

1983

The Resocialization of the *Mujer Varonil* in Three Plays by Vélez

Matthew D. Stroud

Trinity University, mstroud@trinity.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/ml_l_faculty



Part of the [Modern Languages Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Stroud, Matthew D. "The Resocialization of the *Mujer Varonil* in Three Plays by Vélez." *Antigüedad y actualidad de Luis Vélez de Guevara: Estudios críticos*. Ed. C. George Peale. Purdue University Monographs in Romance Languages, No. 10. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1983. 111-26.

This Contribution to Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Modern Languages and Literatures Department at Digital Commons @ Trinity. It has been accepted for inclusion in Modern Languages and Literatures Faculty Research by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Trinity. For more information, please contact jcostanz@trinity.edu.

The Resocialization of the *Mujer Varonil* in Three Plays by Vélez

Matthew D. Stroud

When Arnold Reichenberger writes of the tendency in the *comedia* toward a restored society, he refers to the conservative, patriarchal, ideal society represented by the dramatic works.¹ Characters who exhibit eccentric social behavior are not allowed to remain marginally attached to the society; they are either resocialized into the fabric of the *comedia*'s society or they are expelled. This pattern not only allows for the possibility of an implicit moral lesson, as Alexander A. Parker would assert,² but it also creates dramatic tension the resolution of which results in exciting reversals in the plot. As might be expected, the more extreme the eccentricity, the more spectacular the process of reintegration of the errant member becomes. *Admiratio* is not merely the chance by-product of the *comedia*; it is one of its primary motivating forces.³ This disposition toward *admiratio* and resocialization, with its potential didacticism, is particularly evident in cases involving the failure of the characters to fulfill sex-role duties.

The social duties of each sex are defined by each society. Implicit in the idea of sex-typed obligations is the feeling that there are ideals of "manliness" and "womanliness" and that the two ideals are mutually exclusive.⁴ For women, not to be feminine is to be masculine, that is, assertive, powerful, independent, educated, reasoned, and important. To be feminine, women must be subordinate to men, regardless of their individual worth, and carry out the responsibilities of homemaker, mother, and helpmate. This ideal, treated contemptuously by modern feminist writers,⁵ has been the subject of many works of Western literature throughout its history. Katharine M. Rogers, in her book on misogyny in literature, notes that one cause for this male point of view has been the overwhelming predominance of male writers who reflect the ideas of their own patriarchal societies.⁶ Considering this tradition of male supremacy, it is not surprising that women should be treated

as inferior beings and that female sex variance should be construed as the woman's desire to be a male.⁷

The masculine woman, as a dramatic character to be reintegrated into or separated from the society, has the potential to produce great *admiratio*, and in fact there are many examples of such women in the *comedia*. Melveena McKendrick, in her *Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age*, isolates several types of *mujer varonil*.⁸ There is the *bandolera*, basically an innocent woman who, after being dishonored, turns her ire against society in general and men in particular (pp. 109-12);⁹ the *mujer esquiva* who for various reasons is disdainful of love and marriage (p. 142); the amazon (pp. 174-75); the leader (pp. 185-86); the warrior (p. 211); the *bella cazadora* (p. 242); and the avenger (p. 261). Some of these character types appear in men's dress; some do not. In every instance, however, they present an aberration within the social limits of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Spain. As B. B. Ashcom says, " 'La mujer varonil,' in whatever drama or tale she may be found, is clearly abnormal."¹⁰ Ashcom also indicates that Vélez de Guevara is one of the best exponents of the *mujer varonil*, and lists twenty plays by Vélez that have mannish women involving transvestism.¹¹ Before we look at the women in three of these plays, *La niña de Gómez Arias*, *La serrana de la Vera*, and *Los hijos de la Barbuda*, let us try to delineate the female role represented in the *comedia* in order to see how these women transgress its boundaries.

José María Díez Borque explains in detail the relationship of women to their fathers and to their husbands in the *comedia*.¹² Men controlled everything, including their women. When a woman married, she was entrusted to the husband by the father (pp. 87-90). Men were free to do as they would with their wives, but women's role was rigidly proscribed. This double standard is characterized by Ruth Kelso as a pagan role for men and a Christian role (based on the Virgin) for women.¹³ Women did not have any power in the society in general, a fact which perhaps explains the lack of an important mother image in the *comedia* (Díez Borque, p. 96). Woman's role was that of subservience to man.¹⁴ In spite of what might be termed enlightened laws protecting women's rights outside the realm of sexual relations, women were totally repressed in matters of sex (McKendrick, pp. 15-17). In fact, the woman was a slave to her husband and to her male-dominated society. This fact is seen in the use of the conceit "Materia la mujer, el hombre forma" which Peter Dunn interprets to mean that man not only gave woman protection but her very identity.¹⁵ Woman was meant to be a housewife, and marriage was inevitable.¹⁶

One of the ironic aspects of woman's role in the Golden Age concerns honor, that strange mix of misogyny and reverence in which the same woman who is debased constantly as being inferior, imperfect, and a necessary evil¹⁷ is nonetheless the repository of the man's honor. In short, his honor depends on

the actions of the woman entrusted to his care. The woman, however, can take no part in the maintenance of this fragile honor, for she is merely the passive object of honor (Díez Borque, p. 109), not participating actively. In fact, woman's highest goal was considered to be honor in virtue, which, as it turned out, was the same as seclusion, at least for a woman who aspired to virtue. Honor was a socializing force meant to keep women out of the male-dominated society by means of fear and intimidation. Because the idea of honor in virtue was a social concept, women accepted it as readily as men; after all, they did not want to be thought unvirtuous.

Honor, of course, had no hold on a licentious woman in the seventeenth century. McKendrick speaks of swiftly declining morals in Madrid during the years 1600-50. On at least three occasions, laws were enacted to elevate morals. Each time the effect was a repression of the women who were already virtuous without affecting at all the women against whom the laws were aimed (pp. 33-35). Thus, not only did there exist a double standard between men and women, but also a double standard between virtuous and unvirtuous women, again with the unfortunate weighting of social restrictions against the virtuous woman. In addition, unmarried women had a role different from that of married women, with more in the way of *galanteo* allowed to unmarried women (Díez Borque, pp. 38-44, 84-85) while more real privileges were allowed to married women (McKendrick, pp. 30-31). In summation, if a woman were to aspire to virtue, she had to take on the socially repressive burden of maintaining the man's honor by means of her own self-restraint while contenting herself with the inevitable role of the married woman. Women were meant to be married, have children, and stay at home, and honor was the socializing tool used to this end.

As we mentioned earlier, one of the main purposes of the *comedia* was to present the extraordinary and to focus on *admiratio* rather than reality. As a rule, it is unrealistic to suppose that what look like attempts on the part of this or that Golden Age dramatist to present feminist points of view are that at all.¹⁸ Many of the aspects which have been considered feminist actually have origins in antifeminism. The fact that in the *comedia* the man almost always falls in love with the woman at first sight on account of her extraordinary beauty is an indication of the treatment of the woman as a sexual object, as something to be possessed. The very use of men's dress, which one would think unappealing to a male-dominated audience, can be explained in terms of a "strip-tease," allowing the audience rare glimpses of female anatomy. The charge of indecency leveled at transvestism is a common one among those who argued against the appearance of women in men's clothes onstage, and in fact there were even laws passed to prevent the male audience from viewing the actress's feet.¹⁹ In sum, the mannish woman was considered a monster of nature, and perhaps for that very reason enjoyed great popularity since her appearance onstage was, in a sense, spectacular (Matulka, pp. 191-93,

216, 231). In light of the tendency of the *comedia* to resocialize all errant elements in the dramatic society, it comes as no surprise that the mannish woman, in the end, should renounce her former ways and marry. If the conflict has been with a man, the man almost always wins.²⁰ Thus, the underlying misogyny of the society itself is reaffirmed: after all, women are aberrant creatures of an imperfect and inferior nature.

In the three plays by Vélez under consideration here, we cannot overlook the underpinnings of misogyny in what many of the characters say about women in general. *Los hijos de la Barbuda*²¹ tells us that women are easily bought (vv. 1533-34) and that, as a rule, the wife gives her husband title to any land that was hers before their marriage (vv. 2235-37). In *La niña de Gómez Arias*,²² Gracia's father, in a soliloquy denouncing the meanness of his daughter, refers to women as destructive, vile, imperfect, and of easy virtue (vv. 1038-51), yet in the same breath he still grants them their overwhelming beauty. In other passages, women are considered untrustworthy (vv. 1032-33), weak, and easy (vv. 2454-56),²³ with love given as the excuse for all of their failings. In *La serrana de la Vera*,²⁴ women are fearful (v. 751), easy (vv. 1135-38 and 2094-95), and errant (vv. 2653-55). Against this background of misogynistic thought, let us briefly characterize the remarkable women in these plays.

Los hijos de la Barbuda

Los hijos de la Barbuda has three strong women who embody many of those attributes traditionally associated with men: the ability to lead, bravery, political wisdom, and strength. None of these three is forced by any circumstance to adopt the attitude of a man; they are in essence manlike in everything they do throughout the play. They take care of their own honor and instill a sense of honor in the men around them. Yet, as we shall see, they are most definitely women and the denouement of the drama sees each one of them come under the protection of a man.

Doña Blanca is the *barbuda*, a rich, noble woman distinguished by the mannish trait of a growth of hair on her upper lip. She is, in every sense, honorable. She is of *limpia sangre*, and her late husband was an *hidalgo*. Since she lacks a man to protect her honor, she undertakes its defense herself, claiming an interest in honor similar to that of other honorable rustics, such as Pedro Crespo:

Y en todo este alrededor
non ha de osar requestar
home rico ni infanzón
cosa que a Blanca le ataña
en el pelo de su honor.

(vv. 1613-17)

Although in her own domain she is *dueña*, she nonetheless shows great respect for the royal characters of the play in everything not pertaining to her personal honor. Blanca also possesses many of the characteristics necessary to maintain her own honor and bring glory to Navarra: she is strong, brave, smart, and given to fight and take revenge when she perceives injustice and dishonor not only on a personal level (as with the King's musician and Jimén, vv. 1486-1667), but also on a political level (as with Urraca and her sons, vv. 2286-2389). Mudarra considers her a distinctly threatening entity, and she does indeed threaten to divide his head in two, to pluck out his hair, and to whip him (vv. 1542-44, 1562-65). Not all of her masculine attributes are quite so negative, however, as she demonstrates remarkable self-control in sending her sons into the service of the King and into battle (vv. 519-39, 2312-77). Twice she appears with weapons, once during the lines quoted above, when the King comes to serenade her and she puts on a cape and sword to warn the King as one man to another that the woman he seeks is unavailable. The second instance occurs when she comes to exhort her sons to help the cause of Urraca and Navarra against the Moor Marsilio (v. 2285). She is a good leader, a good if unemotional parent, and an honorable *villana*.

The characteristic of Blanca that provokes the subplot involving herself and the King is that extraordinary beauty which in the *comedia* accompanies noble women. In addition to her honor, Blanca is famous for her beauty, remarked upon by Sancho, Olfos, Mudarra, and the King. In fact, the King falls hopelessly in love with Blanca upon seeing her (vv. 149, 173, 332). Since Blanca will not yield to his advances because a widow in her circumstances should not keep company with men (vv. 313-22), the King devises a plot to see her more often: namely, to imprison her sons. The device does not achieve its end (cf. vv. 1649-67), but it does allow Ramiro and Ordoño occasion to flee to France, where they meet Margarita.

France is involved in internal war between the forces of Margarita and the forces of Roberto, her uncle. Since French tradition forbids the transmission of the throne to daughters, Margarita must fight to attain that which would be granted to her easily if she were a man. Although Margarita is the least developed of the three female characters, we do learn that she is an honorable woman, a good leader, and just, but somewhat arrogant and vengeful, in her dealings with Roberto (vv. 2010, 2041-42). She is, of course, quite beautiful and inspires love in Ramiro, causing him to induce Ordoño to lose in the one-to-one combat; after all, Ramiro can marry Margarita, whereas Ordoño can aspire to no such benefit from Roberto (vv. 2013-23). As a result, Margarita becomes the ruler in France.

Meanwhile, Urraca is having her own political problems in Navarra. Urraca is a highly desirable woman, being not only extremely beautiful but also royal. Her desirability causes Marsilio, the Moorish King of Zaragoza, to pursue her in the disguise of a painter, to ask for her hand in marriage from her

brother, and to declare war on Navarra in order to win her. She is outstanding, and, because her beauty started the military action between Zaragoza and Navarra, she is compared to Helen of Troy on three different occasions (vv. 903, 1734-35, 2464-65). She is famous for her beauty and also for her strength. Urraca never appears with arms or in men's dress, yet she possesses many of the same attributes as Blanca. She is strong, vengeful, fearful, valiant; she is good in battle, a descendant of the Cid, and a terror to Marsilio.

La niña de Gómez Arias

Of the three plays considered in this study, *La niña de Gómez Arias* is closest to the typical *comedia de capa y espada*.²⁵ Two young *damas principales* are more liberal than their honorable social status would normally allow them to be; a question of honor is raised when it appears that the gentlemen accomplices in the young ladies' dishonor are not going to marry them; in the end, the misunderstandings are resolved and honor is restored. Yet, beneath this superficial cloak of normality we see the two main female characters subjected to extraordinary pressures and situations causing them, in return, to react in rather unorthodox fashion.

Gracia and María are desirable women. They are often referred to as beautiful, honest, and frank, and we know that they are noble. Gracia, moreover, is said on four different occasions to be the incarnation of honor (vv. 1016, 2047, 2067, 2231), as well as innocent and pious. María is an "ángel" and best friend to Gracia. As most often happens in the *comedia* in order to give life to the plot, the ladies are also disdainful, deceitful, and mischievous. Their initial entrance is in disguise (v. 86), and they enjoy the pleasantries afforded *mujeres desconocidas*—free conversation with young men. They are shown to be witty and crafty, and each sends a compromising letter to her intended (as it happens, the brother of the other one). In trying to cover up this particular mischief, Gracia is seen to be an artful liar. Indeed, her own maid refers to her as "leona" (v. 422), and Perico lauds her ability to lie (v. 548). These women are, in fact, sirens luring Gómez and Juan into their homes for dishonorable purposes. Gracia admits Gómez and falls in love with him. María, however, because of mistakes in the transmission of the letters, admits Luis instead of Juan.

At this point the parallel stories of Gracia and María part somewhat from a more traditional *capa y espada* scenario. Gómez Arias sells Gracia into slavery to Abenjafar, who falls in love with her. María is abducted and taken into the countryside by a silent Luis who forces her to submit to his sexual overtures. She, still under Luis's power, is made to join a band of *salteadores*. Both women allow themselves to be deceived by love, and both women become slaves because of that love (vv. 1127, 1286, 1965), but the irony of the metaphor cannot be overlooked. Gracia, in love with Gómez Arias, is metaphorically

depicted as a slave to that love; she is sold into real slavery by her lover. María, because of her slavish love for Juan, makes a mistake and is forced into a life as a *bandolera* by Luis. Both Gracia and María refer to the fact that men are basically untrustworthy (vv. 1184-87 and 1454-55). Gracia is the mischievous daughter who brings dishonor to her father Laureano; María, on the other hand, must renounce her femininity completely in order to take part in the robbers' activities. She dresses as a man, she takes part in the murder of Luis, and she threatens the lives of passersby. If it were not for a long aside (vv. 1945-75), we would not realize that her masculinity is a role forced on her by the circumstances. To all outward appearances, she is a man: "¡César soy, no soy mujer!" (v. 1999).

Unrealistically enough, Gómez Arias is saved from certain death by his own father and by Gracia, who is still in love with him even after all he has done to her:

De la pena
de la culpa de mi agravio,
que fue la mayor ofensa,
yo le reservo, queriendo
ser mi esposo, con que queda
mi afrenta más reparada.

(vv. 2573-78)

The only possible explanations of her willingness to marry Gómez Arias come from the fact that her marriage to him rights her dishonor in the eyes of society and that she still loves him enough, evidently, to pledge to him her entire life (v. 2600). María is saved by Juan in a particularly gallant offer of matrimony, considering that María is a very recent widow, and as a result of rather extraordinary circumstances at that. In the end these two artful women are brought under the proper care of men.

La serrana de la Vera

Gila Giralda is a rare mixture of man and woman, pride and submission, love and hate, and violence.²⁶ As a woman she is, above all else, beautiful. She is referred to as beautiful by her father, Don Lucas, Mingo, a passerby, both Isabel and Fernando, and by a chorus singing of her outstanding attributes. Gila herself mentions her beauty only once, however, when she entices a stranger to draw near enough to her so that she may kill him. Never does she boast of her own beauty as she boasts of her other traits, yet it is precisely that beauty which causes several characters to fall in love with her. She suffers many of the same problems as other beautiful women in the *comedia*. She disdains the love of Lucas and Mingo, causing the former to rage in hurt

pride. She becomes the target of Lucas's sexual intrigue, and as a result, she is deceived and dishonored. She accepts the blame for her disgrace, telling her father:

Como imaginé que estaba
tan cercano el casamiento,
le di esta noche en mis brazos
ocasión para ofenderos.

(vv. 2096-99)

Typical of other women in the *comedia*, the only time she gives in to a seemingly honorable man, she is tricked and dishonored. But for Gila, this is also her first attempt at playing a woman's role. We may see her as a beautiful *serrana*, an honorable *labradora*, capable of tears, and respectful of her father's wishes before she is seduced; and we may see her as a cruel siren afterwards. But the only positive feminine attribute which Gila ascribes to herself is tenderness, and it is expressed in the context of farming: she describes herself as one who cuts branches of a live-oak or an olive tree as though they were "mimbres tiernos" (vv. 851-52).

She refuses to allow herself to be loved. She gives in to Lucas out of respect for her father's wishes. She treats Mingo with patronizing disdain. Her beauty fills Mingo with love (vv. 1102-61), and he implores her to love *him* in return (vv. 1162-77). She submits to Mingo's "requiebros y amores" (v. 1193), but later she repudiates *him* with glib responses to his amorous overtures (vv. 1263-74). When he asks to hold her hand, she grasps his hand with tremendous force causing *him* pain, while at the same time she taunts *him* with despective, ironic questions: "¿Tanto bien puede hazer mal?"; "¿A la primer buelta cantas / en el tormento, gallina?"; and "¿De aquesto poco te espantas?" (vv. 1278, 1287-88, 1290). He immediately loses his love for her, utters a series of invectives against her, and finally admits: "Ya no quiero más favor, / que me as quitado el amor, / Gila, como con la mano" (vv. 1348-50). Gila is afraid of love and afraid of marriage because they might deprive her of her freedom:

No me quiero casar, padre, que creo
que mientras no me caso que soy onbre.
No quiero ver que nadie me sujete,
no quiero que ninguno se imagine
dueño de mí; la libertad pretendo.

(vv. 1584-88)

Gila wants the freedom of a man which no contemporary woman, in her own view, could attain.

Gila's primary feminine attribute is beauty, and she ignores its existence except in vengeance. Her primary masculine attribute is valor. She is referred

to as “valiente,” “brava,” “fuerte,” and “gallarda” many more times even than she is referred to as “hermosa.” She does, in fact, embody all the qualities of a *mujer varonil*, a Diana: she is brave, strong, daring, and free; she hunts, rides horses, and drives mules. Yet she is not a Diana because Diana is still a woman, and Gila wants to be more than a woman—she wants to be a man. On only one occasion does she flatly state that she is a man (v. 352), but on several occasions she indicates that she wants to be a man. She says that she has a man’s heart in a woman’s body (vv. 1082-89) and that she is truly a man “por inclinación” (v. 1833). As a man she carries arms, she swears, she fights bulls, she wears men’s clothes, she provokes duels, and she plays dice. She not only wants to be a man, she wants to be better than other men. She is described as being worth two sons to her father (v. 131) and more outstanding than any man in her mannerisms (vv. 249-50) and in her valor (vv. 3114-15). She is not only like Diana, she is like Achilles (v. 457). She causes love in another woman, Isabel (v. 937), and she flatters Pascuala (vv. 2728-29, 2765). She is taken by an overwhelming love and respect for Isabel because to her Isabel represents the successful, outstanding woman (vv. 631-37, 642-44, 871-78). Her own rationalization of her submission to Lucas is that she might be able to imitate the great actions of Isabel (vv. 1613-19). She aspires to fame and she would like to be a general, a bishop, even the Pope (vv. 155-56). However, all she really has, in her own mind, is her honor and her valor.

It is her fervent sense of honor and dishonor that leads to her spectacular revenge on all men. There are clues to the potential cruelty in the early parts of the play where she is seen to be vengeful against Lucas (vv. 177-78), threatening him with a shotgun (v. 392). She is quick to anger (vv. 823-25, 1883-85) and proud of her ferocity (vv. 829-56, 1886-88). She is variously described as “loca” and “necia” (vv. 923, 1200) in her posture as a man. Mingo laments her attitude:

¡Si dieseas como las otras
zagalas en dar favores
a sus firmes amadores!
pero luego te enquillotras
en tratándote de amor,
y no quieres conozer
cómo naziste muger.
Todo es fiereza y rigor,
todo es matar. . . .

(vv. 1107-15)

With this background, we are somewhat prepared for the obsessive, bloody vengeance of her dishonor. She kills every man she meets, using her beauty as a siren does to lure men to their deaths until she finally kills Lucas and is apprehended by the Santa Hermandad. For the men who travel through the

mountains, Gila comes to represent death itself (v. 2164), but in her own mind she is a just avenger and her death is a symbol of her martyrdom:

Nadie de mí se lastime,
 los que me ven tan amarga
 muerte morir, porque yo
 no la tengo por desgracia;
 contenta muero por ver
 que el cielo con esta traza
 de mi predestinación
 el bien que mi muerte aguarda,
 que de otra suerte parece
 que fuera imposible, a causa
 de los delitos que he hecho
 sólo por tomar venganza,
 que sin robos y salteos,
 por estas manos ingratas
 tengo a cargo dos mil vidas,
 de que pido perdón.

(vv. 3226-41)

Pascuala and Magdalena agree that her thoughts are touching, perhaps implying agreement with Gila's justification of two thousand deaths as "sólo por tomar venganza." Gila blames her entire disastrous situation on her father and predestination. As a martyr she is a self-sacrificing victim of her belief in a set of principles.

* * *

The seven strong women of these plays clearly do not all conform to one character type. Gracia and María are typical of the mischievous women of the *comedia de capa y espada*, whose only claim to a masculinity complex is that they express their desires too actively. The Barbuda, Urraca, Margarita, and Isabel represent forceful women defined by the warlike conditions of their surroundings. They are, in essence, virtuous, but they still show masculine traits such as bravery, ingenuity, strength, and a well-developed sense of honor. The Barbuda, because of her rustic background, can also be typed as a *bella cazadora*. Gila is by far the most extreme case of masculinity, and she embodies many of McKendrick's types of *mujer varonil*: she is definitely *esquiva*; she is presented not only as a *bella cazadora* but also as a woman who can singlehandedly subdue a bull in a ring; she is a *bandolera*, mostly because of her reaction to her dishonor; and she is an avenger. In spite of the fact that these women show disparate attributes of the *mujer varonil* (indeed, McKendrick might not consider Gracia at all *varonil*), there is a remarkable similarity in the resolutions of their situations. All except Gila marry and are

thus assimilated into the male-dominated society; Gila is destroyed because she rejects attempts at her resocialization. All except Isabel (whose story is not actually the subject of any of these plays) are deceived by men who treat them as objects to be possessed and who go to great lengths to trick the women into succumbing.

Gracia and María are both tricked by unscrupulous men. Nevertheless, they both take the same men as husbands in the name of honor. After María accepts Luis as her husband, Gómez Arias, inspired with a sense of honor which he did not show in his dealings with Gracia, participates in Luis's murder (vv. 1512-27). In the end, María marries Juan and again becomes respectable. Gracia, on the other hand, does not exact any punishment from Gómez Arias because of what he did to her. In order to regain her honor, she accepts Gómez as her husband. Albert Sloman indicates that it is entirely consistent with *la niña's* character for her to forgive Gómez Arias.²⁷ In Calderón's version the Queen sees in acceptance of Gómez Arias a return to honor for Dorotea, but she nonetheless has Gómez executed because he has defied the laws of society. In the version by Vélez, there is no such retribution against Gómez's actions, and as a result, the end can be viewed as much less justified. Maria Grazia Profeti ascribes this "nonviolent" ending to Vélez's distaste for violence and tragedy. Moreover, she sees the sale of Gracia into slavery as little more than a poetic device, denying the scene any life beyond that of the original *romancillo*.²⁸ Regardless of the lyrical intent of Vélez, it is nonetheless outstanding that Gracia, in the name of honor and therefore resocialization, should accept Gómez as her spouse. Gracia was never that preoccupied with her honor or she would not have sent Gómez the letter proposing a rendezvous, nor does she demonstrate an overwhelming sense of compassion; in fact she speaks bitterly of revenge against Gómez Arias (vv. 1261-73). The ending can only be seen as full of irony and *admiratio*. In spite of any external sense of justice, Gracia accepts Gómez solely for the purpose of regaining her honor and reentering society under his protection.

The three *líderes* of these plays, despite their own strength, are brought under the even greater strength of their husbands. The Barbuda is placed in a situation where she must choose between her own honor and respect for the King. As a widow, she is not desirous of the King's suit, yet he persists, even to the point of using her sons as bait so that he can see her. In the end, she marries him because she is ordered to do so (vv. 2795-97), showing, as Profeti points out (pp. 63-64), that the King is the absolute power in Spain for better or worse. It is the same King of Navarra, García, who also marries his sister Urraca to Ordoño, the Barbuda's son. Urraca, nevertheless, has conceived a certain love for Ordoño as a result of his prowess in battle. She may be impressive in battle, but he is clearly more so, and she succumbs to her admiration for his manliness. Urraca, who up to her marriage has not once shown any indication of fear or timidity, now states her case in the following

terns: “Y todo mi pavor fuya, / pues alcancé mi deseo” (vv. 2802-03). As a woman, her desire is, of course, to be married. Margarita cannot inherit the throne because the French laws of succession do not allow it. Marriage for Margarita implies the attainment of her own rights to the throne and to the power emanating from that throne. She is helpless without male intervention. Ramiro, whom she marries, is not without cunning, however, because he plotted with his brother Ordoño for the victory of Margarita’s side (represented by Ramiro) in the single combat against Roberto’s forces (represented by Ordoño). In other words, Margarita, in her attempt to gain the throne of France, is the object of a deception on the part of Ramiro and Ordoño so that Ramiro might enjoy Margarita’s inherited power.

Gila is the most extreme *mujer varonil*, and she is the only one to die for her masculinity. Profeti (pp. 71-72) sees Gila’s case as basically one of a girl playing at being fierce until she carries the *persona* too far and loses not only her honor but her life. Gila, even after killing two thousand men in her wait to kill the captain, is still offered the socializing alternative of marriage (vv. 3066-68). Whether or not her marriage to Lucas would have absolved her of punishment for the murders, her denial of Lucas’s offer seals her fate. Like San Sebastián, she is pierced through with arrows, and the audience as well as the society onstage is treated to the awesome view of the body.²⁹ Profeti (p. 73) explains that the play is a demonstration of what can happen when excesses are not moderated by “saggia educazione.” In other words, Gila is undone because she is not sufficiently socialized.

Perhaps, too, the severity of Gila’s punishment is a visual lesson in what can happen when women do not like men. Ashcom (p. 59) states that the “Lesbian motif is implicit in most of the plots involving masculine women. . . .” Indeed, in *La serrana de la Vera*, as in none of the other plays, we do have slight indications of Gila’s preference for women over men. In her own words, Gila declares her love for Isabel, and she uses terminology usually reserved for a *galán* referring to his lady:

Rabiando vengo por ver
a la reyna, porque dëlla,
después de dezir que es bella,
dizen que es braba muger. . . .

(vv. 631-34)

She openly declares her love for Isabel in vv. 873 and 908. Her principal reason for accepting marriage with Don Lucas is to be like Isabel. In fact, as she says, “. . . en viendo yo / mugeres dësta manera, / me buelbo de gusto loca” (vv. 642-44). Gila also shows particular tenderness toward Pascuala, referring to her “donayre y beldad” (v. 2729) and to her “grazia” (v. 2766). Moreover, she makes it clear to Pascuala, in vv. 2675-81, that her vengeance is only against men, and that she has made herself representative of all women

to that end. Within the context of a society that labeled all activity as masculine or feminine, Gila's behavior might indeed be seen as potentially homosexual. However, McKendrick argues against the categorization of masculine women in the *comedia* as homosexuals on the following grounds: masculinity was not necessarily a derogatory term in reference to a woman; dramatic irony was a stronger impulse than the insinuation of sexual variance; male audiences would not have responded favorably to Lesbianism onstage; contemporary criticism of the *mujer varonil* as a character in the plays was not directed to the issue of homosexuality; more than desiring women as sexual partners, the *mujer varonil* desired the rights and privileges of men; and the *mujer varonil* is ultimately either won over by the man or destroyed in every case (pp. 313-23). The most convincing argument against actual sexual variance in these women is the fact that the *comedia* did not address the problems of real, sexual beings but of dramatic, stereotyped role-players. Actually, "masculine" and "feminine" are, in the *comedia*, labels of social roles rather than sexual desires. The masculine woman was simply antisocial; it was irrelevant whether her orientation was heterosexual, homosexual, or asexual. What mattered was to reconcile all antisocial elements, regardless of their individual natures.

The contrast between apparent sexuality and real sexual repression is only one of a series of ironies brought out in the plays about *mujeres varoniles*. Women in general were in an ambivalent position. On the one hand, they were exalted in the tradition of the Virgin; on the other, they were debased in the tradition of the satirists (cf. Profeti, p. 79). In addition, the mannish women of the *comedia* embodied yet another irony: all of these women, including the fierce Gila, were exceedingly beautiful and attractive to men. According to Profeti (p. 71), this combination of beauty and masculinity was considered quite exciting, as long as the woman would eventually submit to male domination. The mannish woman was a freak of nature, and as such she represented the *mundo al revés*, a denial of the divine order of things.³⁰ The woman could sin by commission if she expressed an active sexual desire, as with Gracia and María, or by omission if she disdained men completely, as with Gila and the Barbuda.

The abrupt changes in personality that we see in certain characters such as Gracia have their origin in the necessity for resocialization before the final curtain. More often than not, these changes are brought about in the name of honor. If marriage is the socializing institution of the *comedia*, honor is the socializing force: it exalts the male role and it puts the guilt of society on the female role, ultimately causing the debasement of the latter. In the *comedia*, there were basically only four alternative courses of action for a dishonored woman: she might withdraw to a convent; she might marry; she might remain a "fallen" woman; or she might be killed. Of these, only marriage offered the woman the possibility of remaining in society and maintaining her honor. Yet,

even the life of the virtuous, married woman was fraught with danger. She had to renounce her own identity for the purpose of remaining respectable within that society. To deviate from the prescribed path was to fall into disrepute.

The women in the plays that we have seen show that no matter how strong, independent, and admirable a woman may be, her only recourse in the society of the *comedia* is still marriage and the protection of a man, whether that man is himself virtuous or not. A woman, as an imperfect being, is forced to seek virtue in marriage; for a woman to renounce marriage is to bring ostracism upon herself. In the final analysis, the strong, masculine women are not representatives of a feminism present in the Golden Age, but rather demonstrate the power of the patriarchy in the resocialization of independent, resolute women and the importance of *admiratio* as an artistic imperative.

Notes

¹ "The Uniqueness of the *Comedia*," *HR*, 27 (1959), 307.

² "The Spanish Drama of the Golden Age: A Method of Analysis and Interpretation," in *The Great Playwrights*, 1, ed. Eric Bentley (Garden City, N.Y., 1970), pp. 679-707.

³ The concept of *admiratio*, or artistic exploitation of a theme for dramatic effect, is discussed in James A. Parr, "An Essay on Critical Method, Applied to the *Comedia*," *Hispania*, 57 (1974), 434-44, and in three articles by R. D. F. Pring-Mill: Introduction to Lope de Vega, *Five Plays*, trans. Jill Booty (New York, 1961), pp. xiv-xix; review of Parker's *Approach to the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age*, *RJ*, 13 (1962), 384-87; and "Los calderonistas de habla inglesa y *La vida es sueño*: Métodos del análisis temático-estructural," in *Litterae Hispanae et Lusitanae*, ed. Hans Flasche (Munich, 1968), pp. 369-413.

⁴ Rosalind Miles, *The Fiction of Sex: Themes and Functions of Sex Difference in the Modern Novel* (London, 1974), p. 16.

⁵ Cf. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, rev. ed. (New York, 1975); Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (New York, 1972); and Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York, 1971).

⁶ *The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Mysogyny in Literature* (Seattle, 1966), p. 266.

⁷ Cf. Jeannette H. Foster, *Sex Variant Women in Literature: A Historical and Quantitative Survey* (New York, 1956).

⁸ Melveena McKendrick, *Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age: A Study of the "Mujer Varonil"* (London, 1974).

⁹ Cf. Alexander A. Parker, "Santos y bandoleros en el teatro español del Siglo de Oro," *Arbor*, 13, Nos. 43-44 (1944), 395-416.

¹⁰ "Concerning 'La mujer en hábito de hombre' in the *Comedia*," *HR*, 28 (1960), 59.

¹¹ Pp. 57-58. The list includes *El águila del agua*, *El cerco del Peñón de Vélez*, *La corte del demonio*, *El Hércules de Ocaña*, *Los hijos de la Barbuda*, *La Luna de la Sierra*, *El marqués del Basto*, *La niña de Gómez Arias*, *El niño diablo*, *La nueva ira de Dios*, *El rey don Alfonso, el de la mano horadada*, *El rey en su imaginación*, *El rey naciendo mujer*, *Los sucesos en Orán*, and *El verdugo de Málaga* in his n. 15, plus *La serrana de la Vera*, *El Caballero del Sol*, *La montañesa de Asturias*, *La romera de Santiago*, and *El amor en vizcaíno* mentioned in the text. In addition, McKendrick cites *El Conde don Sancho Niño*, *Las palabras a los reyes y gloria de los Pizarros*, *Más pesa el rey que la sangre*, *La rosa de Alejandrina*, and *El valiente Céspedes*. Barbara Matulka, in "The Feminist Theme in the Drama of the Siglo de Oro," *RR*, 26 (1935), 211-16, adds *Encontráronse dos arroyuelos*.

¹² José María Díez Borque, *Sociología de la comedia española del siglo XVII* (Madrid, 1976), pp. 86-96 and 98-113.

¹³ Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (Urbana, IL, 1956), p. 25.

¹⁴ Díez Borque, p. 91. Compare the longer treatises by Kelso, by Julia Fitzmaurice-Kelly, "Woman in Sixteenth-Century Spain," *RH*, 70 (1927), 557-632, and by P. W. Bomli, *La femme dans l'Espagne du Siècle d'Or* (The Hague, 1950).

¹⁵ "Materia la mujer, el hombre forma': Notes on the Development of a Lopean *Topos*," in *Homenaje a William L. Fichter*, ed. A. David Kossoff and José Amor y Vázquez (Madrid, 1971), pp. 189-99. Dunn speaks of this *topos* as a "metaphysical conceit," an idea that has an interesting resonance in an article by T. S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," in *Selected Essays* (London, 1932; rpt. 1966), pp. 281-91, in which he speaks of the separation of intellect and emotion in seventeenth-century poets. Germaine Greer uses this separation as an argument against a male-dominated ambivalent society (*The Female Eunuch*, p. 109).

¹⁶ Díez Borque, pp. 90, 94; Kelso, p. 1.

¹⁷ Barbara Matulka presents a diatribe against women to be found in *Encontráronse dos arroyuelos*. See "The Feminist Theme," pp. 226-28, cited in note 11 above. Cf. McKendrick, pp. 11-13 and 144.

¹⁸ Díez Borque, pp. 90, 94; and McKendrick, p. xi.

¹⁹ Carmen Bravo Villasante, *La mujer vestida de hombre en el teatro español (siglos XVI-XVII)* (Madrid, 1955), pp. 209-15; cf. Díez Borque, p. 44.

²⁰ Matulka, pp. 193, 230; Díez Borque, p. 110.

²¹ All references to *Los hijos de la Barbuda* are to the edition by M. G. Profeti (Pisa, 1970).

²² All references to *La niña de Gómez Arias* are to the edition by Ramón Rozzell, *Collección Filológica*, 17 (Granada, 1959).

²³ Rozzell, in his note to v. 1424 (pp. 273-74), mentions that in only one case (Sol in *La romera de Santiago*) is a woman truly forced to do anything, and a *topos* was that no one could force a woman to do anything against her will.

²⁴ All references to *La serrana de la Vera* are to the edition by Ramón and María Goyri de Menéndez Pidal, *Teatro Antiguo Español*, 1 (Madrid, 1916).

²⁵ For discussion of sources and historicity of the Gómez Arias legend, see Ramón Rozzell, "The Song and Legend of Gómez Arias," *HR*, 20 (1952), 91-107, and Juan Bautista Avallé-Arce, "El cantar de *La niña de Gómez Arias*," *BHS*, 44 (1967), 43-48.

²⁶ Julio Caro Baroja, "¿Es de origen mítico la 'leyenda' de la Serrana de la Vera?," *RDTP*, 2 (1946), 571-72, indicates that the mixture of sensuality, virility, and hate is common in women in Spanish folklore. For more on the development of the theme of the *serrana*, see Enrique Rodríguez Cepeda's edition of *La serrana de la Vera* (Madrid, 1967), pp. 16-22.

²⁷ *The Dramatic Craftsmanship of Calderón: His Use of Earlier Plays* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 181-82.

²⁸ "Note critiche sull'opera di Vélez de Guevara," in *Miscelanea di Studi Ispanici*, 10 (1965), pp. 70, 103-04.

²⁹ For a discussion of the possible symbolic interpretations of arrows in general, see J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 2nd ed., trans. Jack Sage (London, 1971), pp. 19-20. For a further discussion of Gila as a moral *exemplum*, see Rodríguez Cepeda, pp. 25-29.

³⁰ Cf. Helen F. Grant, "The World Upside-Down," in *Studies in Spanish Literature of the Golden Age Presented to Edward M. Wilson*, ed. R. O. Jones (London, 1973), pp. 103-35.