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HIGHER EDUCATION: PEDAGOGY AND OBEDIENT SUBVERSION IN SHAKESPEARE'S *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW* AND LOPE DE VEGA'S *LA DAMA BOBA*

For Thee, as we observe in tragedies
That a good actor many times is curs'd
For playing a villain's part, I hate thee for't,
And for my sake say thou hast done much ill, well.
John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*

RESUMEN:

A través de una comparación entre *The Taming of the Shrew* y *La dama boba*, este ensayo subraya la manera en la que la presencia de las mujeres en estas obras contribuyó a una velada crítica social. Ambas obras se centran en los intentos de resolver las complicaciones causadas por mujeres que, por diferentes razones, no se consideran aptas para el matrimonio, aunque poseen dotes grandes que atraen a pretendientes astutos. El aspecto material de las representaciones de estas obras revela pistas en cuanto a la naturaleza subversiva de los textos. El teatro transvesti de la Inglaterra premoderna se contrasta con la presencia física de mujeres en los escenarios españoles. La obra de Shakespeare utiliza las normas sexuales como metáfora para comentar sobre los objetivos y fracasos de las prácticas de educación del Renacimiento. La presencia de mujeres en el escenario de Lope multiplica las indeterminaciones textuales y permite una representación subversiva por parte de las actrices.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Humanismo, educación, representación, Shakespeare, Lope de Vega

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ABSTRACT:

Through a comparison of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *La dama boba*, this paper highlights the way in which the use of women in the two works contributes to a veiled social critique. Both plays center on attempts to resolve the complications caused by women who, for different reasons, are considered unfit for marriage, yet possess large dowries that attract cunning suitors. The material aspect of the staging of these plays reveals clues as to their nature as subversive texts. The transvestite theater of early modern England contrasts with the physical presence of women on the Spanish stage. Shakespeare's play uses gender norms as a metaphor for commenting on the objectives and failures of Renaissance educational practices. The historical presence of women on Lope's stage multiplies textual indeterminacies, allowing for subversive representation by female players.

KEY WORDS: humanism, education, performance, Shakespeare, Lope de Vega

Current pedagogical methods attempt to foster sexual equality, but Renaissance humanists had no qualms about the gender divide. Both Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and Lope de Vega's *La dama boba* present cases in which early modern educational aims cross paths with issues of gender. The complications of both plays rest on the need for a male protagonist to reform a woman considered unfit for marriage in order to take advantage of the large dowry offered to whichever suitor be willing to relieve a worried father of this burden. While Shakespeare focuses on the violent manner in which Petruchio breaks Katharine's will, Lope's play presents a reformation based on the quasi-mystical transformative power of neoplatonic love.² This key contrast highlights the different aspects of humanist education that each work explores: Shakespeare (bearing in mind that his female characters were played by schoolboys) considers the erotic nature of grammar school education in early modern England, while Lope presents the balancing act between wit and modesty that humanists like Fray Luis de León describe as necessary for the «perfect wife.» The ideal form of pedagogy presented in conduct manuals such as those of Fray Luis de León contrast sharply with the material practices of institutionalized education. A comparison of these two plays highlights this difference, pointing out the disparate ways in which English schoolboys and Spanish women were expected to fill prescribed social roles. Yet, like actors in plays, these roles are subject to individual (and possibly subversive) interpretations.

While Spain and England were mired in political and religious conflicts with each other, the two countries gave rise to similar forms of commercial theater. The collection of essays *Parallel Lives: Spanish and English National Drama, 1580-1680*, compares the most salient aspects of theater in early modern Spain

² For more on this topic, see James Holloway and Emilie Bergmann.

and England, including the physical staging, common historical background, and cultural differences of plays from both countries.³ In 2005, following a series of conferences focusing on the relationship between English and Spanish theater, the University of California at Berkeley produced a short documentary comparing the similarities of the content and form of both traditions, with a specific focus on Shakespeare's works.

Beyond these general connections in the theatrical traditions, there is an even more important relationship among the works of Shakespeare and Lope. These authors are the two iconic figures of one of the most important times of theatrical production in each nation's history. Hugh Macrae Richmond and Kenneth Muir, among other scholars, see commonalities between Shakespeare's works and Lope's *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*. Richmond sums up his (as well as Muir's) argument by indicating that Lope provides «the validation for Shakespeare's practices, which the English theatre supposedly failed to provide» (46). Among the many resemblances between their theatrical productions, both Shakespeare and Lope challenge classical literary norms, are explicitly concerned with the desires of their viewing publics, and enrich their plays with ambiguity that allows for multiple interpretations. The relationship between Lope and Shakespeare is further manifested in *The Taming Shrew* and *La dama boba*, in which the male leads, motivated by the need for money, seek to marry women with hefty dowries despite the fact that other suitors consider these ladies to be unfit for marriage. Each play is similarly «resolved» when the female leads accept their role as obedient wives and declare their subservience to their husbands in a way that seemingly reaffirms patriarchal norms.

The divergences in these similar plots provide insights into how each approaches the principal concerns of the respective cultures. A major separation between the two plays resides in how each author depicts the process through which the leading women are converted from being seen as unmarriageable burdens to suitable, and even ideal, wives. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, the process is marked by an acute sense of domestic violence (or at least the threat of it). Petruchio uses the type of advanced interrogation techniques that could get him in trouble with the Geneva Conventions today. Joan Hartwig has shown that Petruchio's methods for «taming» Katharine are akin to those used to break horses. Laurencio, on the other hand, uses much more subtle, nearly imperceptible tactics. Relying wholly upon the transformative power of neoplatonic love, he woos the simpleton

³ This collection is the result of a 1987 conference in Calgary, Canada. See also Anita K. Stoll's edited collection, which presents a similar compilation of Spanish texts coming from the 1991 Theater Festival in Almagro, Spain, and bearing an almost directly translated title *Vidas paralelas: El teatro español y el teatro isabelino, 1580-1680*.

Finea and lets her emotions produce the magical results. The actual change in Finea happens offstage, between acts. Her last lines in Act 2 show how she was unwittingly tricked into declaring herself married to Laurencio before a witness. Act 3, set two months after Act 2, begins with Finea's cultured soliloquy about the positive effects of love. While each of these female characters is apparently interpolated (to use Louis Althusser's term) into the patriarchal order, the men responsible for this change do so in entirely different ways.

Feminist literary criticism of Shakespeare's play has led to many important studies based on the violent way in which Petruchio brings about the change in Katharine's behavior. This has led Emily Detmer to consider Shakespeare's work in light of a «strategically anachronistic» practice of reading» because it «allows us to think about our positions as readers, teachers, and critics» (283).⁴ Detmer's article is reminiscent of other scholarship, such as that of Holly Crocker and Wayne Reborn, that explores how Katharine is forced to conform to social norms and how she ultimately resists this interpolation through a feigned submission. Reborn studies the use of rhetoric in the play, referencing the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives as proof that «practically everyone in Renaissance society could be seen as an orator, and, what is more important, Renaissance people knew it» (298). Reborn contends that Petruchio's failure to persuade Katharine through rhetorical techniques leads him to a type of «phallic aggression» (307). For Reborn, it is ultimately Katharine who is able to successfully use rhetorical speech in a way that subverts Petruchio's efforts to tame her (323). Katharine's final speech is not a demonstration of her acquiescence, but a rhetorical rebellion, subtle as it may be. Crocker notes how Shakespeare's play highlights the difficulty in staging female submission. Like Reborn, she sees the presence of a subversive resistance to this change in Katharine, especially in her final speech. Her open acceptance of an inferior position, Crocker affirms, takes from Petruchio his ability to dictate the terms of her capitulation (156). Katharine agrees to play the part of the submissive wife, but plays it all too well. Her interpretation of the role is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the woman Petruchio would have her become.

⁴ While Detmer's arguments are interesting and her historical analysis enlightening, her study may be dually anachronistic. While she justifies her use of modern terminology to define the level of abuse Petruchio uses against Katharine, she too readily accepts *The Taming of the Shrew* as purely a product of the social norms of early modern England. By looking as some of the play's predecessors, however, it becomes evident that Petruchio's tactics are not wholly based on humanist reformation efforts. His ability to persuade without ever using physical violence against Katharine, for example, has at least one literary precedent in the fourteenth-century Spanish Don Juan Manuel's «De lo que contesçió a un maçebo que casó con una muger muy fuerte e muy brava» in *El conde Lucanor*. While Shakespeare undoubtedly inscribes early modern English society within *The Taming of the Shrew*, he does so with several intertextual antecedents. Although both works draw from similar sources, Manuel Alcalá has shown there is no evidence to support the idea that the Spanish text had a direct influence upon Shakespeare.

Arguments such as these depend on feminist approaches to literature that have allowed critics to reconsider the roles that women played in early modern society in light of historical readings based, in part, on the humanist conduct manuals. Phyllis Rackin takes a different approach to *The Taming of the Shrew* by noting that the popularity of the play is more recent than historical, and that this is, in part, due to a modern misconception about how women were treated in early modern England. (53). Based on the induction of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Rackin proposes that Shakespeare was not attempting to present a realistic portrait of women, but a farcical comedy through the use of hyperbolic stereotypes. This open-ended, framing scene presents the cruel joke in which a lord attempts to fool the town drunkard Sly into thinking he too is noble. The lord's servants take Sly, unconsciously and inebriated, and dress him in fine clothes so that when he awakens he will think that his life as a vagrant was only a delusional dream.⁵ In addition to providing new raiment, the lord hires some passing actors to perform a play and instructs his boy-servant Bartholomew to dress as a woman and pretend to be Sly's wife. After refusing Sly's sexual advances, Bartholomew agrees to cuddle up with the unwitting drunkard to watch the actors, whose performance is the main plot of *The Taming of the Shrew*. The duo of Sly and Bartholomew, as Rackin comments, is an important precursor with comical overtones that continue to resonate in the portrayal of Petruchio and Katharine's relationship (55). Rackin contends that the induction shows that neither Shakespeare nor his audience took seriously the violent imposition of the patriarchal order as presented in the play.

Rackin's work thus initially seems to complicate the issues raised by those who read *The Taming of the Shrew* as a representation of early modern patriarchal domination. One can reconcile the conflict between Rackin's work and the other criticism presented here by showing how *The Taming of the Shrew* may not have been taken as a serious commentary on the lives of women because the audience understood that Katharine's «taming» was more of a portrait of the educational process of English grammar schools than of the subjugation of wives to the norms of conduct manuals. Rather than present the pedagogical theory for educating women, Shakespeare's play comments on the material practice of teaching schoolboys. While the text presents Petruchio as a teacher of his wife, Shakespeare wrote the play knowing that a schoolboy would fill Katharine's costume. Although this transvestism could be overlooked as a simple theatrical convention that was accepted without cavil by early modern audiences, historical and textual evidence suggests that Shakespeare's play-going public was acutely aware of the thinly disguised gender of the boy actors (Rackin 72). In addition to highlighting the comic nature of the play, the induction also lays bare the artistic

⁵ The connections between this scene and Calderón's *La vida es sueño* seem obvious. For further discussion, see Louise Fothergill-Payne, «La mirada está en la mujer.»

devices by providing an important meta-theatrical quality (Rackin 55). The gender of the actors playing female characters becomes obvious in the induction, both through the costuming of Bartholomew as Sly's wife and through the physical presence of the troupe, perhaps out of costume, reminding audiences of the corporal reality of the theatrical conventions.

While the biological gender of Shakespeare's players may have seemed apparent to the audience, Tracey Sedinger warns about forming assumptions about what cross-dressing on the early modern stage may have meant to these theater-goers. Noting the homoeroticism of the male gaze of the audience directed toward a cross-dressed boy, Sedinger suggests that previous studies were often too dependent on assuming a static gender relationship: «Even when the boy-actor's potential eroticism is foregrounded, when critics assume that the boy-actor was evident beneath the feminine costume, the implied theoretical model depends on a positivist paradigm of sexuality and representation in which sexuality is defined by object choice» (65). The use of cross-dressing boys to represent women did not clearly delineate sexual limits, but highlighted the problematic nature of the social conventions used to define gender. Sedinger contends that this is due, in part, to a fault in the epistemology of gender representation: «The crossdresser reveals an erotics not of the *beyond*-representation (an essentialist thesis), nor of the *produced-by*-representation (a social constructionist thesis), but of the *failure of representation*» (67).

When one bears in mind Sedinger's analysis, textual clues, and historical evidence, it becomes clear that the notion of gender in *The Taming of the Shrew* cannot be taken for granted. The gender identity of the play's characters must be considered in relation to the material performance of early modern theater. Just as it would be overly essentialist and certainly contrary to the richness of Shakespearian texts to say that there is only one possible message in the play, it would be an oversight to simply assume that the play only presents one dynamic of gender relations. While it is evident that marriage and spousal relations are important elements within the play, how these are presented offers other insights into early modern English society.

Katharine's headstrong attitude is the titular complication of the play, and the solutions offered to rectify the situation are often related in pedagogical terms. Lucentio is the first to find an answer for circumventing Baptista's blockade of Bianca's suitors by posing as a teacher of the two sisters (1.1). This plan, at the onset of the dramatic action, links the erotic nature of education with the unstable nature of gender representation caused by the boys dressed as women. While Lucentio is busy pretending to be a schoolmaster, Petruchio is eventually heralded as the successful founder of a «taming school» in which he «is the master

/ That teacheth tricks eleven-and-twenty long. / To tame a shrew and charm her chattering tongue» (4.2, 54, 56-58). The domination of Katharine and the courtship of Bianca are less indicative of how husbands treated wives but highly indicative of the humanist pedagogical institutions that attempted to make schoolboys into English gentlemen.

Richard Halpern explains that one of the most important aspects of formal education in early modern English grammar schools was the emphasis on the imitation of classical literature (38-39). The message of many of these Latin texts was often counterproductive to what humanist educators were trying to teach. The focus then, in Halpern's view, was on the form of this literature and not its content (47). These teachers often failed, however, in their attempts to completely disassociate the form from the content, as evidenced by Shakespeare's own works.⁶ Lynn Enterline builds upon Halpern's analysis in order to show, among other things, how the dramatic nature of humanist education affected early modern theater (173). She explains that such pedagogical methods required a type of theatricality in which «the presence of an actual stage was hardly necessary» (179). Considering the dramatic nature of schoolboys who were required to mimic both male and female voices, Enterline explains that «the logical extension of the grammar school's training in how to be an English 'gentleman' was, in fact, a transvestite theater» (185). Thus Shakespeare's stage becomes the perfect forum for reflecting upon the material practices of early modern grammar school education.

The Taming of the Shrew can be interpreted as a commentary on the way in which schoolboys were taught to play certain parts as directed by the schoolmasters and how well (or poorly) they carried out those roles. With Petruchio as the teacher and Katharine as schoolboy, the play highlights the way in which humanist education was meant to work as well as how it failed. Katharine's initial inability to play the part of the wife is contrasted with her final speech of submission. In her apparent surrender, she also reveals her ability to undermine Petruchio's physical domination through a subversive acceptance of her role much in the same way that schoolboys defied their schoolmasters by embracing the subversive content of their Latin readings.

Starting with its title, Shakespeare's play makes constant reference to a form of gendered interpolation through physical violence. Despite the overtly aggressive nature of the educational process presented in the English text, violence is acutely absent in *La dama boba*. In contemplating the reason for such a disparity, one need not assume that early modern England and Spain shared different views on the form or function of education. The same humanist thinkers, including

⁶ See especially Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*.

Erasmus and Vives, influenced both countries.⁷ The use of violence in teaching by early modern Spaniards is even reflected in Cervantes's *Don Quijote*, specifically in the aging knight's constant, and at times abusive, corrections of his portly squire. Yet, nowhere in *La dama boba* is violence or even the veiled threat of violence used in Laurencio's «education» of Finea, despite the fact that such tactics were well known within Spanish culture as can be seen in Don Juan Manuel's «De lo que contesçió a un maçebo que casó con una muger muy fuerte e muy brava» (224-30).

This absence of violence in Lope's play can be explained by first considering the biological gender of the actors filling the roles on the stage. While Shakespeare wrote his parts for an all-male cast, women filled those roles on the Spanish stage. The gender of the original actors drastically changes the perception of how these plays reflect early modern society. The methods used for interpolating the female characters in each play highlight different pedagogical methods used to teach boys and women. Petruccio's physically and epistemologically violent reformation of Katharine symbolically portrays grammar school education while *La dama boba* considers female education in light of humanist conduct manuals and the institution of marriage. While Shakespeare's play is a commentary on material educational practices, Lope's highlights a more philosophical examination of female submission to father and husband.

Edward Friedman explains that Finea's learning is an example of the imposition of a patriarchal order: «Phallocentrism is a biological counterpart of the logocentrism of metaphysics» («Girl» 78). While Lope omits the realities of physical violence enacted against deviating women, his play demonstrates a form of epistemological violence. So while it appears that Finea gains a certain amount of autonomy along with her intelligence (as shown by her ability to use deception in order to marry the husband of her liking), she is still expected to conform to a rigid notion of the perfect wife. As Teresa Soufas observes, in order to conform with the ideal feminine model established by male authority, women in early modern Spain had to find the right balance between wit and modesty (130-32). While Finea is initially a simpleton, her sister Nise is *too* smart. Her father scrutinizes the books she reads and compares her voracious appetite for literature to the madness of Don Quijote. Both Finea and Nise learn that in order to be considered marriageable they must conform to male-defined standards. Just as the actresses on stage voiced the words written for them by Lope, Finea and Nise act out the roles prescribed by the patriarchal order.

⁷ According to Matthew Wyszynski, while the texts used by such humanist scholars have been heavily analyzed in relation to early modern English literature, they have been underappreciated in Hispanic studies.

Laura Bass has pointed out how *La dama boba* repeatedly emphasizes its own material aspect through its plot. From the play's outset, the action takes place within the concrete socio-economic setting of Lope's time. Bass's analysis has two effects: first, to affirm that the play tempers neoplatonic ideas of love with materialist greed (as previously noted by Robert ter Horst and Friedman [«Girl»]), and, second, to recall that the play was written and first performed with the reality of early modern Spanish life in mind. Just as the real-world performance of Shakespeare's plays can shape an understanding of their content, the immediacies of the early modern Spanish stage can shed light on a play's meaning. It is impossible to gauge the variable impact(s) that the biological gender of the actors had on theatergoers, but it seems important to note the possibilities. Both *The Taming of the Shrew* and *La dama boba* present female characters that, for one reason or another, come to accept a role given to them by a patriarchal authority. If Katharine's acceptance of this role can invoke subversion, how is Finea's apparent compliance to be interpreted?

While critics generally accept that *La dama boba* has, at least, the typical veneer of a socially stabilizing ending, they disagree as to what degree the play indicates the possibility for female subversion. In large part, both sides of this debate depend upon plot analysis to consider how Finea and Nise either break free from or are bound to the patriarchal system.⁸ Due to the multiple interpretations and the inherent indeterminacies of theatrical works, a variety of factors must be considered to decide whether or not a play suggests a subversive message, not least of which is its material performance. Here, the comparison with the British stage is useful in contrasting the biological gender of the actors. Lope was among the early modern Spaniards who were acutely aware that women on the stage were considered a sexually gratifying spectacle (see *El arte nuevo*). As women took up the roles written for them, they also re-voiced male discourse. Just as English schoolboys, like Katharine, subverted humanist ideals by playing a part too well, the female players in Lope's work had the ability to do the same. From this vantage point; *La dama boba* does not have to openly advocate a complete gender revolution, it only needs to provide enough ambiguity to allow for a subversive interpretation by either the actresses or the audience.

The presence of female bodies and voices on the early modern Spanish stage complicates a purely textual analysis. *La dama boba* is a male-centered reflection on the ideal wife as presented in the humanist conduct manuals like *La perfecta casada* of Fray Luis de León. A comparison of these women's prescribed roles with the English grammar schools is important for pointing out the disparities between the theory and practice of humanist education.

⁸ See Michaela Heigl and David Gómez Torres for examples.

While Lope may not have had any intention of pointing out the real-world obstacles for enacting the norms of these books, his play cannot help but reflect such issues. One thing that can be gathered from Soufas's analysis is that the gender structure of early modern Spain placed a great deal of faith in women's desires to conform to the precarious balance between wit and modesty. While Finea and Nise ultimately learn enough to fulfill these roles, they must also be acutely aware of how easy it would be for women to frustrate them. By internalizing the law, they simultaneously come to be intimately conscious of how to transgress it. One must wonder, as with other Spanish *comedias*, if the final marriage scene does more to resolve the initial conflict or to further complicate it, especially considering the latitudes those female actors had to present their own interpretations of their roles.

Despite his rhetoric about the power of love, Laurencio openly admits that his own interest in Finea is purely financial. This incongruent mixing of neoplatonic ideas and material greed is never resolved, leaving the audience, in Egido's words, with «un final ambivalente. La felicidad esconde una realidad amarga» (359). Despite her metamorphosis, Finea is left to marry a man who loves the dowry, not the wife. For modern audiences, the depreciation of Nise's talents is likewise disconcerting (Friedman, «Lope»). The marriage of the sisters conforms to the standard plot resolutions of theatrical performance, but in this case, the audience is left with more questions than answers, suggesting that there is more to the play than a simple reaffirmation of established norms.

The same humanists who established the English grammar schools developed the normative conduct manuals for women in early modern Spain. While schoolboys were taught to imitate classical literary texts, women were meant to mimic the male-centered concept of a perfect wife. Both boys and women, in their own way, had to learn to act according to certain norms in order to fulfill their gender roles. Just as English schoolboys like Shakespeare found ways to subvert these roles, so did Spanish women. Lisa Vollendorf uses a wide variety of historical documents in order to reconstruct how women dealt with the development of humanist education. While the primary aim of such educators was to create better wives, many women used education not only to better themselves, but also to become active in educating other women. Vollendorf explains that despite the lack of a widespread institutionalized education for early modern Spanish women, humanist pedagogy empowered women in a way that allowed them to subvert traditional power structures:

By broadly defining education to include informal and formal mechanisms of women's education of and support for each other, I argue here that women in the seventeenth century laid the groundwork for direct involvement in the public

sphere, and that we can recuperate women's educational history by turning to evidence of informal instructions and support found in advice and behavior manuals, religious instruction, fiction, and even Inquisition archives. (170)

While the Spanish early modern period is typically understood as a time when women were excluded from contributing to cultural formation, Vollendorf shows that certain women negotiated the discourse of early modern education with enough success that they were able to publish their advice, at times even directing it to men of high-ranking secular and ecclesiastical positions (171-75). She connects the abilities of these women to the better-known cases of proto-feminist female Spanish authors like María de Zayas and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz to show that humanist pedagogy, while limited, still left the door open, ever so slightly, for a more progressive advancement of women in later centuries.

A major difference between *The Taming of the Shrew* and *La dama boba* can be explained as the contrast between material practice and theoretical pedagogy. While the norms espoused by the work are decidedly male-centered and chauvinist in nature, they do not completely negate the possibility for changes in gender relations. Although Nise's father is displeased with her pedantry, it was he who first brought in the tutors to instruct her. The ending does not show two sisters who give up studying in order to appease their husband's desires, but two women who have learned how to negotiate social discourse to create the appearance of conformity. It is well within the interpretive power of the actresses playing these parts to endow these characters with a subversive bent. Lope's intentions are neither clear nor are they relevant. While one may argue the proprietary nature of a literary work, theater, especially Lope's decidedly commercial plays, takes on a life of its own the moment the author hands the script over to the actors and the audience.

David Gómez Torres argues that the socially subversive elements of *La dama boba* all fall within the acceptable limits of theatrical performance. Considering the carnivalesque nature of early modern drama, he argues that «todo aquello que puede ser calificado como subversivo en la actitud de Finea [...] no lo es sino momentáneamente» (315). He insists that the final restoration of order in the play suggests a suppression of any potential sedition. The carnivalesque *bobería* is replaced by the patriarchal order of Finea's *discreción* that makes the final marriage scene possible.⁹ Gaylord presents a similar argument, basing her analysis of *La dama boba* on Lope's *Arte nuevo*, in which he prescribes that «Las damas

⁹ «La pugna de discursos dentro de la comedia se resuelve, no sólo mediante la eliminación de uno de ellos, el del carnaval, sino, paradójicamente, en la utilización de éste—producción de la disforia en Liseo—para confirmar las premisas de felicidad dentro del orden (matrimonio Finea-Laurencia). El proceso de descarnavalización de Finea coincide con la enunciación de una serie de prescripciones que apuntan

no desdigan de su nombre» (280). Here, Gaylord notes, Lope outlines the limits in which women found themselves: «De tal modo encasillada, vigilados ella y su nombre por guardas cuidadosas varoniles, la mujer debe meditar muy bien sus pasos y sus versos, pues cualquiera de ellos puede constituir una *transgresión* de la línea del círculo invisible pero muy real que traza alrededor de ella el *nombre de dama*, nombre que le ha conferido el hombre» (72). For Gaylord, the work is a dramatized representation of the process whereby female speech is interpolated within a patriarchal order.

A consideration of the material performance of the Spanish *comedia* highlights the possible ways in which the female characters in *La dama boba* exceeded such preestablished limits. What Gaylord does not consider when citing Lope is that when he states that the «damas no desdigan de su nombre,» he was aware, as was his audience, that these women really were «damas» by name only. Acting as a profession was not highly esteemed during the early modern period. As Lynn Matluc Brooks notes, «People of the theatre, in general, were considered an immoral lot throughout Spain and the rest of Europe during this period» (5). One particularly disconcerting aspect of the acting profession for the contemporary moral authority was the relative freedom women enjoyed. Brooks notes several examples of women who were able to organize and control acting and dancing groups. These women negotiated contracts and performances with government leaders, yet these same authorities were wary of women taking the stage, and often went as far as to require that female performers be married and accompanied by their husbands as they traveled from town to town lest they transgress legal or moral codes (6).

Lope's discussion of the way women should act on stage in the *Arte nuevo* comes in a section focused on the general decorum actors, both male and female, should assume when representing the noble classes. Facing the type of moral criticism represented by Cervantes in the speech of the Canon of Toldeo in *Don Quijote*, the *Arte nuevo* is an apologia for the *comedia* on both artistic and moral levels. Lope's «damas» were not considered as such once they stepped off the stage. By suggesting that they «no desdigan de su nombre» he indicates that they must act the parts written for them so as not to offend social sensibilities. As Brooks notes, players were known for going off script in scandalous ways (5). In the *Arte nuevo*, Lope must assure his readers that his intentions are virtuous despite what the lowly actors might do.

The general moral concern with the *comedia* and actors is reflected in Finea's perceived conformity with cultural mores. While within the play Finea appears to

hacia un discurso único, hacia el deber ser necesario para mantener la armonía social y la perduración del orden vigente» (Gómez Torres 324).

acquiesce to the social demands of the prescribed role for a perfect wife, textual clues suggest that the overall message of the work exceeds the boundaries of gender norms with possibly subversive consequences. Just as English drama must be interpreted within the framework of transvestite theater, *comedia* studies should also consider the material aspect of the players on the stage, which includes the biological gender and low social esteem in which all actors were held. Such an approach reveals the textual indeterminacies that ultimately destabilize the general social structure that both Gómez Torres and Gaylord seem to believe the play upholds.

In the first act, Finea's lack of intelligence is portrayed, marking her unfit for marriage. The tutors brought in by Otavio represent the failed attempts to interpolate Finea within the patriarchal order. As a result, Laurencio declares his intention to overcome Finea's intellectual ineptitude through love. It is in the third act that the fruits of Finea's transformation become apparent. After her opening soliloquy about the power of love, Finea converses with Clara, who notes the general amazement surrounding the metamorphosis. The *criada* notes three specific things about Finea that have pleased Otavio: «cómo lees, escribes / y danzas» (2077-78). These three new abilities that Finea has gained, which correspond to her tutors previous failed attempts, represent the qualities that make her a prime candidate for marriage, yet each has the potential for developing broader subversive attributes.

Clara's statement is immediately followed by a conversation between Otavio and Miseno, specifically regarding female literacy. Their discussion, focused on finding a mate for Nise, establishes the perceived evils of reading, especially by women, first listing the books and authors she reads, and then expressing the fear that she become «un Don Quijote mujer / que dé que reír al mundo» (2147-48). So while some amount of literacy can make Finea a marriagble woman, Nise represents an unacceptable extreme, in which reading can lead to some act compared to the exploits of Cervantes's knight that will bring about public shame. The mention of specific works is not a mere stroke of metafiction on Lope's part. If a study of Don Quijote's library situates his «madness» within the fictional world of knight errantry, Nise's reading list, featuring key canonical works of the Spanish Golden Age, suggests that Otavio's worry is that she will become more like the authors she reads—in other words, a writer. Given the fact that Finea is praised for her ability to read and write, Otavio's concern for Nise represents the inherently subversive qualities of literacy and literary practices if taken beyond predefined limits.¹⁰ While Miseno believes that matrimony will remedy this problem, Otavio

¹⁰ For more on the subversive nature of female writing in early modern Spain, see Amy Kaminsky's introduction to *Water Lilies/Flores de Agua* and Julián Olivares and Elizabeth S. Boyce's introduction to *Tras el espejo la musa escribe*.

seems less than convinced. Thus even the supposedly stabilizing effect of the final marriage scene seems, to Otavio, inadequate to squelch the chance of future female sedition.

The possibility that Finea's transformation from *boba* to *discreta* could exceed the acceptable limits of gender norms is highlighted by her third acquired ability, dancing. Shortly after the discussion of literacy, Otavio calls in the musicians to have his daughters dance as a way of showing off the new and improved Finea. The moment juxtaposes the male voices of the singers overlaying the physical movement of the women impossible to fully reflect on the written page. Aurora Egido analyzes how Finea's love proves itself to be a better teacher than any of the tutors could have been. For Egido, the dance in Act 3 is a key point that unifies the two sisters: «El baile del amor indiano rompe así la antítesis entre ambas» (366). The symbolic union represents the moment in which each daughter finds the middle ground between *boba* and *discreta* and finally conforms to the ideals set forth for wives.

Just as reading and writing are potential points of subversion, so too was dancing. In addition to classical and biblical sources suggesting the dangers of female seduction brought about by dancing, early modern moralists were wary of letting women perform dances in public scenes. Brooks notes that dancing was seen as one aspect of the same type of theatrical performances that threatened secular and ecclesiastical leaders of the time. Louise Stein confirms this historical description: «What is clear is that they viewed songs and dances as inherently titillating or erotic (the mere act of singing and dancing onstage often occurs in burlesque, ridiculous, or lascivious scenes) and worthy of strict control in terms of both genre and performance practice» (658-69). So while «poetic eroticism» was more commonly accepted on the stage, the use of music and dancing was «considered potentially dangerous to public morality» (659). Making the dance scene a central aspect of Finea's learning and a key marker in Nise's acquiescence to the demands to act as perfect wife does more than merely suggest the possibility for subversion. It hints at the fact that within female submission is contained an inherent potential for social transgression.

The dance scene also marks the moment in which Finea appears to have completed her transformation. While the general amazement of Finea's reading and writing takes place off stage, the *mudanza* is a staged performance of her newfound erudition. Nonetheless, her new abilities do not come through normal pedagogical methods. The lessons taught to her by the tutors hired by Otavio ultimately fail where love triumphs. Louise Fothergill-Payne has noted the way in which the masculine gaze has an important effect on the overall interpretation of the play. Here the dance serves to satisfy the male desire to view women

in their antagonistically dual role of both erotic and «discreta.» But the physical movements on stage, along with Finea's ability to read and write, are the product of a learning process that happens outside of masculine control and both the audience's as well as the male character's immediate view. While it is Laurencio who brings about the emotive forces that spark the change in Finea, he is not directly involved in teaching her to read, write, or dance. Finea performs before the male gaze, but underlying her actions is a capacity to learn outside of the typical male-centered educational practices.

The dance scene near the beginning of the third act represents Finea's completion of the lessons Otavio wanted her to learn, but the play does not end there. Finea has learned more than just how to read, write, and dance. When she is able to manipulate linguistic signs and other people to achieve her goal of marrying Laurencio, Finea shows that her knowledge now exceeds the subjects her tutors sought to teach her. As Finea is transformed, she is not simply conforming in the face of the epistemological violence of education. Rather, she is strategically internalizing the lessons she needs to negotiate her role within a male-centered society. The supposedly conservative message conveyed by her marriage to Laurencio is tainted by the fact that Finea has gained the upper hand over a patriarchal order that would limit her ability to define her own fate.

Both Lope and Shakespeare use humor to approach the dynamics of gender in their respective cultures in relation to humanist education. As a result, their plays highlight crucial social conflicts of the early modern period. The indeterminate nature of theatrical works makes it impossible to suggest that either play dictates a prescriptive view of gender roles or social order. A consideration of the historical material aspects of performance counteracts the generalization that these productions inherently furthered a broader, unitary conservative agenda. While playing within the socially acceptable limits of public performance, both Lope and Shakespeare present works that at least invite audience members to reconsider their own personal values through a subtle challenge of social norms. An analysis of the way that each playwright communicates cultural tensions reveals the scenes of subversion made possible through the carnivalesque nature of theater.

While the application of modern feminist theory to these works has been enlightening, the analysis of the plays must move beyond one of authorial intent based on anachronistic social values. The mere act of broaching the subject of female erudition in *La dama boba* or pedagogical practices in *The Taming of the Shrew* foments a larger social dialogue about the issues. One cannot simply assume that because Katherine, Nise, and Finea fail to live up to a modern conception of liberated women that the plays reeks of an unabashed approval

of total male domination. While the women in these plays conform, in a sense, to pre-established parameters, they also have gained the ability to negotiate their social position. Rather than advocate the general oppression of women, these plays show that women of the time could find individual power despite gender disparities. Lope's play does so through Finea's ability to master the lesson taught to her and manipulate others to achieve the marriage she desires; Shakespeare uses matrimony as a veiled metaphor for the subversion of the pedagogical practices of humanist education.

In both *La dama boba* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, the material performance has bearing on the plays' overall meanings. The comments made by detractors of early modern theater show that both English and Spanish audiences were aware of both the presence and absence of female bodies on stage. The exclusion of women from the stage is laid bare in *The Taming of the Shrew* as textual clues highlight the presence of the boy actors. The play thus comments on gender relations by showing how boys taking on female voices could undermine the imposed humanist construction of masculinity. Social resistance against humanist gender definitions in *La dama boba*, however, is quite different. While the final message appears to be male-centered and conservative, the physical presence of women on the stage highlights the possibility for a subversive reading. Finea's ability to manipulate symbols, and by extension the social order, to achieve her means shows the possibility for female subversion of cultural norms. The contrast between Finea and Nise also shows the precarious balance that women had to strike in order to be defined as perfect wives. This balance was dependent upon female submission and thus, like English grammar school education, susceptible to veiled resistance through feigned compliance.

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