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FEMALE PRESENCE IN TIRSO'S *EL BURLADOR DE SEVILLA*

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Of the innumerable studies on Tirso's *El burlador de Sevilla*, only a few have considered the role of women in the play in detail. Too often scholars fall into the narcissistic trap of the main character, who has succeeded in imposing his presence to the point of captivating not only the women in the play, but also the discourse of literary critics.

Studies which have devoted some space to the representation of women in the text tend to concentrate on Tirso's alleged feminism or misogyny, or to focus mainly on the four female protagonists.¹ Similarly, references to the prostitutes in the play have been made usually in connection with Don Juan's perversions or as a function of the male characters.² In other words, the picture is incomplete: the female presence in *El burlador* remains to be addressed.

Tirso de Molina's feminism is rather irrelevant to a modern reader. His individual position regarding women is only important insofar as his legacy—the text—still has an impact upon us. The spirit of 17th-century Spain obviously impregnated Tirso's ideology about women—as much as my historical circumstance as I approach his plays today is shaping my interpretation of them. The question, then, is not whether he was a feminist or an anti-feminist, but, rather, how shall I read his plays as a feminist.

The other tendency—that of analyzing the principal female personages—is also far from providing a complete picture of the women's role in the play. Although allowing more space to female representation, these studies do not venture to the margins of the text, where—as some feminist literary critics claim—it is more likely to find the impact of women in male-au-

thored, early modern works.³ By focusing solely on the main female characters these analyses remain near the spotlights—thus giving a partial and fragmented picture of the women’s role.

This study attempts to provide a holistic view of the female presence in Tirso’s *El burlador de Sevilla* by taking into account all the female figures in the play—including those who did not get the privilege of having a voice. The analysis enters the text through the back-door: starting from absence. By getting out to the margins of the text, while keeping the focus on the women, the article tries to reverse the assumption that women are just “victims,” and show that the female presence—however fragmented and suppressed—is in fact the most powerful source of dramatic energy.

The invisible women

Traditional interpretations of the play tend to assume that the end of *El burlador* is the epitome of justice. A vast majority of critics subscribe to the idea that Don Juan’s fall to hell, along with the marriage of the heroines with their beloved ones, have the effect of restoring the world’s harmony—“the social harmony which has been disrupted by the anarchy of Don Juan” (McKendrick 158). According to Casaldueiro, these two facts provide the denouement with the necessary reflection of divine and worldly justice which was so essential to the Spanish baroque (139). However, there is an entire group of *burladas* whose claims we do not hear, and who do not benefit from the restoration of the Cosmic Order.

From the beginning of the play we learn that Don Juan’s dirty trick on Isabela is not the first one he has perpetrated. As his uncle Don Pedro points out upon discovering Don Juan’s offense, there seems to be at least one other anonymous *burlada*, of whom we only know that she is a Spaniard and noble:

Di, vil: ¿no te bastó emprender
con ira y con fuerza extraña
tan gran traición en España
con otra noble mujer...?⁴ (1.5.636)

In act 2, during Don Juan’s first encounter with Mota, it becomes clear that this sort of behavior is rather common—at least among some young men. As the marquis replies to Don Juan’s question about *perros muertos*:

Yo y don Pedro de Esquivel
 dimos anoche un cruel
 y esta noche tengo ciertos
 otros dos. (2.6.655)

Presumably, the trick Mota had in mind for that night also involved Don Juan's exchanging places with him:

M: Pues llegad
 y decid "Beatriz" y entrad.
 D.J: ¿Qué mujer?
 M: Rosada y fría. (2.13.660)

Some of these women are anonymous; others, like Beatriz, possess names but are "invisible." To this second category belongs the long list of prostitutes: Inés, Constanza, Teodora, Julia, the two sisters and their mother, and several others still harder to identify who are referred to as a group (*el barrio de Cantarranas*). With or without names, these female figures make a silent entrance in the text: they are bonded by their absence.

From a dramatic viewpoint, one could argue that the evocation of "invisible women" has the function of describing Don Juan's character. It shows that Don Juan's seduction of women is not just limited to those appearing on stage. It makes apparent that this behavior is a pattern of his—of which spectators get to witness only a small segment. Thus, the reference to the "invisible women" has the effect of multiplying automatically the number of *burlas* committed by Don Juan in the audience's mind.

From a psychological perspective, the recurrence of "absent females" may be taken as an illustration of Don Juan's neurotic perversions. As Conlon suggests in connection with the covert misogyny of Don Juan and Mota, their scornful attitude toward women may represent "the male's transference of his sexual disgust with himself to his female partner" (9). Here, the "invisible women" are seen as a tool that provides psychological depth to the male characters.

The problem with these approaches is that, while highlighting these women's functionality, they forget to view them as an entity in their own right. They obliterate the fact that the "invisible women" are so present and powerful a motif of the play that they became an indispensable ingredient in later recreations of Don Juan. A culminating peak in this trend is the popular Mozart-Da Ponte's *"mille e tre"*—where the motif assumes spectacular proportions, as the women's anonymity is magnified through their transfor-

mation into plain numbers. Nevertheless, in the first analysis, the female presence is understood as a function of the drama; in the second, as a function of the male characters.

The use of women for specific purposes and their sudden discharge when no longer needed is a common practice in patriarchal cultures. While not eliminating entirely the validity of the above mentioned propositions, let me invite the reader to place in abeyance the dramatic and psychologically illustrative functions of these women for a while, in order to hear what their silence has to say.

From this angle, the text's evocation of "invisible women" is to be understood as an *invocation* to the silent voices of those who do not have a place in the overall scheme of the World's Order. The "unknown women" reveal the existence of an inherent fissure in the patriarchal System of Justice, where some may pay for others, and just a few may get satisfaction or reward. They might be seen as standing for the suppressed and unheard female voices which this system constantly ignores, utilizes, and, ultimately, leaves behind. Their silent presence, their use as functional objects, and the subsequent abandonment of their causes by all of the concerned (and this includes the characters in the play, the playwright, and the critics) add something of a "realistic touch" to the supernatural reality of the play. These women's purpose in the text is to remind us that one cannot expect this system to offer justice for all.

The queen and the absent mother figure

It comes rather as a surprise when, at the end of act 2, Don Diego insinuates the existence of a queen when he reveals: "Fuese al sagrado, Doña Ana/ de mi señora la reina" (663). But further references to this character are equally tangential. In act 3, the king orders that Isabela be taken from the convent and led to the queen ("que quiero que en palacio/ asista con la reina más despacio" [679]); and later he adds, "Doña Ana con la reina me ha pedido/ que perdone al marqués" (679). These are the only signs in the text that there is more to the female species than unmarried damsels; and it is more than some other contemporary Spanish plays would offer.

The absence of mother figures is a disease of Spain's Golden Age drama which has been noted by some critics.⁵ Yet psychoanalytical readings of Tirso's Don Juan would not hesitate to "blame the mother" for the character's abusive attitude towards women.⁶ Perhaps one of the finest interpretations of this absence has been given by Ruth El Saffar in connection with

Cervantes's *Don Quijote*. In her view, the absence of mothers in the literary discourse reflects the period's changing attitude towards the Earth and Nature—from organic to production-oriented, from respectful and nourishing to destructive and greedy. The notion of Mother Earth as an organic entity which deserves reciprocity was being replaced by a mechanically oriented mentality of production. The latter received further support from the fact that the immense territories conquered in the New World offered Spaniards a shortcut to the acquisition of quick profits, and intensified their sense of alienation from an earth that is “not ours.”

The absence of a significant mother figure in *El burlador* seems to corroborate the fact that the Cosmic Order provided by the play is incomplete. The references to a distant, invisible, almost abstract queen, appear to emerge not from the reality that the text strives to create, but, if I may say so, from some unconscious place within that reality. First of all, her mention does not stand the test of dramatic scrutiny: dramatically speaking, it is unnecessary. It is rather like a “Freudian slip.” The decision to pardon the marquis could have been made by the king himself, without the queen's intervention—much in the same manner in which all other arrangements throughout the play are of his own making and unmaking. Nevertheless, the queen is invoked, as if there was some vague awareness that the Cosmic Order would lack some balance without her; but this invocation, rather than bringing her closer, reveals her absence, makes it more explicit.

On the other hand, even from her sketchy figure, we learn that she embodies a “safe place” for young women in distress. It is impressive that, however dethroned, stripped of her voice, and alienated from the scene, she is still capable of advocating for them, and of incarnating an available alternative instance.

The heroines

Literary critics tend to oscillate between regarding the four female protagonists in the play as “victims” of Don Juan's seduction, or blaming them for what they brought upon themselves. The pendulum may go from one extreme to the other, and it is not uncommon to find both attitudes expressed at once. Feal points out that “si Don Juan es un ser demoníaco, la mujer, asociada con Eva, no está exenta tampoco de culpa” (9-10). Ruth Lundelius holds a similar opinion. In an attempt to prove Tirso's misogyny, she analyzes each of the four characters from a perspective which attests to

their moral flaws: “With their prudence overmastered by sexual desire, each of his victims contributes as much as Don Juan ... to her own dishonor” (7).

Isabela, the first *burlada* on stage, has been found guilty twice: by the characters in the play—for breaking the moral codes—and by the critics, for lying and deceiving. The first set of accusations comes from the king:

Di mujer: ¿qué rigor, qué airada estrella
te incitó, que en mi palacio,
con hermosura y soberbia,
profanases sus umbrales? (1.7.637)

And then Octavio follows:

No hay cosa que me espante,
que la mujer más constante
es, en efecto, mujer. (1.9.640)

In what appears to be yet another example of “blaming the victim,” many literary critics maintain Isabela’s charges, in spite of the fact that she was herself cruelly deceived by Don Juan. Feal quotes Arturo Serrano Plaja, saying that “la duquesa, *oscuramente*, de modo más o menos inconsciente, quiere ser seducida por Don Juan, pero no se atreve a confesárselo a sí misma,” and he himself adds: “El luciferismo de don Juan sería entonces la réplica adecuada al de ella; don Juan combate a la mujer utilizando sus propios medios” (10).⁷ Casaldueiro makes her join the group of the liars, along with Don Juan and Don Pedro, in the first scenes of the play (126); and Lundelius proclaims her blame by posing that “she unhesitatingly turns to deceit and deception, even jeopardizing Octavio to salvage the remnants of her honor when she remains mute before the king’s error in thinking Octavio to be the fleeing lover” (8).

The striking fact about these interpretations is that they are textually unfounded. Isabela gives no clues as to her unconscious wish to be seduced by anybody, other than Octavio; and, moreover, she makes three frustrated attempts to speak before the king:

Isa: Señor...
Rey: Calla, que la lengua
no podrá dorar el yerro
que has cometido en mi ofensa.
¿Aquél era el duque Octavio?

Isa: Señor...

Rey: No importan fuerzas,
guardas, criados, murallas,
fortalecidas almenas
para amor, que la de un niño
hasta los muros penetra.

Don Pedro Tenorio: Al punto
a esa mujer llevad presa
a una torre, y con secreto
haced que al Duque le prendan
que quiero hacer que le cumpla
la palabra o la promesa.

Isa: Gran señor, volvedme el rostro.

Rey: Ofensa a mi espalda hecha
es justicia y es razón
castigarla a espaldas vueltas. (1.7.637-638)

It is not possible to speculate about the potential content of her discourse—had she been allowed to speak. But in any event, it is clear from the text that silence is neither a choice of hers nor a proof of her guilt. In acquiescing to the blame, she is doing nothing else but going along with the only option available to her as a woman: keeping silent.

One character who would have trouble keeping silent is Tisbea, the fisherwoman. She has been considered an example of the *mujer varonil*, more specifically, the *esquiva*—a female character type which exerted a strong fascination upon audiences of Golden Age Spanish drama. The fact that the *esquiva* opposed love and matrimony placed her at odds with what the period considered as “the natural role of a woman” (McKendrick 142-44; Lundelius 9). Hence, a 17th-century spectator would probably agree with Anfrioso and Coridón in regarding her dishonor as an expected outcome of her pride. On the other hand, some interpretations of Tisbea’s role reveal that literary critics also share the pleasure of seeing her punished. Feal, as an example, asserts that “afortunadamente, don Juan pondrá a Tisbea en su sitio” (11).

Perhaps because of her *varonilidad*, Tisbea is the only female character who really gets a chance to speak, as illustrated by her long and beautiful introductory monologue (1.10.640-42), and throughout the play. Although she has been compared with Don Juan—for both make themselves inaccessible to love and rejoice in their capacity to break other people’s hearts—there is a basic difference in the discourse of the two. He uses words as a

weapon to conquer, or as a tool to manipulate the other; she uses them to express her feelings. Tisbea has been generally held guilty for her behavior towards men; but the fact is that, were it not for her own description of herself, her performance on stage shows no hint of deviant, or otherwise incorrect, behavior. It is mostly by her own words that her so-called “misconduct” is betrayed.

Commenting on French feminist criticism, Adrienne Munich suggests that “when women speak ..., they cannot help but enter male-dominated discourse; speaking women are silent as women” (239). In literary terms, this is Tisbea’s main character flaw: she speaks too much. It is not only through her refusal to fall in love with men that she affirms her independence and unwillingness to comply with the “natural role of women,” but also through her attempt to be admitted into the world of language. Hence, it is not surprising that the first dialogue between Tisbea and Don Juan is marked by references to speech, words, and language:

D.J: ... pues veis que hay de amar a mar
una letra solamente.
Tis: Muy grande aliento tenéis
para venir soñoliento,
...
Pero si es tormento el mar
y son sus ondas crueles,
la fuerza de los cordeles,
pienso que os hace hablar.
Sin duda que habéis bebido
del mar la oración pasada,
pues, por ser de agua salada,
con tan grande sal ha sido.
Mucho habláis cuando no habláis... (1.12.643-44)

Yet, being a male-dominated realm, words turn against her. They do so, first, by shaping her as a “negative character,” and then, by helping Don Juan perform a lyrical manipulation on her.

One may say that Tisbea’s punishment is twofold: on the one hand, she is guilty of *esquivez*, of “willful defiance of the natural order of things” (Lundelius 9); on the other—to use Julia Kristeva’s terminology—of trying to partake of the Symbolic Order, “the order of verbal communication” (152). She defies her womanly place by refusing to remain silent. This behavior may be acceptable as long as she colludes with the Symbolic Order, that is, as long as she does not allow the woman-inside-her to emerge, and

keeps the identification with the Father clear of *jouissance*. In this respect, it is noteworthy that Tisbea's request from the fishermen to bring Don Juan to her hut is done in the name of her father ("que mi padre gusta mucho/ de esta debida piedad" [1.13.645]). However, when Tisbea gives way to her womanhood, she is disassociated, extricated from the Symbolic Order. She who used words is abused by words. The *palabra de marido* given to her turns Don Juan into an agent of the Symbolic Order; and in this sense, his "broken word" becomes the vehicle through which the Symbolic Order takes its revenge on her.

Interestingly, Tisbea's narration of the events to her friends is marked by sudden breaks and ruptures of discursive coherence (1.18.650). The text jumps back and forth from fire to water, from anger to pain, from blaming to taking the guilt, and is full of exclamations that disrupt the narrative flow. Of course, this may be read as a literary strategy that communicates her emotional confusion. But again, in Kristeva's terms, it may also be regarded as an irruption of the Semiotic plane within the Symbolic Order.

Being expelled from the Symbolic Order, it is natural for the fisherwoman to jump into the sea—a symbol of the unknown, the unconscious, the mother, of that which can never be predicted, ordered, categorized. In spite of the suspicions raised by Anfriso that she may try to harm herself ("porque va desesperada/ y podrá ser que ella vaya/ buscando mayor desgracia" [1.19.650]), it is entirely natural for Tisbea to jump into this element. Water has not only the capacity to dissolve the past, regenerate, and heal, but it also "symbolizes a return to the pre-formal, ... a reintegration into the formlessness of pre-existence" (Eliade 188) and, hence, a return to the Semiotic. Water is also a place where a fisherwoman feels naturally at home. Contrary to Don Juan—who is almost killed by the hostility of the element—the sea represents for Tisbea a place to recuperate, to be healed from the wounds inflicted upon her by the Symbolic Order.

According to Grace Barse, "although Doña Ana is the core of Tirso de Molina's drama, the comendador's daughter never appears on stage in his *Burlador de Sevilla*" (18). Her dramatic function as the vehicle that eventually leads Don Juan to damnation stands in contradiction with the fact that hers is the least developed role among the heroines. In Barse's words: "It is not until the thirteenth scene of the second act that Tirso lets the audience hear Ana's voice for the only time in the entire play" (19).

Being absent from the stage, it is through other characters that we learn about Ana. We are first introduced to her through the eulogies of her father:

una hija hermosa y bella,
 en cuyo rostro divino
 se esmeró naturaleza. (1.14.647-48)

Echoes of this image reverberate in the marquis's description of her—the second presenter of Ana:

Es extremada,
 porque en doña Ana de Ulloa
 se extremó naturaleza. (2.6.655)

Hearing her illustrious father describe Ana in such a positive light makes it almost logical to view her rebellion against this loving authority with suspicious eyes. In fact, Lundelius poses that she “has contumaciously sought to trick her father and to gain by deceit and illicit means what firmness and tact might still have achieved openly and honestly” (10). In this critic's view, Ana is guilty of several actions: first, she is to be blamed as irresponsible and careless for writing a compromising letter without instructing her maid to deliver it *only* to the right man; second, she is culpable of deceiving her father and the king without even trying to speak to them about her feelings towards Mota. “Furthermore,” Lundelius says, “like the Duquesa Isabela, Doña Ana jeopardizes the very life of her innocent lover, the marqués, who as a result of her actions and deceits, is incarcerated under sentence of execution” (11).

Lundelius's assertions reveal a rather arbitrary interpretation of the text. Indeed, it is not possible to infer from the maid's unfortunate delivery of the letter whether she was following carefully her mistress's instructions or not. The text implies that the servant addresses Don Juan under the assumption that he is a good friend of Mota; she might have heard their previous conversation in the scene immediately preceding the delivery of the letter (2.6), in which the marquis lets Don Juan know about his love for Doña Ana. But even if she didn't, it is clear from the servant's words that she delivers the letter in good faith, confident of their friendship, and counting on the mutual respect that is supposed to exist among noblemen:

Pues sois prudente y cortés
 y su amigo, dadle luego
 al Marqués este papel;
 mirad que consiste en él
 de una señora el sosiego. (2.7.656)

Don Juan, of course, responds according to what is expected from a man of his class, leaving no doubts in the servant's mind:

Digo que se lo daré:
soy su amigo y caballero. (2.7.656)

The result is that the maid becomes another *mujer burlada*, who falls for what should otherwise be a social convention. The words “amigo” and “caballero” elicit from her the response: “Basta, señor forastero.” Being the marquis's friend, and a nobleman, should suffice. How was she supposed to know about Don Juan's tricks? Moreover, the letter is delivered to him through a *reja* —a symbolic reminder of the great difficulty for women in those days to move freely in the streets.

Concerning the second accusation of Doña Ana by Lundelius, the text does not provide any information about the actual relationship between the comendador and his daughter—at least, not from *her* point of view. We do not know, therefore, if the possibility of explaining her love for Mota to her father was available to her or not. In fact, the text insinuates quite the opposite. When the king proposes to Don Gonzalo a husband for his daughter, he immediately replies:

Como sea
tu gusto, digo, señor,
que yo lo acepto por ella. (1.14.648)

Lundelius's interpretation is based solely on the one comment made by the king at the end of this scene, in which he requests Don Gonzalo to bring back the answer—presumably from Doña Ana (“Id en buena hora, y volved,/ Gonzalo, con la respuesta” [1.14.648]). However, we never see the father asking her anything, and the text rather suggests that she does not have much of a right to choose. This can be gathered from Mota's conversation with Don Juan, where the marquis points out that “el rey la tiene casada,/ y no se sabe con quién” (2.6.655). Likewise, Doña Ana's letter presents the facts unmistakably:

Mi padre infiel
en secreto me ha casado
sin poderme resistir; (2.8.656)

These two references should suffice in order to assert that Ana's re-

course to rebellion is not due to the character's dishonesty, but rather to her lack of a better option. No hints are found in the text which could lead to a different assumption—unless, of course, Doña Ana's sincerity is doubted for no reason. The idea that receiving her lover into her chambers was a means of compelling her father to accept the man of her choice is speculative and textually unfounded.

The same applies to the third accusation: the marquis is not an innocent lover. He is also a *burlador*—and not an insignificant one. Let us remember that Don Juan gets a chance to fool him thanks to Mota's plan to play a trick on an "invisible" woman. However, in contrast to Don Juan, he gets the benefit of salvation, mainly because his *burlas* are performed within the limits of socially accepted norms (he hasn't killed anyone), and given that his true love for Ana redeems him from his foolish actions.

There are many reasons to absolve Doña Ana of blame: the content of the letter leaves room for speculations about her true relationship with her father.⁸ There is also the fact that, as we learn at the end of the play, she was not dishonored by Don Juan. This last point, although disputed by some critics,⁹ eliminates the possibility of playing—as done in the case of Isabela—with an "unconscious wish" of hers to be seduced.

One more point remains to be mentioned about the invisible Ana: the modality chosen to carry out her rebellion is writing. In contrast to Tisbea, Ana speaks too little; but she too resorts to the Word in order to affirm her independence. When asked by Don Juan whether his beloved Ana favors him, Mota adds: "Y me escribe" (2.6.655)—an indication that recourse to written communication has been employed in the past by the young woman.

It is not that Ana is to be blamed for allowing her maid to deliver the letter to another man. Her imprudence consists in putting her wish in writing. Hesse connects the letter scene with the "air" element—as the message is received by Don Juan through a "voice" and "por la estafeta del viento" (2.8.656) ("Simbolismo sexual" 55). Indeed, Ana's voice from behind the stage is almost the only trace of her we ever get. Even Don Gonzalo hears her voice asking for help ("La voz es/ de doña Ana la que siento" [2.14.661]). Invisible as air, Doña Ana's transparent voice takes on a visible form through the letter; and, coincidentally, her writing becomes the instrument that leads her to dishonor. Ana's rebellion, thus, is not only present in her act of affirmative disobedience, but also in her attempt to have access to the Written Word. Beaten in her endeavor to appropriate the very essence of the Symbolic Order, it is not accidental that she takes refuge—like Tisbea does in the sea—in the absent and speechless queen.

After playing tricks on so many women, it is noteworthy that Don Juan would regard Aminta's as "la burla más escogida/ de todas" (3.6.66). Indeed, this episode is full of aggravating circumstances. The *burla* is performed in front of everybody's eyes and with their consent; it reaches a dramatic climax because it takes place on Aminta's wedding day to Batricio—thus creating a "last-minute" atmosphere, as well as deepening its moral overtones with the profanation of a sacrament.

Furthermore, of all four heroines, Aminta represents the one most deprived on the social scale. As opposed to Tisbea, who is also a *villana*, Aminta does not even have the freedom of her pride: she is totally powerless. And it is this combination of the highest with the lowest that makes the episode all the more repugnant—and all the more desirable to Don Juan—because it re-asserts the power imbalance.

In the seduction of Tisbea, it is she who brings up the issue of their social differences, while Don Juan—uninformed that Catalinón has mentioned his nobility—instructs his servant to conceal his identity ("si te pregunta quién soy/ di que no sabes" [1.8.645]). In the episode of Aminta, by contrast, the power of his social condition is used twice by Don Juan. First, in order to dissipate Catalinón's fears:

DJ: Si es mi padre
el dueño de la justicia,
y es la privanza del rey,
¿qué temes? (3.7.668)

The second time, he utilizes it as a means to impress Aminta:

Yo soy noble caballero,
cabeza de la familia
de los Tenorios, antiguos
ganadores de Sevilla.
Mi padre, después del rey,
se reverencia y estima;
y en la corte, de sus labios
pende la muerte o la vida. (3.8.670)

He further resorts to promising her a life of luxury and money—though his description is full of connotations of imprisonment:

Mañana sobre virillas
 de tersa plata, estrellada
 con clavos de oro de tibar,
 pondrás los hermosos pies,
 y en prisión de gargantillas
 la alabastrina garganta,
 y los dedos en sortijas... (3.8.671)

From this, one is tempted to agree with Lundelius that Aminta, “in order to reach above her class, trades her ultimate honor and her surest protector, Batricio, for the lies and enjoyment of Don Juan” (11). However, the same could be said of her father, who is actually responsible for trading her. Accusations could be made as well against Batricio—who falls for Don Juan’s lies without bothering to question their veracity, and easily abandons his sweetheart.

The attribution by Feal of an “unconscious attraction” to Don Juan by Aminta is rather speculative (1). Aminta’s faithfulness is quite obvious in the scene with her girlfriend, Belisa (3.4.66), where she expresses her distaste for the *caballero* (“La desvergüenza en España/ se ha hecho caballería”), and her strong desire to please Batricio (“¡Plega a los cielos que sirvan/ mis suspiros de requiebros,/ mis lágrimas de caricias!”).

In contrast to the other heroines, Aminta is not a rebel: she is a “good girl.” Her fault is to follow the rules and obey her father’s wishes. When these dictate that she marry Batricio, she does it; when both her father and Batricio change their minds, she changes hers. Lacking a will of her own, Aminta is badly equipped to deal with Don Juan’s adulations and demonstrations of power; and as any “good girl” would do, she hastens to fulfill Gaseno’s expectations and Don Juan’s desires.

If the four heroines were placed on a continuum that reveals each one’s internalization of the conventional role of women, Aminta would be on top of this list, followed by Isabela—who challenged the norms but did not rebel against a father; Ana would be next—as she dared contradict Don Gonzalo’s wishes—and Tisbea would be last, for refusing to put up with what was considered the *natural* inclination of women. At first glance, each heroine’s punishment is a function of her degree of internalization of, or rebellion against, the conventional role.

The overt message that “rebellion leads to punishment” is clearer in the cases of Tisbea and Doña Ana. Although Anfriso accompanies Tisbea to the court, he does not specifically state that he intends to marry her. It is customary to assume that he does. His tacit consent is inferred from Batri-

cio's plural remark at the end, that they too will get to marry "con las nuestras." However, Anfriso's silence is significant—especially in light of the proper statements made by all three men: it may imply that Tisbea has still some "homework" to do in order to get married.¹⁰ Similarly, in the case of Ana, punishment entails the loss of her father. Nevertheless, one may question whether the possibility of staying single—which is what Tisbea wanted in the first place—is such a bad idea for her; and whether losing her father—which allows Ana to marry the man she loves—constitutes a real punishment. A further message of the play, then, may be that, ultimately, rebellion pays off.

Concluding remarks

The idealization of Don Juan as a rebel who defies socially accepted conventions is quite preposterous. The fact that he uses his privileged position as a nobleman who moves in influential circles as a springboard for his *burlas*, clearly shows that, rather than rebelling against the norms, Don Juan plays with his power to enforce them to the extreme. It is this abuse of power that makes it impossible for the male characters in the play to go on colluding with him, continuing to protect him. Don Juan is not a rebel but a radical executor of the norms. If there are social rebels in this play, these are the women.

As his punishment seems to imply, Don Juan's worst offense is his disrespect for the dead—for he was about to be pardoned for his other deeds. However, the fact remains that women are the trigger that leads to disharmony. This may be explained—as has usually been the case—as the outcome of the gender's unstable, lascivious, and morally weak nature. But on a deeper level, it may be seen as reflecting the female's profound discontent with the impositions of patriarchal order. In other words, the female presence is disturbing, first, because it escapes complete subjugation by the system; and, second, because it is disturbed by it. The consistent attempts to manipulate, control, submit, shut off, and possess it, turn the females in the play into a subversive force that challenges the established order, exposes its flaws, disrupts its functioning, and ultimately, confronts it to question and assign responsibility for its abuses.

The system is not repaired, either by Don Juan's death or by the marriages. The restoration of justice and cosmic balance needs more than one scapegoat and a few happily married couples. The unanswered claims of the "invisible women," the uncertain fate of Tisbea, and the impalpable presence of the queen, leave too many untied ends in the play. Readers may be

accustomed to pay no attention to these gaps; but the story of Don Juan has repeated itself so many times in Western literature that it is difficult to believe that anything has yet been resolved.

NOTES

1. See among others: Lundelius; Singer; Feal; Hesse.
2. For references to the prostitutes in the play, see for example: Feal and Conlon.
3. My analysis follows the ideas expressed by Adrienne Munich, who argues that “instead of viewing the criticism of male-authored texts as a mere act of interpreting works by the ‘other,’ feminist criticism can consider the active role of women in their production” (244). In her view, suppression, distancing, or absence of women in a text are significant gaps, which often conceal hidden places of female power.
4. Tirso de Molina. *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra. Obras dramáticas completas*, Vol. II. Ed. Blanca de los Ríos. Madrid: Aguilar, 152. Further references to the text are from this edition (act, scene, page number).
5. As an example, McKendrick 4.
6. See for instance Wade, who asserts that “Tirso has no mention of his protagonist’s mother, but even so, the Oedipal conflict must be taken for granted. As a result, the mother, presumably more than any other person, would be the one most responsible for the scarring of his psyche” (37).
7. The italics are in the original.
8. As critics have noted, dramatists of the period tended to lean in favor of the daughter in cases of rebellion against a father who did not consider the woman’s feelings regarding love matters. See Oñate 147.
9. See, for example, Cabrera and González del Valle.
10. I wish to thank Prof. James A. Parr for his comments concerning this point. Both the play’s expected outcome and Batricio’s text do suggest that Anfriso and Tisbea are included among the marrying couples. But it is also noteworthy that while the other grooms make formal confirmations of their will, Anfriso remains silent—an attitude which may lead to speculation.

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