

Vega Carpio, Lope Félix de. 1987. *El villano en su rincón*. Juan María Marín (ed.). Madrid: Cátedra (Col. Letras Hispánicas).

El villano is the story of a strange contest of wills between Juan Labrador, the peasant protagonist who is determined not to see the King, and the King, who is determined to make Juan see him. Juan is a wealthy and patriotic farmer whose chief delight is in his life of peaceful solitude and whose principal hope is never to see king or court. Presumptuously, he has written an epitaph for himself proclaiming that he has lived an ideal life and died without seeing the King. The King sees the epitaph and is so curious about its author that he disguises himself, visits Juan, and sees that his life is indeed wonderful. Envious of Juan's idyllic life, the King tests his loyalty by a series of demands that culminate in Juan's coming to court and the King making him his steward, thus obliging him to live permanently at court.

The play also deals with the amorous courting of Lisarda, Juan Labrador's daughter, by Otón, Marshal of France and one of the main courtiers in palace. Contrary to their father, the girl and his brother Feliciano are willing to see the King when the occasion arises and fond of courtly life, which is why she frequently visits Paris in the clothes of a gentlewoman. The play opens with Lisarda accompanied by Belisa, in one of her visits. She attracts the attention of Otón, who takes her first to be a noblewoman, but soon discovers that she is a villain girl. Notwithstanding, his love for Lisarda is unshaken and a series of upheavals concerning his commission in the service to the King in his endeavour to outwit Juan Labrador makes him visit the latter's village, where he resumes his wooing of the girl. Finally the King blesses the marriage of the couple as part of the reward-punishment conferred on Juan Labrador.

There is also an incidental strand which concerns the appearance of the *Infanta*, i.e., the King's sister, in acts I and III. She accompanies him in his visit to Juan Labrador's village in Act I and is presented as short before living the court to marry another the king's brother-in-law, seemingly the King of Spain.

(The first paragraph is taken from Frances Day Wardlaw's "El villano en su rincón: Lope's rejection of the pastoral dream", *BHS*, LVIII, 1981)

Shirley, James. (1914). *The Royal Master*. In sir A.W. Ward (ed.): *Representative English Comedies*. New York & London: Macmillan.

Synopsis[edit]

The play is set in the [Kingdom of Naples](#). Montalto, the King's [favourite](#), wants to secure his influence by marrying Theodosia, the sister of the King — which means that he must frustrate the proposed marriage of Theodosia to the Duke of [Florence](#), the brother of the King's late queen. Montalto arranges a hunting party for the King and Duke, which pauses, by plan, at the country house of the noble widow Simphorosa. Montalto's plan is that the Duke will fall in love with Domitilla, the charming, fifteen-year-old daughter of the house. And to that extent his plan succeeds — the Florentine Duke is much taken with the young woman. Also, Montalto quietly informs the Duke that Theodosia is already privately committed to another — that being himself, Montalto.

Still, the Duke hesitates to abandon the sister of a powerful monarch. Montalto informs Theodosia of the Duke's interest in Domitilla; he also hints to Riviero, the Duke's secretary, that Theodosia has already yielded her honor — to him, Montalto. All this plotting comes to a head: the King reproaches the Duke for deserting Theodosia, the Duke complains of Theodosia's compromised honor, and Theodosia clashes with her brother and with Domitilla as well.

Montalto tries to keep the mess from reaching him. The only link that can connect Montalto with the accusation against Theodosia is the secretary, Riviero. Montalto uses his power to keep both the secretary and the Duke from the King's presence. The King calls for his favorite; concerned that the rumors about Theodosia's compromised honor are true, the

King wants to find some nobleman to marry her to control a possible scandal. Montalto volunteers. The King accepts him, but has a strange plan for showing his gratitude. The King orders Montalto and all his party of supporters into custody, and encourages all and sundry to present their complaints to the supposedly "disgraced" favorite. The royal scheme is that Montalto will soon be restored to favor with all his enemies revealed. But Montalto's plot against the duke, and other crimes as well, are demonstrated, with evidence in the favorite's handwriting.

The court is amazed to find that the King still appears to favor his favorite. Montalto is brought back to the court — only to face the accusations of his villainy and to be disgraced and condemned to death. Since this is a comedy, it turns out that a man Montalto is supposed to have had murdered is in fact alive, in disguise; he is Riviero, the Duke's secretary. Montalto's death sentence is commuted to banishment. (Because of this serious undercurrent, the play is sometimes classified as a [tragicomedy](#).)

The subplot involves Domitilla, and her infatuation with the King. The King at first plans to arrange a marriage between her and Montalto; the naive girl misunderstands him, and thinks the King has asked her to marry him. When the Duke shows his interest, she rejects him, thinking herself already committed; but this merely drives the Duke and Theodosia together. The girl's mother, Simphorosa, perceives her daughter's situation and asks the King to help resolve it. The King does so, by asking Domitilla to be not his wife but his mistress (a solicitation he makes only after he's certain she will refuse). The plan works, and Domitilla, her infatuation broken, becomes affianced to the noble young Octavio.

(Wikipedia)