

Juan Pablo Gil-Osle.  
*Los cigarrales de la privanza  
 y el mecenazgo en Tirso de Molina.*

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**Jane W. Albrecht**  
*Wake Forest University*

**THIS STUDY RAISES THE CURTAIN ON AN EPISODE** in Tirso de Molina's life and career and offers it as an example of the patronage system in seventeenth-century Madrid. In 1624 the Mercedarian was in the position of appealing to a man called Luis Suero de Quiñones y Acuña (1586–1648) to underwrite publication of the miscellany *Cigarrales de Toledo*. Who was this person to whom Tirso turned for support and dedicated his first published work? In the introduction and first three chapters, Gil-Osle approaches the subject from various angles, offering historical and contemporary opinions, textual evidence, and archival information about Suero. The fourth chapter and the conclusion assert that, contrary to standard belief, the prose and drama sections of the *Cigarrales* are integrated parts of a whole unified by the theme of loyalty, friendship, and service inspired by Suero and his set of connections. The book concludes with a 34-page appendix of the archival material related to Suero and a fold-out genealogical tree and explanatory notes about his roots and relations.

In the introduction, Gil-Osle reviews what is known of Suero, a member of the lower nobility of León who worked as an art dealer. Notwithstanding ties to the Pimentel and Sástago families, he was not particularly wealthy, nor a major benefactor of any other writer or volume, and never the dedicatee of another of Tirso's works.

In chapter 1 the author examines the dedication to Suero and also the title page. The former reckons Suero a generous, beloved courtly gentleman. The latter includes the figures of *Favor* (a prince) and *Ingenio* (an artist). Above them hangs the Quiñones family crest from which flows *Fortuna* and upon which perches a pelican, symbol of altruism and piety.

In chapter 2 the author relates the image of Suero conjured in the dedication and title page engraving to his brief appearance in the first prose section of *Cigarrales* in an elaborate description of *justas náuticas* taking place on the River Tajo. Suero occupies the second boat (possibly associated with bad poets, according to Gil-Osle), and Tirso arrives in a small boat as a poor but talented professional poet. Gil-Osle suggests that Tirso and Suero may

have known each other through poetry gatherings. Gil-Osle's close reading of the *justas náuticas* is notable. However, the significance of Suero's presence in them is not well defined. Additional explanation of or evidence about Suero's interest in poetry would strengthen Gil-Osle's claims about the meaning of the boat in which he appears and the type of relationship he had with Tirso.

In chapter 3 Gil-Osle aims to evaluate Tirso's motive in dedicating his first published work to Suero. He presents the information on Suero and his lineage that he unearthed in many Spanish archives, among them the Sección Nobleza of the Archivo Histórico Nacional in Toledo. Based on his findings about Suero's family and its links to the Duke of Lerma, he speculates that Suero could have been part of Lerma's vast patronage network; references to Calderón in his letters could be to Rodrigo Calderón, Lerma's minister. However, as Gil-Osle correctly notes, since Lerma was in power only until 1618, and *Cigarrales* bears a publication license of November 1621, pursuing support from Lerma or any of his cronies post-1618 was out of joint with the times. Gil-Osle then summarizes Suero's career as an art dealer, submitting contradictory opinions: some testimonials paint him favorably, while other comments portray him as an unsavory, money-grubbing art merchant. Gil-Osle's investigative work on Suero, his family, and his other associations is impressive and provides the premise of the next chapter's contention.

In chapter 4 and the conclusion, Gil-Osle reflects on the thematic unity of *Cigarrales*, which heretofore have been considered an arbitrary collection of three plays, *El vergonzoso en palacio*, *Cómo han de ser los amigos*, and *El celoso prudente*, embedded in a novelistic frame. For Gil-Osle, patronage (involving service, loyalty, and friendship) is the overarching theme in *Cigarrales* and a driving force in Tirso's life and career. To lay the foundation of this argument, Gil-Osle weighs prevalent views on the nature of the relationship between friends, secretaries, and *validos* and identifies certain related symbols that appear in *Cigarrales*. Hands, symbolizing patronage, cover the garment of *Favor* in the title-page engraving, whereas wings, representing ambition and social aspirations, adorn *Ingenio*, the artist (presumably Tirso). Wings also help hold aloft the garland that the two allegorical figures are raising, within which appears "utinam" ("fervent wish"). Furthermore, wings (or feathers) are associated with Tirso in the *justas náuticas* section and are also mentioned in relation to the character Mireno, a nobleman raised as a shepherd in *El vergonzoso en palacio*. In sum, according to Gil-Osle, Tirso likely held professional aspirations that rested on his relationship with sympathetic members from the same extended family, beginning with his first benefactor, Suero, and ending with the dedicatee of his last published volumes, Don Martín de Artañ, the seventh Count of Sástago.

Gil-Osle's inquiry into the Suero affair raises some issues that should prove interesting to scholars. First comes the practical matter of exactly what Tirso asked for and received from Suero. How much did it cost to publish *Cigarrales*? Beyond that single transaction, what was Tirso looking for in the early 1620s? Money and protection, as Gil-Osle suggests? What form would that protection take? Would Tirso have hoped for positive publicity from his benefactor about his artistic abilities? Or would he have counted on Suero or others to shield him from criticism over something he wrote? In the big picture, what did it mean

for an artist to seek patronage? Were a position at court and social ascent the ultimate goals? In this regard, Gil-Osle points to Tirso's supposed affinity for the powerful Duke of Lerma. Did Tirso have a grand objective in mind by cultivating friendship with Suero, who was possibly one of Lerma's *hechuras*?

Gil-Osle, in fact, places Tirso in the same basket with other tenacious artists, namely Lope de Vega and Cervantes, in claiming that all three were always looking for a powerful protector. Missing from Gil-Osle's study is the fact that Tirso's circumstances made his life very different from the material conditions of other writers. Tirso had not one, but two professions, as both author and priest: he wrote and received payment for plays while living in a convent and fulfilling his religious duties. A true man of the cloth, his devotion clearly influenced many of his plays, which are invested with a moral authority and depth of conviction unequaled in the works of other Golden Age writers. Furthermore, belonging to the Mercedarian Order seems to have afforded Tirso the intellectual freedom to take risks by exploiting sexual innuendo and also political satire. He criticized *privados* and *privanza* in a number of plays and *autos sacramentales* written or retouched in the early 1620s. Just one year after the publication of *Cigarrales* in 1624, certain members of the political regime and/or of the Mercedarian Order thwarted Tirso. He was targeted by a government commission, the Junta de Reformación, which reprimanded him, threatened him with excommunication, prohibited his writing "comedias que hace profanas y de malos incentivos y ejemplos," and recommended his banishment from Madrid (qtd. in Emilio Cotarelo y Mori, "Vida y obras de Tirso de Molina," *Comedias de Tirso de Molina, I*, Nueva Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, vol. 4, Bailly-Ballière, 1906, pp. vii–lxxx, citation p. xliii). It is possible, as Gil-Osle suggests, that since Tirso made enemies, he also needed to find allies, in this case Suero. Nonetheless, it is difficult to imagine Tirso's pinning hope for protection and social ascension on Suero. It is even more of a challenge to reconcile the fact of Tirso's moral conviction and penchant for satire with Gil-Osle's view of him as a patronage artist à la Lope de Vega, always in search of favors from friends in high places.

Since relatively little is known of Tirso's time in Madrid in the early 1620s, this volume's focus on a crucial contact in the court city is much appreciated. While not the last word on the subject of Tirso and patronage, and not purporting to be a definitive study, this is a thought-provoking contribution. It opens several lines of inquiry for future investigations into Tirso's life and works.