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Matthew D. Stroud

Trinity University, mstroud@trinity.edu

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Repository Citation

Stroud, M. D. (1991). Clotaldo's daughter. In A. Pérez-Pisonero (Ed.), *Texto y espektáculo: Nuevas dimensiones críticas de la comedia* (pp. 95-104). University of Texas at El Paso.

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Clotaldo's Daughter

MATTHEW STROUD
Trinity University

With respect to the fictional father, Robert Con Davis (3) has noted (1) that the question of the father in fiction, in whatever guise, is essentially one of father absence; (2) that each manifestation of the father in a text is a refinding of an absent father; (3) and that the father's origin is to be found in the trace of his absence. Calderón's masterpiece, *Life Is a Dream*, is the parallel story of two people's searches for their fathers and the consequences both of not knowing who they are at the beginning and of their finding them before the final curtain. For Segismundo, the trajectory of this search takes him from the question of whether he is animal or human, dead or alive, through the acting-out of his imaginary desire, to the mediation of his desire symbolic civilization. His is the way it should work, the way it does work for men who accept both the limitations and the promises of the law. While it is quite true that within the structure of the play neither Segismundo nor Rosaura can effect a personal transformation without the other, her quest and discovery are different from his in important ways. Here we shall concern ourselves with the role of the father in the problems and actions of each one, focusing particularly on Rosaura.

Rosaura opens the play by establishing a tone of violence and confusion. Her arrival in Poland, written in blood, (18-19) has been provoked by violence done to her directly and indirectly by Clotaldo and Astolfo. Unlike Segismundo, who is the victim of violence done in the name of civilization, Rosaura represents violence committed against civilization, the violence of the broken code (honor, family relations). While for Segismundo the law is the source of his misery, Rosaura in a very real sense wants the intervention of civilization on her behalf to force Astolfo to live up to his obligations under the law (in a moral, not a juridical, sense). For both, the path to restoration lies through the

father. Normally it would be Rosaura's father who would come to her aid, but she does not know who her father is. Just as Astolfo broke the code by abandoning her after promising to marry her, Clotaldo violated the law by abandoning her and her mother. Ironically, Clotaldo, as guardian of the tower in which Segismundo is kept captive, represents the law in Poland; he is the surrogate for Basilio and the only father Segismundo has known. When Rosaura, the woman as victim who comes to challenge those in authority to uphold the law, enters the forbidden realm, she is confronted by Clotaldo's summation of the two options available to civilization in dealing with individuals: "prendedles o matadles." (286) The displacement of Clotaldo's paternal function from Rosaura to Segismundo can be seen on the sociological level as merely reflecting the interchangeability of the keepers of the law (father-policeman-judge-priest-king), but within the action of the play it is clearly seen as untenable in the quest of these two individuals to find their places in the world.

Rosaura's first appearance in the play in men's clothing is related to her status as victim in search of the law that will function by mediating desire and fixing identity. Her words and those of Clarín are full of allusions to a divided self and a 'condición mixta' ('hipógrifo', see Morón's edition, 167-68n) "rayo sin llama," "pájaro sin matiz," "pez sin escama," "bruto sin instinto / natural. (3-5) There is in addition significant mention of violence ('violento', 1) and a state of mind not under the harmonious influence of reason and law: "ciega y desesperada," (13) "desdichas y locuras." 28) Hers is the violence of indistinction, a point made quite forcefully by Bandera using René Girard's theories about the nature of sacrifice.¹

We know that she is a woman because of her use of feminine adjectives in the Spanish ("ciega y desesperada"), but when she talks to Segismundo, she uses masculine adjectives ("un triste," 177 "quejoso," 263) and Clotaldo clearly talks to her as a man and recognizes her as his son. (413, 422) Just as Segismundo is taken for a beast, Rosaura may as well be a man. As frequently happens in the *comedia*, these characters are what they wear. For the moment, Rosaura is not yet Clotaldo's daughter, or at least she does not know it yet, and without recognition, there is no meaningful relationship.

She is, she says, unhappy with her fortune, but what has really upset her is the consequence of her own desire. Rosaura has come "a vengarme / de un agravio." (376-77) She engaged in sex with Astolfo without the prior benefit of marriage. As a result, it was unsatisfying because he abandoned her. This little scenario, repeated so often in the *comedia*, points out the relationship between one's desires, which insist without ever achieving fulfillment, and the pleasure through law and order that civilization promises but never completely delivers. (see MacCannell 35, 42-43, 69, 77-79) In neither case can one count on satisfaction because there is no guarantee of the desire of the Other: there is no 'Other of the Other'. (Lacan, *Écrits* 310-11) Consider a secondary argument regarding the relationship between desire and the law: Rosaura and Clotaldo's disagreement about whether or not Astolfo could have aggrieved her. Clotaldo says that her natural prince cannot dishonor her for the simple reason that he is her lord. (949-51) Rosaura, of course, disagrees. (955-56) She is not yet ready to relinquish her own desire to the demands of the law because it is the figure of authority who has broken the code he supposedly represents. On the other hand, one must enroll in the symbolic order of civilization; without such mediation, one's desires leave one either like Segismundo, an animal raging in an isolated cage, or like Rosaura on an endless quest for an unattainable object.

What Rosaura is missing is an established place in society, a place that can only be granted by the law. The plot metaphorically depicts her indistinction as the result of her not knowing her father. It is only when Clotaldo speaks in favor of Rosaura and Clarín so that Basilio will not kill them that Rosaura says that she will forever be Clotaldo's slave (898-901), thus beginning the process of knowing her father and submitting her desire to his. The 'name of the father' is important to both the socializing process the mental well-being of the individual for whom it represents castration, inferiority, and the denial of desire on the one hand, and identification and participation on the other. The 'name of the father' is the representation of the symbolic Other without which the individual simply cannot live in society. (Wilden 26; see also Lemaire 86-87; Davis 3) Civilization, through the name of the father, does not require the extinction of desire, however, but rather the mediation of desire by the law, the binding of desire to the law. (Lacan, *Écrits* 321) In Rosaura's

case, we might say that after her seduction Rosaura's desire is for the law; typical of many wronged women in the comedia, it is precisely marriage, the mediation by law, that she seeks.² The law promotes civilization but at the expense of the self and its relation to the other, a relation that must be sacrificed. (MacCannell 61, 131) Through acceptance of the 'name of the father' one mediates the imaginary pleasure of the fulfillment of desire by the order and tranquility promised by law and civilization, in short, the symbolic.³

To return to the passages in question at the end of Act I, Clotaldo thinks he understands Rosaura's dilemma and her lack, noting that a man whose honor is defamed is not alive. (903-4) Rosaura has a very ironic comment about life: "Confieso que no la tengo / aunque de ti la recibo." (912-13) There is perhaps a subterranean recognition in Rosaura's assertion that she doesn't understand why she has such instant confidence in Clotaldo. (962-65) In effect she must receive life twice from Clotaldo; the first time biologically, the second time symbolically. Perhaps the first symbol of Clotaldo's fatherhood and his importance to Rosaura's situation is the sword, given to Rosaura by 'una mujer' (381) who must remain unrecognized. He returns the sword to her and she ties it on a second time in his name: (926-27) the first time because he was not there to fight for her honor, the second time because he has returned it to her knowing that she has some relation to Violante. For her part, Rosaura is still unaware of all this meaning.

In Act II, it is Clotaldo who convinces her not to reveal her true identity yet, but still to appear in female attire, this time as Astrea (thus also invoking the myth of justice; see de Armas). (1185-90, 1550-52) She now has not just one name but two names and two feminine identities in addition to her nameless masculine identity in Act I. In Act III, Rosaura again appears as Rosaura. Her first action is to give Clotaldo the key to Astolfo's garden so that he might enter to cleanse the stain on her honor. She is still, however, intent on "venganza con su muerte." (2511) Clotaldo cannot do it because Astolfo had saved him from Segismundo, again an interesting irony of Clotaldo's devotion to the law in one sense but not in another. Because he won't help her, she now says that in fact he not only has not given her life, but that he has given her nothing (2594-99). 'Life' here clearly means 'honor' with its various effects in both the imaginary and the symbolic. Clotaldo's solution for

Rosaura is to give her all his money so that she will live in a convent. (2610-12) She says ironically that if Clotaldo were her father she would suffer such an affront, but that since he isn't she won't. (2628-30) She wants to kill Astolfo. Clotaldo is amazed that a woman who has never known her father should have such valor, (2632-34), but he is still adamant that one cannot kill one's sovereign lord. In the choice of 'your honor or your life,' if she chooses the former, she loses them both. (see Lacan, *Four Fundamental* 212-13) Clotaldo finally says that if she is intent on suicide, he will have to go with her, and calls her 'hija' for the first time (2655). At the same time that he finally recognizes his true relationship to her, he also owns up to his responsibilities towards her.

In Scene X, Rosaura, as both a man and a woman, in a dress but with sword and dagger, beseeches Segismundo to help her. After she tells him that he has seen her three times, she tells him the story of her life with the following interesting details. Her mother was very beautiful, and a 'traidor' put his eyes on her. (2736-37) Her voice cannot name him because she doesn't know who it was. (2737-38) He promised to marry her (*aquella necia disculpa / de fe y palabra de esposa*, (2756-57) and she had sex with him. She was born from this

. . . .mal dado nudo
que ni ata ni aprisiona,
o matrimonio o delito,
si bien todo es una cosa. (2766-69)

She has been the perfect copy of her mother, in both beauty and fortune: Astolfo tricked her the same way:

¡Ay de mí al nombrarle
se encoleriza y se enoja
el corazón, propio efeto
de que enemigo se nombra. (2782-85)

She was, as a result of the insult, "ofendida", "burlada," "triste," "loca," "muerta," "yo" -all the confusion of Babylon. (2798-2803) When she told her mother about it, she told Rosaura to follow Astolfo (in men's clothes) and force him to restore her honor. (2831-37) She gave her

an old sword, saying that the man who recognized the sword would help her. (2843-49) She comes to him as both 'mujer' (to ask for his help with her honor, to 'enternecer' him, to cause him complaint) and 'varón' (to urge him to recover the crown, to serve him in his struggle, to kill him in defense of her honor if need be, to gain honor for herself). (2902-21) Segismundo, without looking at her or talking to her at any length, goes to right the matter of her honor. (3008-15) As we know, Rosaura ends the play with her initial aim 'satisfied' through her marriage to Astolfo. Of course, we can note the irony of the satisfaction of marriage to a man who abused her and abandoned her. She has not, however, carried out her revenge, if indeed she ever really wanted revenge. The sword is not a weapon to be used against Astolfo; it is rather a symbol of the 'name of the father' and the submission of both Rosaura and Astolfo to the symbolic and to order restored.

Life Is a Dream is in many ways the story of the individual's sacrifice of self to the species, of nature to culture, of pleasure to the possibility of exchange, and of unconscious truth to social order, all of which has the effect of causing the subject to fade. (Lacan, *Feminine* 35, 94, 104, 120) In a very real sense, identity is always linked with death because one has to make a choice, abandoning in the process the alternative not chosen. The more choices one makes, the more one leaves behind. There is no subject without this fading, or *aphanisis*; as soon as the subject 'appears somewhere as meaning, he is manifested elsewhere as 'fading', as 'disappearance'. (Lacan, *Four Fundamental*, 218; see also 221; Durand 863-64) We may speak metaphorically of this loss as a castration that all functioning subjects must undergo, but beyond that the situation is quite different for men and women. According to Lacan, "the symbolic order, in its initial function, is androcentric. That is a fact." (*Seminar II*, 261) The symbolic father gives the forms of the laws: knowledge, mastery, reason, etc., all of which are forms of social tie usually offered to only one sex, the male. (MacCannell 78) A good example of these sexual differences within the play is the irony in Clotaldo's position as violator of Violante while he is also keeper of Basilio's law. Perhaps the problem for women is that men can have quite different symbolic roles within the law. Both Clotaldo and Astolfo are firmly inscribed in the tradition that says that robust males are supposed to bed as many women

as they can before they marry. At the same time they are the representatives of the law and its authority.

Unlike Segismundo who becomes king of Poland, Rosaura at the end of the play is very much marginalized. Women, unlike men, are considered inferior objects in the system that dominates them both. "For her, there's something insurmountable, let us say unacceptable, in the fact of being placed in the position of an object in the symbolic order, to which, on the other hand, she is entirely subjected no less than the man." (Lacan, *Seminar II*, 262) Ragland-Sullivan calls the additional subordination of women the 'Second Castration', which is instituted in the law through the many myths of inferior women and self-sufficient men. (277, 283, 287, 290, 298-301) In other words, women are inferior because the androcentric and patriarchal society has made them so. In Mitchell's terms, while men must learn to recognize the phallic power of their fathers; girls must learn to recognize that of all men. (Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis* 54; cf. 50)

Both Segismundo and Rosaura search for their identities; they are successful only when they find and accept their fathers and the proscriptions on desire that accompany their full enfranchisement in society. There is no better example of the compromise of desire for the sake of civilization than Rosaura's marriage to Astolfo, a man who no longer represents desire but only the culturally defined, important, and wholly symbolic honor. At the same time, Segismundo, as a man, is able to assume the throne of Poland and thereby gain honor, power, and social acceptance. Rosaura, to gain her honor and social acceptance, must renounce the power that enabled her to regain her honor. She has become Clotaldo's daughter, happy with the promises that her surname and social position hold. Of course, neither Segismundo nor Rosaura will ultimately find the happiness each seeks. The only possible source of (perceived) satisfaction is in the symbolic order in which one trades the frustration of dissatisfaction for the security of a promise. The problem with civilization, as MacCannell has pointed out, is that "one anticipates, but never achieves, satisfaction." (81; see also 68, 55; Lacan, *Écrits* 195)

Notes

¹ Bandera, 178, 206; Girard 1, 40, 57-58, 146-47, 169, 180, 281, 287. Cf. Lacan's discussion of Melanie Klein's case of indifferenciation in Dick (Seminar I, 68-70, 80-88).

² See Ragland-Sullivan 293: ". . . man takes his sexual pleasure in woman principally on the Imaginary slope, while she finds hers in him on the Symbolic plane."

³ The child is "acculturated" by obedience to the law of the symbolic father; (Wilden 261) both the Other and the symbolic father are cultural. The laws that we see at work in civilization are not, however, the whole story. Behind the laws exists a supplementary restriction, the law of the law. According to MacCannell (44), in the case of sexuality the law of reproduction "is further restricted by another law, the law of the law of reproduction -legitimacy," that is, the incest taboo. In this case, the "name of the father" is "the legal fiction of paternity instituted by modern, and particularly modern bourgeois, society."

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