

“FALSOS PAÑOS”: LINEAGE AND DRESS IN GIL VICENTE'S *DON DUARDOS*

Most of the critical attention paid to Gil Vicente's *Tragicomedia de Don Duardos* (1522?) is independent of any serious consideration of the play's source, the anonymous romance of chivalry, *Primaleón* (1512).¹ Dámaso Alonso, in his critical edition of the play, is one of the few critics to discuss the romance in any detail, and he simply concludes that the *Tragicomedia* adds nothing to the original story; instead, he argues, Gil Vicente skillfully reduces or simplifies much of the complicated plot.² Vicente apparently feels free to condense or eliminate whole episodes, including scenes of considerable tension in *Primaleón*, confident that his courtly audience will be familiar with his source.

In both works the hero, Don Duardos, assumes the disguise of gardener to court Flérida, the lovely and well-guarded daughter of Palmerín, Emperor of Constantinople. Yet although Vicente follows the *Primaleón*'s plot in its broad outlines, what most impresses the reader of both works is the unquestionable shift in emphasis in the play. Vicente changes characterization and motivation in both minor and major characters. He significantly reverses the order of plot episodes, and even adds one entirely new character.

The famous Camilote episode occurs after Don Duardos enters the service of Flérida as Julián, the gardener's son, in *Primaleón*. In the *Tragicomedia*, however, the comic anti-knight and his ugly lady, Maimonda, appear at the beginning of the play and disappear almost immediately. More importantly, their most dramatic scenes, including Camilote's defeat and death, occur offstage. In contrast, the gardeners are far more fully realized characters in the play, although ironically their actual importance in the plot is greatly reduced. Vicente gives the generic *ortelana* of the

¹ All references to the *Tragicomedia de Don Duardos* are to the line numbers of Thomas Hart's edition, in *Gil Vicente: Obras Dramáticas Castellanas* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1968). All references to the *Primaleón* are from the 1536, Medina del Campo edition.

² Dámaso Alonso, ed., *Tragicomedia de Don Duardos* (Madrid: CSIC, 1942). Cf. also Dámaso Alonso, "El Hidalgo Camilote y el Hidalgo Don Quijote," in *Del Siglo de Oro a Este Siglo de Siglas* (Madrid: Gredos, 1968), pp. 20-28.

romance a concrete name, Costanza Ruiz, and a specific racial identity as *morisca* in the play. At the same time he omits the *ortelana*'s biggest scene in the novel, in which she hysterically threatens to reveal the seduction of Flérida by Don Duardos, whom she believes to be a *villano*.

Don Duardos undergoes a similar transformation: in the romance version he is ready to murder the meddlesome gardener's wife for her impertinent interference. In fact, his first motivation for the secret courtship is vengeance, not love: Don Duardos briefly considers asking for Flérida's hand directly, but decides that the Court of Constantinople should be punished for the abduction of the English princess, Agriola, years before. Hardly the restrained lover of the *Tragicomedia*, Don Duardos in *Primaleón* takes full advantage of his unique access to Flérida, and enjoys her favors long before they flee the garden; it is only her subsequent pregnancy that necessitates a hasty departure for England. Vicente chooses to leave out any reference to the deflowering (although he is anything but a prude), concentrating instead on a bowdlerized version of the courtship leading up to the abduction, and leaving the action suspended anti-climactically at the play's end.

These shifts in emphasis are neither accidental nor merely the necessary result of the playwright's efforts at condensation; they point, rather, to the quite different thematic preoccupations of the play. Certainly the changes cannot be justified on purely "dramatic" grounds since they often do not advance the action, and in some cases halt it altogether. *Primaleón* had offered Vicente an unproblematic world of platonic absolutes in which the contrast between ideal and grotesque models of chivalry, beauty and love are embodied in the two opposing couples: Don Duardos and Flérida, and Camilote and Maimonda. As Stephen Reckert suggests, in the *Tragicomedia* Vicente uses the "grotesca pareja... para... curarse en salud, caricaturizando en un espejo deformador a sus románticos protagonistas D. Duardos y Flérida antes que se le ocurra al auditorio hacerlo por su propia cuenta."³ In this way Camilote can serve as a comic foil for Don Duardos and his courtly love effusions. A native of "la tierra de Gorate" where "eran todas las gentes como salvages" (*Primaleón*, Ch. 102), Camilote is a terrifying, devil-like creature whose ugliness and arrogance earn him the fear and derision of all.

Vicente extends the comic effect of this grotesque pair in Camilote's absurd *requiebros* dedicated to Maimonda, described in the stage directions as "la cumbre de toda fealdad":

¡Oh Maimonda, estrella mía!
 ¡Oh Maimonda, frol del mundo!
 ¡Oh rosa pura!

³ Stephen Reckert, *Gil Vicente: Espíritu y Letra* (Madrid: Gredos, 1977), pp. 40-41.

¡Vos sois Apolo segundo
 en hermosura!
 Por vos cantó Salamón
 el cantar de los cantares
 namorados (vv. 109-117).

The reader familiar with the romance version derives double pleasure from such a description, since in *Primaleón* Maimonda represents the utter antithesis of the blond and delicate femininity of the classic chivalric heroine: "ella tenía los cabellos negros y cortos y crespos a maravilla y traya la garganta muy seca y negra defuera" (Ch. 102). In contrast to Flérida's tender years (she is only twelve in the romance), Maimonda in the play is a "muchacha de quarenta años/mas no menos" (vv. 230-231).

Obviously Vicente has great fun exploiting the comic possibilities of his lovesick knight's courtly rhetoric. When Camilote assures his mistress that her very looks can kill, she complacently concurs, confessing that an angel has told her much the same thing. Her jealous swain berates Maimonda for such an indiscretion with a rival, angel or no:

Ya un angel me dixo esso...
 ¿Estando solos?
 Sí, señor.
 ¿Apartados?
 Era ángel, ¿y pésaos de esso?
 ...Pídoos que no habléis
 ni con ángeles, señora,
 de essa suerte (vv. 181-185).

But underlying the comic interlude of the oafish braggart and his ungainly *dama* is the central thematic preoccupation of the play: the philosophical and social dilemma of the correspondence between *linaje* and *ser*. Camilote and Maimonda simply don't look or act like a proper knight and lady, and their physical disconformity calls into question their very chivalric essence. The Emperor enquires into Maimonda's background with heavy sarcasm: "¿Cúya hija es, si sabéis?" and the proud Camilote eagerly replies "Hija del Sol es, por cierto," prompting Palmerín to snort contemptuously "¡Bien parece!" (vv. 211-213).

Thus Vicente introduces in parodic form the central conflict of the play; if Don Duardos, disguised as Julián the peasant boy, looks and talks like a prince while dressed as a *villano* and digging holes in the earth like any common *morisco*, how is Flérida to recognize his real identity or accept the sincerity of his lovemaking? As Bruce Wardropper has pointed out, Flérida's test is to "learn the difference between reality and appearance."⁴ But her problem is more than just another lesson in the deceptiveness of outward

⁴ Bruce Wardropper, "Approaching the Metaphysical Sense of Gil Vicente's Chivalric *Tragicomedia*," *Bulletin of the Comediantes*, XVI, 1 (Spring 1964), p. 6.

appearances. The *Tragicomedia's* audience, both the fictional court of Constantinople and the real court at Lisbon,⁵ judges Camilote's love absurd because of the inappropriateness of his chosen love object. His extravagant praise of Maimonda prompts Flérída to wonder outloud "¿Quién hizo cosas tan feas/namoradas?" (vv. 267-270). Yet, ironically, Flérída soon finds herself in an equally untenable position, in love with a man of the wrong social class, religion and birth. Certainly her situation is no less ludicrous existentially than Camilote's. In fact, the dramatic function of the Camilote-Maimonda episode serves to underline the similarity between the two situations. Camilote dismisses as ridiculous any comparison between his "estrella" and the "pardal," Flérída. She, in turn, struggles with the disparity between what Don Duardos appears to be and who he may and indeed should be: "Deves hablar como vistes/o vestir como respondes" (vv. 744-745).

Reckert views this conflict as the radical expression of the Virgilian convention of the egalitarian role of love, "Omnia vincit Amor."⁶ Vicente's hero demands recognition on the basis of his love's merits, rather than his rank: "¿Qué merced me haría ella/si yo fuera su igual?" (vv. 1534-1535). This apparently quixotic obsession with Flérída's blind acceptance of his love on faith alone is very different from the pragmatic reasoning of Don Duardos in *Primaleón*: "por agora no querays saber mi nombre ni quien soy porque aunque yo vos diga que soy hijo del más alto rey que ay en el mundo... yo vos podría engañar" (Ch. 111). In both works the Prince sets out to win Flérída "por su persona sola," but in the romance Don Duardos reveals his true identity before he seduces Flérída. Don Duardos' perverse obstinacy in the *Tragicomedia* ignores all the laws of normal social hierarchy: "Quien tiene amor verdadero/no pregunta/ni por alto ni por baxo/ni igual ni mediano" (vv. 1520).

Thomas Hart argues that "D. Duardos' insistence that love is not properly a social matter at all but one which involves the lovers themselves and them alone, is revolutionary, or would be if... *Vicente had allowed it to take place in a world more recognizably like his own, the Lisbon of the 1520's*" (emphasis added).⁷ But it is precisely the language and details that Vicente adds to the *Primaleón* plot that provide a recognizable sense of place and period to the play. Vicente uses terms so highly charged with social significance in Peninsular society that it seems improbable that his only purpose is to sustain the omnipotence of love. Repeatedly Don Duardos refers to his *ley, fe* or *linaje*: "si soy de baxa ley,/bastan seren mis cuidados /muy reales" (vv. 1591-1593). A term like *ley* has too particular a meaning in

⁵ See Reckert's discussion of the play-within-a-play effect ("un momo dentro de un momo") in *Espíritu y Letra*, p. 43.

⁶ Reckert, *Espíritu y Letra*, p. 38. See also Thomas Hart, "Courtly Love in Gil Vicente's *Don Duardos*," *Romance Notes*, II (1960-1961), pp. 103-106.

⁷ Hart, p. 106.

Sixteenth Century Hispania to be dismissed as figurative language. Significantly, it is never used in the romance version of the Don Duardos episode, nor are the *ortelanos* ever identified as *moriscos* in *Primaleón*, as they are in the *Tragicomedia*. Vicente's use of such concrete and socially charged language situates the conflict of the chivalric lovers in a much more immediate context for the Lisbon audience than the remote Constantinople idealized in the *Primaleón*.

Much of the clothes imagery of the play reinforces this social particularity. Wardropper has studied what he calls the "metaphysical sense" of the play transmitted through the many references to *paños* in the text, and he concludes "that the metaphysical scheme inspiring the dramatic poetry of *Don Duardos* consists of the question of identity."⁸ However, Wardropper fails to relate the abstract metaphysical question of "who am I?" to the agonizing social dilemma of identity in Renaissance Spain and Portugal. *Paños* are above all the most obvious sign of caste. When Don Duardos first knocks at the gates of the *huerta*, the gardener instructs his wife to cover her face, alerting the audience that she is a *mora* (v. 526). In the first scene of the play, Don Duardos reminds the Emperor to serve Justice and not sell "falso paño" unbecoming his rank (vv. 26-27). To win Flérida Don Duardos must change "la vida/y el nombre y el estado/y el vestido" (vv. 475-477).

Because dress is a primary symbol of rank and therefore worth, Flérida is both bewildered and dismayed by her lover's "viles paños," yet she intuits that clothes alone are insufficient evidence by which to judge him. She chides the *ortelana* for attempting to excuse him from appearing before her in his dirty clothes since "el hombre queremos ver/que los paños son de lana" (vv. 654-655). This is the pressing identity question for those of Vicente's audience: How is it possible to see the man divested of the outer trappings of *ley* or *linaje*?

In his three soliloquies Don Duardos consistently employs language which Constance Rose and others have identified with the peculiarly *converso* genre of the *queja* or lament.⁹ His sense of existential displacement, or *saudade* is a Hispanic angst that removes the English prince from the romance world and inserts him directly into the "tierra agena" (v. 1715) of the Portuguese court which sheltered numerous exiles from Inquisitional Spain. The neurotic moral paralysis of the lovesick Don Duardos in the garden is analogous to the plight of the socially misplaced *converso* Phenicio in Torres Naharro's *Comedia Jacinta*. In his seminal article "Retratos de conversos en la *Comedia Jacinta*," Stephen Gilman describes "la pesa-

⁸ Wardropper, "Metaphysical Sense," p. 7.

⁹ Constance Rose, *Alonso Núñez de Reinoso: The Lament of a Sixteenth-Century Converso* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1971). See also Américo Castro, *De la Edad Conflictiva* (Madrid: Taurus, 1961); Marcel Bataillon, "Melancolía renacentista o melancolía judía?" in *Varia Lección de Clásicos Españoles* (Madrid: Gredos, 1964), pp. 39-55; and Stephen Gilman, "Retratos de Conversos en la *Comedia Jacinta* de Torres Naharro," *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica*, XVII (1963-1964), pp. 20-39.

dillesca sensación de moverse sin poder avanzar, de debatirse sin poder liberarse" that "nos permite vislumbrar, como en un relámpago, la profundidad vivencial que yace bajo la trivialidad pastoril de la superficie poética."¹⁰ If we compare the passage he cites, the lament of Phenicio, with Don Duardos' soliloquy, the similarities in tone and metaphoric language are striking:

PHENICIO

Yo, señora, con pesar
voy del mundo muy quexoso,
porque vn poco de reposo
nunca en él pude hallar
y no hago sino andar,
mas no me aprouecha nada;
que quando pienso acortar
se me dobla la jornada,
como el ave desdichada
que en lazo sta segura,
que si soltarse procura
se halla muy más ligada.

(V, vv. 265-276).

DON DUARDOS

Dezid que no sé quién so
ni que digo...
Y dezid que no soy hombre
y si hombre, desventurado
y destroído.
soy quien anda y no se muda
soy quien calla y siempre grita...
soy quien bive en muerte cruda
soy quien arde y no se quita
de su fuego.
Soy quien corre y está en cadena,
soy quien buela y no s'alexa
del amor (vv. 1576-1584).

In this context, Don Duardos' compulsion to be accepted for himself alone, "por mí, por mí", expresses a more generalized plea for an acceptance of men for what they are, regardless of the social roles they are forced to play. Flérída's misgivings and reluctance to accept the man without the proper *paños* is dramatic evidence of the powerful social pressures which stand in the way of such an ideal of tolerance.

In the same way, it is only against the backdrop of this social preoccupation that the expanded role of the gardeners can be fully understood. While the gardeners may, as Wardropper suggests, "possibly be relics of the liturgical tradition" of Juan de la Encina,¹¹ Vicente goes out of his way to refer to their caste as well. Their profession, of course, suggests their *ley*, since the Moors were known as laborers and cultivators of orchards. Don Duardos announces that "yo me voy luego a cavar/como moro" (vv. 803-804). The gardener is a loving husband who sings his wife a love song in Arabic: There is even a suggestion of the same melancholy displacement expressed by Don Duardos, in the gardener's plaintive *cantiga* "Soledad tengo de ti,/oh, tierras donde nascí!" (vv. 816-817).

The gardeners respond to the beauty of the *huerta* with quiet, domestic affection, in marked contrast to the courtly love effusions of Don Duardos and Flérída, or the presumptuous narcissism of Camilote and Maimonda. There is no suggestion of parody in their evocative but essentially mundane love exchange: "¡Quán alegre y quán florido/está, señor mi marido,/el

¹⁰ Gilman, "Retratos," pp. 32-33. I am grateful to Nora Weinerth for first bringing this parallel to my attention.

¹¹ Wardropper, "Metaphysical Sense," p. 4.

jazmín y los granados,/los membrillos quán rosados,/y todo tan florecido.../Pues más florida estáis vos" (vv. 551-558). For Elias Rivers the gardeners are "hardly noble as they bicker about pulling weeds" but "even they appreciate the almost miraculous powers of nature."¹² Yet even the Moorish family's quarreling contributes to the sense of human love in a real social world, despite the obvious idealization of courtly love that serves as the conventional setting for the action. Vicente grafts onto the mythic framework of the romance the contemporary "intra-historia" of the gardeners' domestic love, and thus transforms the theme of love with a new social relevance and sense of identification for much of his audience.

For this reason Vicente enlarges the platonic opposition between Flérida and Maimonda to include the social distinctions of *morisca* and *conversa* in the characters of Costanza and Grimanesa. Costanza Ruiz's ordinary, quite unselfconscious love provides a balance between the extreme poles of ideal and grotesque love. If Costanza, married and *morisca*, counterbalances the virgin princess Flérida, the ugly *conversa* Grimanesa parallels Maimonda.

Grimanesa is entirely Vicente's invention. There is no mention of any character even remotely like her in the Don Duardos episodes of *Primaleón*. She never once appears on stage, yet she is described in great detail as a prospective bride for Julián. The gardener assures the disguised *caballero* that if he marries well he may one day aspire to become a "vaquero"! *Marimacha*, thirtyish, dark and unmistakably branded as *conversa* ("el padre fue judío,/y su padre y su nació" vv. 1361-1362), Grimanesa, unlike the skittish Flérida, is more than ready for marriage with the first man she can find, no questions asked: "según hogada está,/a la voluntad me da/que escusadas son espuelas" (vv. 1356-1357). Grimanesa is the Lusitanian incarnation of the chivalric monster Maimonda. But this apparently unsympathetic portrait of Grimanesa does not in turn imply a correspondently negative attitude towards New Christians in Vicente; in fact, many believe Vicente himself to be of *converso* origin.¹³ By representing in Grimanesa the contemporary social equivalent of the rejected and despised Maimonda of *Primaleón*, Vicente comments ironically on the "viles paños" that brand the reviled *converso* class and make social integration impossible.

In his *Tragicomedia*, then, Vicente sets out to exploit the chivalric quest for identity, in which name, fame and worth are held synonymous. Vicente transforms the convention into a metaphor which helps to define the most urgent human problem of his society: the obsession with and tyranny of racial purity. The chivalric genre is an ideal vehicle to present in a defused and patently literary form the explosive issue of lineage. The more sensitive members of his audience could be counted on to perceive the disturbing

¹² Elias Rivers, "The Unity of *Don Duardos*, *MLN*, LXXVI, (1961), p. 761.

¹³ See Constance Rose, *Lament*, p. 65, n. 11.

