

2000

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## Repository Citation

Stroud, Matthew D. "Homo/Hetero/Social/Sexual: Gila in Vélez's *La serrana de la Vera*." *Golden Age Studies in Memory of Daniel L. Heiple*. Ed. Julián Olivares. Spec. issue of *Calíope* 6.1-2 (2000): 53-69.

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# HOMO/HETERO/SOCIAL/SEXUAL: GILA IN VÉLEZ DE GUEVARA'S LA SERRANA DE LA VERA

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There is an ever growing body of criticism noting the homosocial underpinnings of *comedia* society in which women serve primarily to cement the relationships among men. Barbara Simerka, Harry Vélez de Quiñones, and others have convincingly begun to establish the homosocial nature of the stage society in which women, often as objects given signification only when they acquire exchange value, frequently have little say in their marriages or in other important aspects of their lives.<sup>1</sup> The *dama*, to borrow a definition from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, is a character who takes her "shape and meaning from a sexuality of which she is not the subject but the object" (8). In Luis Vélez de Guevara's *La serrana de la Vera*, Garganta la Olla, the home of Gila, the protagonist, is most definitely a man's world. Except perhaps for Queen Isabel, women, including Gila, are intended to be supportive of men but not to take a commanding role. Most importantly, all women, this time including both Gila and Queen Isabel, are expected to get married. Marriage is a primary means by which a woman's place in society is established. Despite her resistance to the idea and her unwillingness to conform to the role of *novia*, everyone wants and expects even Gila to marry (235-39):

Dios mil años nos la guarde  
la serrana de la Vera,  
y la dé un galán amante . . .  
para que con ella case (235-37, 239)

There is, perhaps, no more potent symbol of the role women play in relationships between men than the arranged marriage contracted by the father and the groom. In such situations, it is quite clear that the daughter represents for the father a commodity in play in the marketplace of marriage in which all the traders are men and the goods they deal in are women. Indeed, Gayle Rubin, basing her comments on the work of Lévi-Strauss, has argued persuasively that patriarchal heterosexuality can effectively be characterized by the traffic in women which can take many different forms. The exchange of women, who have little or no value of

their own, serve primarily to establish bonds between men.<sup>2</sup> In Act II, Lucas, the Captain, enters into such negotiations with Giraldo for Gila's hand (1480). It is not entirely clear if the Captain, like Mingo, appears to be genuinely attracted to Gila, if he is just saying that her beauty and her courage have turned his head (1493-94) so that he might seduce her and take vengeance on her for her earlier treatment of him, or if perhaps his main goal is merely to find lodging for his soldiers (see 1530-31). Regardless, and it is relevant that the motivation for marriage is unimportant, his arguments, including his assertion that he could find no better mother for his children (1504-45), convince Giraldo, who believes that the Captain has been blinded by her beauty and her "varonil valor" (1805). Moreover, it is strongly implied that Giraldo, by agreeing to this marriage, seeks to improve the family's lot by joining it to the wealth and nobility of the Captain. The homosocial relationship, with all the transitive properties involving honor and estate, is to be consummated with the conveyance of, or on another level, the sharing of, the desired object, Gila. They shake hands on it and embrace, both traditional homosocial, phallic gestures (1522, 1529). The predicate of this system of relationships is that the bride is a woman who is willing to serve the role of stabilizing social object. Any time the woman proves herself unwilling to go along, the relationship among the men involved cannot proceed.

Gila, of course, is a most extraordinary character, far from the empty signifier required by normal homosociality. She is both a victim and a criminal and has been called a tragic hero, a siren, and, to use the old-fashioned term, an invert.<sup>3</sup> Here is a woman known both for her extraordinary beauty and for her ability to excel in endeavors almost exclusively thought of as masculine. Gila's most distinctive characteristic is her masculinity, making her the *mujer varonil* par excellence, and the other characters have no trouble treating her as if she were a man. Her father, who always wanted a son, is in no way disappointed with Gila, who is worth two sons any day of the week (130-31). She is famous for her valor and her strength (141, 144, 147-48); she swears all the time (348, 377, 395, 672, etc); she mounts a horse as though she and the horse were sewn together (149-50); and she is such a good hunter that she never misses her target with her shotgun (162-65); she is even, in the signature scene of Gila's masculine prowess, able to dominate a bull that the men around her run from (902-31). When Gila rejects the captain's plan to get closer to her, she even denies that she is a woman: "Si imagináis / que lo soy, os engañáis, / que soy muy hombre" (350-52). But Gila is not just masculine, she is aggressively so. Like the bull she tamed, she is known for her strength and fury. She can kill any bear or boar, she can throw the *barra* farther, overcome a bull just by seizing it by the horns, and even tear a man limb from limb (829-56). She takes pleasure in humiliating and dominating

men in a number of ways. Gila goes out of her way to challenge men: "no hay labrador / en la Vera de Plasencia / que a correr no desafie" (135-37). Gila is bossy and threatening to the others working in the fields (1055-62). Like Laurencia in *Fuenteovejuna*, she calls men "gallinas" (1900), a term sure to carry the connotation of emasculation (Parr and Albuixech 32). Through her domination of the men around her, she feminizes them, thus the line, "no hay quien mire que no adame" (233). So masculine is Gila that McKendrick says that the term "mujer varonil" is inadequate for Gila, who is rather a "mujer hombruna" (246). For Madalena, nature erred when Gila was not born a man (659-60), and Gila agrees, later commenting that the only feminine thing about her is her dress (773). Looking at Gila from a perspective informed by queer studies, Otero-Torres characterizes Gila as a figure inhabited simultaneously by two sexual genders in an age that only recognized the masculine (134).

Somewhat surprisingly, Gila's masculine behavior alone is not enough to dissuade the men from pursuing her. There are repeated references to her beauty (134, 171, 209-25), such that she cannot help but cause the men around her to fall in love with her (227-29). Moreover, the men appear to find the combination of her strength and beauty enormously attractive, and they repeatedly praise her and speak of their great respect and admiration for her (774, 780-81, 782-83, 802, etc.). Even her father, Giraldo, is quite taken with her; he not only heaps praise upon her masculine abilities, but he flatters her feminine qualities using terms more typical of amorous poetry:

Los azules alhelíes,  
 ¿han querido competir  
 con tus venas de zafir?  
 ¿A tus labios carmesíes,  
 atrevióse algún clavel?  
 ¿Hubo algunas maravillas  
 al nácar de tus mejillas  
 descortesés? . . . (261-68)

At least at first, no one seems bothered by her masculinity; they still regard her as a woman, albeit an exceptional one. Although she dresses and acts as a man, this is not the same situation as in *Don Gil de la Calzas Verdes*. Everyone here recognizes Gila as a female, and she possesses many of the charms typical of women in the *comedia*.

Gila thus brings together characteristics of three important types of women in the *comedia*. She is as beautiful as any *dama* and just as attractive to men; by her behavior and her interests, she also proves herself to be a *mujer varonil*. Finally, despite their many attempts to win her over, she rejects men's advances, often humiliating them in the process, estab-

lishing her as *mujer esquiva*.<sup>4</sup> Like her more feminine sisters in the *comedia*, such as Nise in *La dama boba* and Diana in *El desdén con el desdén*, she is simply not receptive to the advances of the men around her. Much of the first part of Act II involves her rejection of Mingo's overtures. The country lad appears to be genuinely taken with her and sincerely interested in pursuing a proper relationship. He flatters her, he wishes and hopes for her attention, he presents logical arguments in his favor: after all, even the beasts of the field fall in love (1176-77). He scolds her disdain (1200-01) and declares his profound love for her (1247-52). He even declares that he wants to nibble on her ears (1253-60), an ironic foreshadowing of the terrifying incident at the end of the play in which Gila bites off her father's ear (3249-50). At first, the *serrana* thinks Mingo must be joking, and, at times, she appears to play along with him, teasing him by halfheartedly promising him favors (1191-92).<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, of course, she rejects him and even humiliates him by taking his hand and squeezing it so hard that he cries out in pain (1277-92). His feelings (and his hand) hurt, he abandons his pursuit of her, declaring her to be a "fiera y no mujer" (1300). What he is actually reacting to, however, is not that she is a beast instead of a woman, which of course she is not in a literal sense, but rather that she is a woman instead of an object, a self-possessed woman who is willing to confront him, reject him and even mock him openly.

Mingo may suffer once, but Gila defies the Captain twice. His interest in her is expressed at two different moments in the plot. When he first spots the *serrana* in Act I, the Captain is primarily concerned with finding lodging for his soldiers, but, like others, he is also taken aback by Gila's "varonil bazarria" (250). Confronting her over the issue of billeting soldiers in her house, the Captain sums up her qualities as *mujer esquiva*: "Serrana hermosa y cruel" (423). He soon recognizes that he is falling for her, "porque vence con valor, / con hermosura y amor" (452-53). In the tradition of the *mujer esquiva*, Gila rejects all his arguments. She most forcefully opposes his proposal to stay in her cottage by phallically aiming her shotgun at him (392) and even threatening to throw him physically out of their house (396). As is typical with a *mujer esquiva*, the *galán* takes her rejection as a challenge to be met. Despite Gila's protestations to the contrary, the captain insists on treating her as a woman, as an object to be conquered. The more he finds out about her from García, the more he must have her; she is an object to be conquered: "Esta serrana valiente / he de rendir si me cuesta / mil vidas, Alférez," (486-88) he vows. When he tries to soften her with kind words, she says that she is not susceptible ("sufro mal demasías," 436) and bids him farewell. Since so much of the Captain's social standing rides on his conquest of the women who are the objects of his desire, Gila's rejection does not seem to lessen his attraction to her: he has been overcome both by her beauty and her strength

(451-55). The Captain must possess her in order to maintain his standing as a man in his society. To allow her rejection of his demands to stand would lessen him greatly.

When the marriage arrangement surfaces in Act 2, Giraldo first tells her that he has good news for her. She asks if they have named her general, king, bishop or Pope, all masculine positions (1555-56), in addition to asking if they have made her a princess of Castilla or the empress of Germany (1560-63). Gila definitely has no problem with self-esteem. When she finally discovers that Giraldo has contracted marriage for her, it is an epiphany because by doing so her father has pointed out that she is indeed a woman:

Hasta agora  
me imaginaba, padre, por las cosas  
que yo me he visto ser hombre y muy hombre,  
y agora echo de ver, pues que me tratas  
casamiento con este caballero,  
que soy mujer, que para tanto daño  
ha sido mi desdicha el desengaño. (1577-83)

As long as she remains unmarried she can consider herself a man ("que creo / que mientras no me caso que soy hombre," 1584-85). Moreover, marriage also means being subjected to the will of another, a loss of freedom: "No quiero ver que nadie me sujete, / no quiero que ninguno se imagine / dueño de mí; la libertad pretendo" (1586-88). She refuses the offer of wealth and position that marriage to the Captain represents; she has no interest in being a lady. Indeed, she is a most inappropriate wife for a noble Captain; can one imagine her dressing in the style of the ladies at court, bowing and scraping and carrying on (1593-1600)? Besides, Gila is no name for a lady (1601). She gives in only when the Captain compares her to great figures (Semíramis, Evadnes, and Palas, 1611-12) and says that she will imitate Isabel (1615). By her somewhat strained logic, we later learn that she does not consider a king, in this case, Fernando, to be a man like other men (2568-71). Thus, a queen like Isabel must not be a regular woman; she does not lose herself in her relationship with men, as the phrase "tanto monta" implies. By this reasoning, if Gila imitates Isabel, she can accede to her father's wish to have her marry and still not have to consider herself a woman-as-object. Unlike the situation with other *mujeres esquivas* who are ultimately tamed by marriage, Gila's final decision to marry the Captain (1622), based as it is on such logic, demonstrates more firmly her resolve to conduct her own affairs according to her own logic and wishes.

The heart of the dramatic conflict in a play involving a *mujer esquiva* is the double-sided problem she represents for the men around her. First,

she refuses to play along with their amorous but deadly serious games. Gila upsets the plans of Lucas, Mingo, and her father for perfect control of the women around them and, more generally, she upsets the workings of the social system based on relationships between men using women as the objects of exchange. Second, and as a result, she is considered threatening. She threatens their plans, she threatens their position in society, she threatens their manhood, and she even (usually but not in this case metaphorically) threatens their very lives. While she does not divest herself of her exchange value, she insists on her own value and significance, thus causing a problem for the men by producing a surfeit of conflicting values: she subordinates her exchange value as a homosocial object to her signification as a human subject participating fully in her society.

That an object should express herself as a subject appears to these astonished men as extraordinarily strange, even dangerous. In her discussion of Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, Sedgwick has noted that the status of women is ambiguous when they assert themselves as subjects rather than mere objects. For her, "women are in important senses property, but . . . property of a labile and dangerous sort" (50). The disdain of the *mujer esquiva* is tantamount to social castration: the man has been unable to penetrate the woman's defenses and seize the object of his desire, therefore he has lost. He is not a "real man" in the sense that he has failed to exercise his authority to traffic in women with other men. It is not surprising that any woman who can present such a threat to a man, who represents such utter unmanageability, should be considered extremely dangerous. Naturally, men, rather than trying to change the system or even acknowledging their role in it, choose to heap abuse on unruly women, who are frequently considered to be perverse or monstrous because of their refusal to play the game. At the same time, the position of the rejected man in the homosocial system is one of great peril. Again citing Sedgwick: "Only women have the power to make men less than men within this world. At the same time, to be fully a man requires having obtained the instrumental use of a woman, having *risked* transformation by her" (40). Once a man has risked his masculinity by staking it on her submission to his homosocial purposes and she rebuffs him, he loses. By investing his social stature in the object, he has allowed himself to be vulnerable to the very object who is supposed to have no say in the matter. Should he misunderstand the nature of his relationship with women and, therefore, to the system of exchange in which he participates, he could lose his own position of power and privilege, becoming feminized or objectified in relation to other men.

The *mujer esquiva*, if she does not ultimately yield, can expect punishment in the homosocial *comedia*. Indeed, Gila is actually punished twice. The first punishment comes specifically as a result of her rejection of men

as a *mujer esquiva*. When Gila first opposes him, the Captain is blind with thoughts of revenge. García has a plan: he will bring Gila to the captain so that he can have sex with her, thus establishing his dominance over her:

. . . y esa polla,  
que entre los gallos crió,  
se la daré sazónada  
en el plato que quisieres,  
y todas cuantas mujeres  
tiene dentro, si te agrada. (493-98)

Ironically, this means that Gila's first punishment comes by means of heterosexual intercourse carried out in such a way as to treat her not as a woman or even as an object of desire but as an object of conquest, even scorn, indicating that at some level there is very little difference between a man's treatment of a woman he loves and reveres and the treatment he gives a woman he hates and disdains. Dámaris Otero-Torres (136) describes the Captain's revenge as a strategically semiotic affirmation of masculine superiority in a society dependent upon strict sexual demarcation. Gila's submission to penetration is essential not only to the Captain's ego, but to the survival of the very system he lives in. She is allowed to participate in society only as the objectified recipient of male sexual activity, disempowered, and, in this case, humiliated and dishonored. Like many a Don Juan character, the Captain uses their future marriage as a lure for her submission. For a character like Gila, it is hard to believe that she could be seduced by sweet words and romantic gestures. The text does not make it clear, but it is not foreign to her character to imagine that a woman like Gila, who believed that she could maintain an equal, heterosexual relationship with the Captain, modeled on that between Fernando and Isabel, also believed that having sexual relations with him was her prerogative as an equal partner. But the captain will stop at nothing to force Gila's submission; the law, which he usually upholds because it supports his position in the society, now means nothing to him ("romperé esta ley," 518). From the masculine point of view, no one is more dangerous—to men, to family, to the state—than Gila, who, depending on your point of view, is a right-on woman, maybe even a lesbian avenger, or a terrorist whose motivations are as arcane to her victims as they are terrifying. When he abandons her without fulfilling his promise, the entire marriage plan is revealed to have been an elaborate act of revenge on the part of the Captain for Gila's earlier treatment of him:



... ya cogió la venganza  
 lo que sembró mi esperanza,  
 y lo que Gila después,  
 despierta habrá de llorar. (2022-26)

Her rebellion is ultimately crushed, just as are those of most *mujeres esquivas* who either marry or are driven from society. In part, this is punishment for her being “ingrata,” for her not accepting her father’s and the Captain’s wishes for her. The insistence on characterizing Gila as “ingrata” (also repeated several times in Act 3: 2711, 2839, etc.) calls into question the meaning of the term. The *Diccionario de autoridades* mentions the usual definition of the term: “desagradecida, que no corresponde a los beneficios” as well as a second definition that includes “desapacible,” “áspero,” and “desagradable a los sentidos.” The latter entry is the most common translation for the use of “ingrata” to describe the *mujer esquivia* in the *comedia*, but the first entry should not automatically be rejected from consideration. There is a definite implication in such plays that a woman should indeed be grateful for the attention and protection offered to her by a man. The use of the concept of a “mujer ingrata” implies an opposite term, a “mujer grata,” a pleasant and docile woman who always succumbs to the men around, never causes any problems, and is, in fact, “grateful” for the attention. But exactly what does Gila have to be grateful for? Being essentially sold by her father for his own greed and social aspirations? Being betrayed by the Captain and made an object of revenge for having wounded his pride? It is no wonder that she is both ungrateful and unpleasant.

Moreover, there is an important irony in the fact that Gila’s punishment for not yielding to a man is to be objectified as the object of heterosexual intercourse. In her homosocial society, sexual relations are designed to give the man pleasure, produce an offspring that will carry the man’s name, establish his dominance over her, and/or punish her, which we certainly see here. Gila’s refusal to play the woman’s role without protestation or difficulty points out a weakness of the homosocial system that relies upon compliant women to succeed. Sedgwick has noted that the perfection of the patriarchal, heterosexual society is a deception, what in the *comedia* would be called an *engaño a los ojos*: “As in one of those trick rooms where water appears to run uphill and little children look taller than their parents, it is only when viewed from one fixed vantage in any society that sexuality, gender roles, and power domination can seem to line up in this perfect chain of echoic meaning” (8). The appearance of the *mujer esquivia* disrupts this typical theatrical anamorphosis in which her society, and the powers behind it, appear to run in perfect harmony, and, in doing so, she encourages us to notice the various ironies that abound, not least of which is the fact that “normal, heterosexual” society is based

on homosocial bonds that are broken by the appearance of real relations between the sexes, that is, a man dealing and negotiating with a woman. Unlike the traditional *dama*, the *mujer esquiva* clearly feels competent to represent herself as her own subject, senses her own objectification, and rebels against it. In this way, she asserts a positive heterosociality that breaks the homosocial pattern and prevents men from exchanging her as a token of their relationship: she insists upon dealing with men herself rather than relying on male family members to enter into contracts in her behalf. By doing so, she attempts to establish herself as an equal in the marketplace of goods and affection, a woman negotiating on an equal footing with a man.

At the same time, Gila, more than most *mujeres esquivas*, actually combines the masculine and feminine, not only in her actions as a *mujer varonil*, but as a woman with a definite interest in other women. Gila demands that men treat her as another man, and she is drawn to other women just as they are. In fact, there are two manifestations of homosexuality in this play. In the first, as has been noted, Gila actually considers herself exempt from the requirements of being a woman by virtue of the fact that she is a man ("soy muy hombre," 352). Early in the play, Gila's category shift in the minds of some men from potential sex object/mate to friend/rival means that they too consider her to be more of a man. The men of Garganta la Olla are used to working in the fields along side her; the Captain would not mind having her as one of his soldiers (183-85). She is compared favorably to men even using the criteria applied to masculine behavior: "¡No he visto en hombre jamás / tan varonil bizzaría!" (249-50). These desires to treat Gila as an equal imply a desire to treat Gila as a man, making their relationship to her homosocial. At the same time, the men are erotically drawn to this masculine figure, revealing the affectional ambivalence typical of transvestite characters in the *comedia*, but inverted. Usually when a woman appears in men's clothing, any interest she sparks in the women around her is excused in the name of apparent heterosexuality, since the women perceive the character to be of the opposite sex. In this case, however, it is the men who are drawn to the woman dressed as a man. Is their desire also to be interpreted at the level of appearance, in which case Gila is engendering homosexual desire in them? Or is this a special case requiring the nullification of the ways one is taught to view such a situation in these plays? Gila definitely upsets the established, paradoxical order in which men have relationships of inequality and ownership of women, who serve men as a symbol of the ties that bind them, especially in the case of husbands and fathers. Gila's relationship with Lucas in Act I is marked not by the fact that she considers herself a difficult woman avoiding a repressive trap, but instead by her self identity as a man. She can be Lucas's friend, his rival, his hunting companion,

or a soldier in his squadron (which, ironically enough, would require her subordination to him), but she will not and, in her own mind, cannot be the heterosexual object of his homosocial relationship with Giraldo, or with any other man. In other words, a relationship between Gila and the Captain would be transexually homosexual. At least as far as the seventeenth-century stage society is concerned, a man cannot serve as the stabilizing social object of the homosocial system because he is himself more than an exchange object.

The second manifestation of homosexuality is more overt and direct. There is no doubt that Gila is in love with Isabel ("ha muchos días que estoy / enamorada," 872-73).<sup>6</sup> Gila's famous bullfight takes place within the context of Gila's first sight of Queen Isabel. Gila longs to see her, to bask in her beauty, to admire her strength (631-39). Her desire for strong women could not be more clearly expressed: "Madalena, en viendo yo / mujeres de esta manera, / me vuelvo de gusto loca" (642-44). In the same way that Gila astonishes men with her beauty and her strength, so too has Isabel enchanted Gila (873-88). If she were a man, she would give herself completely to Isabel; in fact, even as a woman, she does: ". . . si hombre fuera, / por vos sola, me perdiera, / y aun así lo estoy, ¡por Dios!" (888-90). Isabel is taken with this unusual girl, and Gila realizes that Isabel is falling for her ("y yo a Isabel enamoro," 908). When Gila triumphs over the bull, although she may be a "loca labradora" (923), her "osadía" (928) adds to Isabel's affection for her: "Enamora / verla tan valiente y bella" (937-38).

Gila's obvious homosexuality breaks even more completely the bonds of homosociality, while the only act of heterosexual activity in the play serves to spur Gila into an anti-male frenzy that bridges the gap between homosocial heterosexuality and heterosocial homosexuality. There is an inherent irony in the homosocial system of the heterosexual exchange of women. What happens if any of the participants fail to play their roles as they are supposed to? More particularly, what happens if one or more of the people involved are themselves homosexual, or are of the opposite sex making the situation homosexual? In the case of this play, Gila could scarcely be more candid about her sexuality. She does not disdain men in the same way that other *mujeres esquivas* do; she is their friend, their rival—she is one of them. Moreover, the object of her desire is another woman, specifically Queen Isabel. Queens are considered an exceptional category of woman, and are allowed to possess power and authority and still be considered women suitable for stabilizing relationships among men (Fra Molinero, 323-24, 329-30). As a result, Isabel can comment on Gila's beauty and talent and still be given a place in the homosocial society. Gila is different. When she places herself in the system as a man, she destroys the basic homosocial nature of patriarchal, heterosexual society.

Instead, by demanding to be treated as an equal, she, as a woman, is in essence demanding a shift toward a heterosocial system, one in which men deal with women as equals, one in which women are no longer passive exchange objects to be passed among men but establish their own relationships. Gila causes problems in the areas of both sexual orientation and gender identification, which are not, of course, the same thing.<sup>7</sup> As Otero-Torres notes in her discussion of homoeroticism in the play (135), Gila's desires for women and her self-identification as a man, making Lucas's relationship with her at some level homosexual, give her significance, meaning that she can no longer serve only as an object of symbolic exchange. Thus, we have the irony that, just as the patriarchal homosocial system is based on the heterosexual exchange of objects as signifiers, Gila's homosexuality, combined with the homosexuality she in essence creates in her relationship to Lucas, gives rise to an unexpected and unwanted system based on heterosociality.

By rejecting men, Gila also rejects her womanhood, and, by failing to recognize the womanly qualities that were bestowed upon her at birth (1113), others consider that she is no longer even human: "Todo es fiereza y rigor, / todo es matar" (1114-15); "eres fiera y no mujer" (1300). If only, Mingo hypothesizes, if only she should wish to love (1106); if only she would return the favors of her suitors (1107-09); if only she would act like a woman, she would validate her beauty, her deportment, her manner of dress, and her discretion—she would be "herself" as Mingo wants that self to be (1162-66). The gossip is that that she has abandoned all the glory that could be hers as a woman "por faltas secretas" (1170), secrets that remain unexplained in the text but which look exactly like code for lesbianism or transsexualism. Taken together, her disdain for the homosocial system, her refusal to participate in a heterosexual relationship, her homosexual or transsexual desire for the queen, and her violent hostility to the norms of her society cast Gila as yet another type of character familiar to the *comedia*, the monster.

Her second punishment comes as a result of her astonishingly monstrous, murderous rampage. She has become much more than a troublesome woman; she is a threat to public safety. Indeed, she has become an avenging angel representative of another type of *mujer esquiva*, the *vengadora de las mujeres* (McKendrick 261-75). After being tricked by the promise of marriage—the broken promise is aptly characterized by Gila as "traición" (2050)—she laments her loss of honor (2054), but this woman is not one to mourn her loss in silence or appeal to men to solve her problems. She swears, she cries out, she blames everyone who encouraged her engagement, ultimately turning her wrath against all men. Act 2 ends with her bloodcurdling vow to kill every man she comes in contact with until she has taken her revenge against Lucas :

que hasta matarlo no pienso  
 dejar hombre con la vida.  
 Y hago al Cielo juramento  
 de no volver a poblado,  
 de no peinarme el cabello,  
 de no dormir desarmada  
 de comer siempre en el suelo  
 sin manteles, y de andar  
 siempre al agua y al viento  
 sin que me acobarde el día  
 y sin que me venza el sueño,  
 y de no alzar, finalmente,  
 los ojos a ver el cielo  
 hasta morir o vengarme. (2137-50)

By the start of Act 3, Gila is now famous (2240) for being a *bandolera* (2230-31) as well as for her murderous vendetta against all men; she is a "brava homecida" (2171), in Mingo's words. She has erected a field of crosses, one for each man she has killed. She openly lures men to her cottage with promises of sex (2250-51), thus using heterosexual desire to punish men for their homosocial objectification of women. Simultaneously, Gila has become the worst stereotypical nightmare of woman while she has also ceased to be more than a ferocious monster incapable of human feelings or thoughts. She is at once a being marked by "hermosura" and "fiereza" (2257); she is a "tiguere" (2522), a "fiera" (2585), "Locifer" (2697). One after another, people try to dissuade Gila from her activities. Pascuala's intervention is interesting because, while she chides Gila for her "condición ingrata" (2711), Gila finds Pascuala charming: "Notable gracia ha tenido" (2766). Still, Gila is one scary woman to the men in her life: she refuses to submit to their desires and, therefore, she cannot and will not submit to the requirements for participation in the male-dominated society. Gila even goes so far as to menace the king, and only spares him because, as noted earlier, in his capacity as God's representative on earth he is not really a man:

y pues no eres hombre, voy  
 a buscar hombres que puedan  
 hartar la sed de mi agravio,  
 que es hidrónica mi afrenta (2568-71)

The use of the terms "sed" and "hidrónica" cast her more in the role of out-of-control sexual monster than of dishonored woman.

Gila finally confronts the Captain. She never claims to be look-

ing for justice (Mingo had asked her for justice since he was innocent, 2464-65), just revenge (3048, 3060). Once she gets what she wants, she could not care less what happens to her or her world:

Mi venganza solicito,  
y en estando yo vengada,  
los ejes de la estrellada  
fábrica sobre mí den. (. . .)  
¡Quien tal hace, que tal pague,  
y cáigase el Cielo agora. (3060-63, 3074-75)

The Captain, fearful for his life, says that he is still willing to marry her, but for Gila, who started as a *mujer varonil*, became a *mujer esquiva*, and is now a monster unfit for homosocial society, it is too late: "Ya es tarde, ingrato" (3069). She hurls the Captain off the rock, repeating that she has now avenged her honor (3102-03, 3116, 3127). She expects to be executed for her actions, but, again surprisingly, the men continue to admire her strength and courage. Don Juan notes, "No he visto jamás / en hombre tan gran valor" (3114-15), and Fernando, piquing the jealousy of his Queen, remarks: "¡No se puede pintar la gallardía, / la belleza y el valor de la serrana" (3128-29), but he nevertheless gives the order to execute her (3167). Gila is happy with the verdict, but there is one last debt to clear. She has her father draw near and she bites off his ear: that is what fathers who give their children too much liberty deserve. If he had not been so indulgent with her wayward activities and characteristics, it would not have come to this unhappy pass (3250-58). Lucas is also given his share of the blame by García (3224-25), meaning that, in the words of the characters themselves, the two men who caused Gila to become a monster are her father and her intended husband, precisely the two men who used her as an object of negotiation to cement their homosocial relationship.

Madalena sums up the popular feeling: "¡Nunca nacieras al mundo!" (3272). For McKendrick, Gila's death represents "the consequences of woman's refusal to submit to the natural order of things."<sup>8</sup> Pascuala notes that the executed Gila looks like Saint Sebastian (3278), a significant association. As far as we know, Saint Sebastian himself was not in life associated with homosexuality, but the image of his martyrdom, usually featuring a nude or near-nude male figure in as erotic a pose as possible, has indeed become an icon of gay culture.<sup>2</sup> At the very least, piercing her body through with arrows is a way to eliminate Gila and feminize her at the same time: the one who is penetrated is dominated. As Judith Butler reminds us (231-232), the dominant, homosocial society will go to extraordinary lengths to eliminate threats to its authority. Gila is such an outsider in so many ways: a woman who acts like and wishes she were a

man, a woman who conceives amorous thoughts for another woman, a woman who wants to be treated as an equal by the men in her society, a woman who rejects the offers of suitors who seek to have a socially sanctioned relationship with her, the dishonored woman, the murderer, and the monster. Moreover, Gila represents one of the most overtly homosexual figures in the *comedia*, again proving that the *comedia* is far from the monolithic and reactionary tool of the empire and its Inquisition. While never allowing for an openly and successfully homosexual character, the *comedia* could always find room to challenge the reign of homosociality, the definitions of masculinity and femininity, and the notions that sexuality can always and only be reduced to two possibilities.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Regarding homosociality and the Spanish *comedia*, see Vélez Quiñones and Simerka. In addition, Barbara Simerka has an article forthcoming in *Hispanic Review*, "Homosociality and Dramatic Conflict: A Reconsideration of Early Modern Spanish Comedy." For more on women's role as that of exchange object or "zero-symbol," see Lacan, *Écrits* 68, 109, 289, and *Seminar II* 261. See also MacCannell 42-43, and Wilden 16, 20.

<sup>2</sup>Rubin 171-85. The anthropological basis for the notion comes from Lévi-Strauss 115 (cited in Rubin, 174): "The total relationship of exchange which constitutes marriage is not established between a man and a woman, but between two groups of men, and the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners." See also Irigaray 107-08.

<sup>3</sup>Rodríguez Cepeda, 27. For more on Gila's unusual blend of characteristics, see Parr and Albuixech, who note that Gila is a "curiosa figura erótica" (23) and sum up her various dichotomies as "mujer/hombre, bella/fuerte, tierna/cruel, valerosa/histórica," all of which adds to the theatrical production of *admiratio* (25). In an earlier study, I described Gila as a contradictory "mixture of man and woman, pride and submission, love and hate, and violence" (Stroud 117).

<sup>4</sup>McKendrick (115) notes that Gila is extraordinary, almost unique, in her combination of three types of women: the *bandolera*, the *mujer esquiva*, and the *bella cazadora*. In some ways, she is so extreme as to be a caricature of the difficult woman. McKendrick also notes that the *mujer esquiva* is not separate from the *mujer varonil*, but is in fact the character type's most important and most popular manifestation in the *comedia* (142).

<sup>5</sup>For Peale, Mingo fills the requirements to be the play's *gracioso* or *bufón* and, in fact, Peale goes on to note the carnivalesque structure of the entire play (145). As a result, it is not surprising that Gila would think that Mingo is joking.

<sup>6</sup>In a typical example of the attempt to erase any possible homosexuality in the *comedia*, McKendrick goes to great length to explain lesbianism out of existence (313-23). For a summary of McKendrick's arguments, see Stroud 123.

<sup>7</sup>Sexual orientation refers to the object of one's desires (a person of the same sex, of the opposite sex, or either); gender identification refers to the gender with which one identifies (male, female, or other). Both of these distinctions evoke

what Marjorie Garber refers to as category crises (16-17) and bring up such questions as whether Gila is a homosexual female or a transgendered heterosexual male, categories which deserve closer attention in another study. For our purposes here, we shall take the position of the other characters, that is, that Gila is a woman who is attracted to women.

<sup>8</sup>117-118. McKendrick also states, "That Luis Vélez disapproves of Gila there can be no doubt" (117), a sentiment apparently echoed by Parr and Albuixech in their discussion of the didacticism of the final scene (26-27). In fact, there is ample reason to cast doubt upon that statement. There is a certain awe and admiration in her very outrageousness. The fact that she is executed at the end does not mean we are to disapprove of everything that she said and did. Her death is merely the required moral ending, much in the manner of the recantations of bawdy medieval poetry, that by no means erases the effect that her extreme actions have on the spectator. McKendrick goes on to note (131) that, unlike other female rebels allowed to repent at the end of the play, Vélez has Gila executed, indicating that he did not "sympathize" with her. For Otero-Torres, the importance of Gila as a character lies not so much in her punishment at the end as in her very presence as "un cuerpo que trastroca los límites naturales y simbólicos entre lo femenino y lo masculino" (133). Of course, Gila is also a monster; it may well be that she is not executed for being a *mujer varonil esquivia* but for killing two thousand men.

<sup>9</sup>Kaye (113) documents St. Sebastian's "enduring popularity as a 'gay icon,'" citing representations of the saint in Renaissance paintings, in which the display of Sebastian's nearly naked body combined with a beatific expression to evoke a sensual response on the part of the spectator, the iconography of the piercing of the body by (phallic) arrows as representative of homosexuality, and the well-known legend that Sebastian was Diocletian's lover (130-31, n. 31). Examples of Renaissance representations of Saint Sebastian include two paintings by El Greco ("Saint Sebastian," c. 1580 and 1610-14), as well as paintings by José Antolínez ("Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian," seventeenth century), and Juseppe Ribera ("Saint Sebastian," 1651); among the most important paintings in Italy are two by Andrea Mategna (both entitled "Saint Sebastian," 1456-59 and 1457-58), three by Pietro Perugino ("Saint Sebastian," "Bust of Saint Sebastian," and "The Madonna between St. John the Baptist and St. Sebastian," all produced around 1493), as well as works by Antonello da Messina (1476-77), Giovanni Bellini ("Madonna with Child and Sts. Peter and Sebastian," c. 1487) and by Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, aptly known as Il Sodoma ("Saint Sebastian," 1525). All these paintings may be viewed online via the Web Gallery of Art (<http://gallery.euroweb.hu/index1.html>). For more on Saint Sebastian in Renaissance Painting, see Saint-Saëns (51-57) and Saslow. For more on Gila, Saint Sebastian, and homoeroticism, see Regan 300-01.



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