

***Contrast of values between the male characters of
"The Silly Lady" by
Lope de Vega***

***Contrast of values between the male characters of "The
fool lady", by Lope de Vega***

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Summary: Since its publication in 1613, *La dama boba* has been the subject of dissimilar studies and interpretations. The duality of elements that characterize the work is one of the points of greatest analysis. The most studied contrastive pair has been the one concerning the protagonists. However, little progress has been made in relation to male actors and their game of opposites. This essay examines the contrast in values between the male characters in *La dama boba* by comparing elements such as social class, behavior and personality projected throughout the piece.

Keywords: Contrast of values; male characters; Social class.

Summary: Since its publication in 1613, *The fool lady* has been the subject of dissimilar studies and interpretations. Topics such as the social position of women, the pedagogy of love, the didacticism of the time and others have been examined both in theses and research essays. The duality of elements that characterize the work is one of the points of major analysis. The contrastive pair that stands out in the studies is the one concerning the protagonists. However, little weight has been given to the male actors and their play of opposites. The present essay examines the contrast of values between the male characters in *The Fool Lady* by comparing elements such as social class, behavior and personality projected throughout the play.

Keywords: contrast; Male characters; Social ranking.

Introduction

It was the year 1613 when the prolific playwright Lope de Vega wrote what seemed to be, at first, one more work of his production. However, the multiple views made from various spheres of science and the arts place *the silly lady* among the most important comedies of the Spanish Golden Age.

The literary critic Diego Marín described it as "one of the masterpieces of the cape and sword genre" (Marín, 1988), highlighting its permanent value in the national and foreign theatrical repertoire. Numerous studies have been conceived since its first staging; each and every one of them contributes facets that enrich the critical corpus of the work.

Textual analysis has shed - and still sheds - light on topics that, although they were unnoticed in their time, are today important sources of study. Among them, the social position of women, the power of love as opposed to social canons, the historical customs of the time, the reflected pedagogical practices, among others. Similarly, stage performance has been able to exploit the underlying metatext in pursuit of perfecting contemporary dramaturgy.

Whether on the boards or the paper, the contrast permeates the entire work. There is opposition in its characters, concepts and even in the rhetoric and structure of the dialogues. The contrastive pair of greater analysis has been the one concerning the two leading women. Lope de Vega is the playwright who leads the way in the most relevant aspects of women and her world, using them several times in *test of wits* *the maiden theodor*, to name a few works.

However, little has been weighed in relation to the male actors and their game of opposites. Most of the investigations make an approach of the subject by way of brushstroke. This edge is useful for the study of the piece, so it is worth dedicating its corresponding analysis.

The essay that concerns us investigates the contrast of values between the male characters of *The silly lady*. It is important that the reader knows the context in which they move in order to obtain a better appreciation of them and their behavior in the course of the work.

Developing

"The horizon of humor is the transcendence of what exists with respect to negative values," says the essayist Jorge Portilla. The theater, especially comedies, they extol both the evils and the virtuosity of their characters. *the silly lady*, Of course, you don't get rid of it.

The comedy in question narrates the disagreements between a father, his daughters of marriageable age and the gallants who aspire to marry them. After certain intentional twists, both maidens end up joining in marriage with whom, at first, they had not agreed.

Despite the relevant role of the sisters, the men are the motive for the events. Built in a conventional way, we see reflected in the old Miseno, the teacher Rufino, the servants and gallants, the customs and ideas of the Spain of those times.

Among the male figures, the main triad stands out: Otavio, father of the maidens, and Laurencio and Liseo, their suitors. The such, with their actions and attitudes provoke the conflict and dictate by their means - without excluding the influence of the leading females - the final outcome.

A comparative analysis between these three characters reveals the clear disparity of principles that condition the actions of each one throughout the piece. To better observe this contrast, it is necessary to examine the following criteria: social class, the way they act and personality. Trichotomy that starts from the general to the particular and that offers an impartial examination of individuals.

Considering what Portilla said, the reader should not indulge in subjective judgments, given that dramaturgical fiction itself is nothing more than reality expressed in a histrionic way.

in his essay *The comedy in the Boba Lady*, Javier Espejo and Carlos Mata Indurán describe the Spanish society of the moment. In verses (vv.) 1512-1514 of his edition there is a complaint by Otavio that Nise's discretion has brought

his house to "The heartthrob, the musician, the poet, / the cute one, the one who prides himself on smelling, / the shaved, the crazy and the idle" The authors allege that the comedy reflects popular types with a satirical-burlesque approach. (Mata and Mirror, 2020)

Liseo is a rich Indian whose mission in Madrid is to marry a maiden from a wealthy family, which corresponds to his class. The Indianos were the Spaniards (Asturians and Cantabria) who emigrated to America in the 20th century, only to return later with great fortunes. It must be said that the aristocracy of money is represented in this gallant.

Otavio belongs to the middle bourgeoisie. This is indicated by the not inconsiderable dowry that his daughters have. The character has a high concept of patriarchal honor, a condition that in this sitcom is no more than a mere procedural formula without tragic force, but which should be pointed out as a trait consistent with his social status.

Both have servants at their service and, in the case of Otavio, a residence worthy enough of its level to have an attic, various rooms and a private park.

Lope de Vega is committed to social difference as an enriching element of history. He builds individuals from different environments, whose life experiences differ from each other to accentuate the conflict and penetrate his message in the reader / viewer. He includes a third character in the formula, Laurencio, who exemplifies the above.

Laurencio describes himself as poor and the reasons for his behavior attest to this. However, his knowledge of the arts and the poetic sensibilities he exhibits indicate that he comes from a group with access to culture. By this it is understood that he is not located at the bottom level of the social pyramid.

Not only do these individuals differ in terms of economic status, but rather the same status shapes the relationship with their peers. This is demonstrated in the reaction of each one before the behavior of the women, especially Finea.

Aurora Egido, referring to the role of women, comments that the context reflected in the work shows a clear perspective of the Spain of those days, where the trades of the female and the male were perfectly outlined: one would work for the good of the republic and the other will learn about customs, upbringing and goodness of life. (Aegis, 1996).

The silent, introspective teaching was a requirement for all women. It was considered unseemly for a lady to express herself in public.

With this in mind, Liseo's contempt for the stunned Finea's behavior and her father's concern, both conditioned by the prevailing codes of correctness and good taste in that society, is understandable. Not so Laurencio, who sees graceful and even romantic –perhaps because of his position exempt from such rigors– the attitude of the foolish lady. Having established the context in which the characters under analysis develop, it is necessary to examine the reasons that drive them to act.

First we have Otavio, who is faced with the concern of marriage. His daughters are of marriageable age and it is understandable that he wishes to join them with men of equal or higher economic status. For such reasons he arranges the union of Finea with the young Liseo.

Otavio believes that every maiden should be subject to her husband and that there is no good for her but marriage. An evident machismo stands out in his ideals, but it is justified given the historical framework in which he lives. He takes, in his own right, the tenor voice in decisions regarding his daughters, regardless of their criteria. He shows it in the following stanza:

Otavio: There is the discretion of a married woman

in loving and serving her husband;
in living collected and demure,
honest in speech and dress;
in being from the respected family,
in withdrawing sight and hearing,
in teaching the children, careful,
prized more clean than beautiful.

Certainly, you can see what normally happened in Spanish society at that time, the only thing he is doing is fulfilling the obligation that corresponds to him. However, such a situation is focused on the interior of the comedy trying to highlight what is projected from imposition and authoritarianism. The intentions of the patriarch are really sincere, but they respond solidly to the standards of the time.

Similarly, Liseo, a bourgeois archetype, considers "the right thing to do" to marry a woman with a good dowry.

Liseo: My wife seems fine,

If I give credit to fame

Of his sister I know little;

But just give me

What is most appreciated and loved.

Turin: Beautiful blow of money!

Liseo: It's forty thousand ducats.

Turin: Bravo dowry!

Liseo: If only I get to see them, as I hope.

Liseo leaves for Madrid with the sole intention of strengthening powers. What better means than a civil union. Our gallant responds to his social nature: he is rich and of good name. In his opinion, he deserves a maiden of equal character. Love or feelings are not among his projections. In the case of Laurencio – who is economically distant from the other two, but whose education and culture are not wasted – he enjoys certain moral licenses.

In our consideration are these elements that allow teachers in formation, from their position (of readers, students, men or women of our present time) establish comparisons and establish their value judgments, to express from the knowledge of the work itself, his feeling of rejection or conformity before the different attitudes or injustices committed.

At the beginning of the comedy, the attraction between Nise—Otavio's other daughter—and our austere heartthrob is made clear. As the play progresses, Laurencio exposes his feelings about Nise, but abruptly makes a decision regarding them: he opts for a life of comfort at the expense of artificial love.

Laurencio: Nise is a single beautiful,

Fine to twelve are:

hour of more blessing,

more rested and copious.

At twelve o'clock the officer

rest, and it is enough to be

then time to eat,

So precise and natural.

I mean Finea

maintenance time is,
whose rest you see
how much the man wants him.
Give me, then, the twelve to me,
that I am poor, with a woman who, feeding me,
is the best for me.

Laurencio shows us here his intentions towards Finea. His ideals of love contrast—without any hint of appearance—with the sacrifice and patience of courtly love or the desire for elevation in Neoplatonic love. Navarro Hernández expresses his position on the character with the following: “If, as Laurencio says, “love pays for love”, it is obvious that Finea's infatuation is a one-way street, a voice in the desert that finds no echo. .” (Navarro, 2007)

Laurencio goes from having an affair with Nise to focusing on conquering Finea, or rather, her dowry. His behavior evokes a quixotic axiom which states that “love and desire are two different things; that not everything that is loved is desired, nor everything that is desired is loved.”

What are a man's actions but the reflection of his personality? The questionable act of Laurencio allows the benefit of the doubt. Such behavior on your part may stem from an apparent urgency, which leads you to trade love for prosperity.

In *The foolish lady, her authority and Estefano Arat*, Esther Gomez judges the character to be petty and inconstant, alleging that although Laurencio answers that it is the beauty of the young woman that inspires desire in him, it has been precisely the gold of the dowry that has made him decide. In this way, Finea hits the nail on the head without knowing it, and her naivety contrasts with the hypocrisy of the leading man: according to the logic of concepts,

It would be foolish to think that love is something palpable, and yet Laurencio, when he speaks of love, is guided only by material interest. (Gomez, 2003)

Clara - Finea's maid - also warns carefully when telling her mistress:

Clara: In the attic, in a thousand ways,

and subject to a thousand misfortunes,

the one who says thank you

he is miserable with everyone!

In the attic, a lady

who, believing whoever worries her,

for an hour of discreet,

lose a thousand years of fame!

In the attic, a precious

cute, and it's an alligator,

but it has the attic,

like the mirror, deceived!

In addition to the poetic profile and the culture possessed by Laurencio, such characteristics are not enough to inspire confidence in the Liseo woman, on the other hand, it seems that she can buy everything except education. His interventions reveal him as someone "short of lights" and not at all subtle in dealing with his peers. His rudeness - which embarrasses him - explains why he dislikes Finea's so much and why he finds Nise's cultured so attractive. (Mayorga, 2003)

She is a fragile character, as evidenced by the outbursts of love she suffers after Nise's rejection. He has different ideals than his rival; – We are talking about Laurencio- he arrives in Madrid after the hand of Finea and then falls in love with the beauty and discretion of his

sister. It is in this state that the simplicity and ingenuity of the character is manifested.

We can take a closer look at the differences between the two by the way they profess love.

Quoting León Hebreo in his *Dialoghi D'amore*, there are three types of love: delightful, useful and honest. Delightful love is that which is eliminated when the desired has been possessed. Useful love comes after desire is over and that object is still loved. Useful things before having them are only desired, but not loved. After that desire comes love. And honest love takes place in the intellectual soul. It has to do with love and the desire to know. That is a more spiritual love that lifts the soul towards the true one.

An analysis in the light of the previous approach places Liseo's love as an honest love. Her intentions towards Nise are sincere. Her intelligence draws him to the point where he considers love above position and power. In contrast, Laurencio expresses a useful love. He puts well-being and interests before affection. To say that he may come to love Finea in a pure way is already speculating beyond the text.

Regarding Otavio, he is the authority figure in the comedy, the one in charge of watching over the family's honor. His weight and character endow the work with humor and warmth. He does not represent the typical imposing and oppressive patriarch. On the contrary, the nobility and genuine concern that he feels for his daughters are the channel for the entanglements that later develop.

Consequently, the alleged goodness of his practical philosophy and common sense, with which he boasts of clearly and sensibly understanding the way society works, are exhibited with all their patent limitations.

Conclusions

It is shown that, observed under the previous criteria, the characters in question are enriched in depth and content. They are individuals with chiaroscuro nuances, written with virtues as well as defects.

It is evident that machismo rules as a unifying element. The men in this story preside over their acts and words under the prevailing social conscience. Although rounded, they are nothing more than spokesmen for the Spain of the time.

The foregoing, of course, does not prevent them from being valued in terms of their importance in the plot, rather it enhances the realism of the work and adds another element to the set of reasons that make this one of the emblematic pieces of its time.

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