres de Carthago".

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Appendix 1

ARBRE GÉNÉALOGIQUE DES SCIPIONES - PAULLI - GRACCHI
 (toutes les dates sont avant J.-C.)



Source: Wikimedia Commons

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