

THE REFUNDICIONES OF MANUEL BRETÓN DE LOS HERREROS

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For the collected *Obras*¹ of 1850 Manuel Bretón de los Herreros wrote several footnotes throwing light on his theater; for example, his note to *A la vejez viruelas* explains why he, the great versifier, wrote a few plays in prose; the notes to *El ingenuo* and *Achaques a los vicios* show the effect that censorship had on his theater; and in another note to *El ingenuo* he "sings the palinode" regarding some lines written back in 1828, where he had spoken humorously of the free use of stanzas in dramatic works.² Similarly, the note to his adaptation of Lope de Vega's *¡Si no vieran las mujeres!* reveals the nature of *refundiciones*, which may be defined here as early nineteenth-century adaptations of seventeenth-century plays. Here is a portion of this note:

De cuantas tareas puede imponerse quien dedique sus ocios a la literatura dramática, ninguna tan ingrata y estéril como la de refundir comedias antiguas. No porque sea una profanación, un atentado, como entienden algunos, el meterse a enmendar la plana a **Lope** o a **Calderón**, a **Rojas** o a **Moreto**. Aquellos insignes poetas no fueron perfectos en todas las dotes que requiere el arte escénico, aunque en algunas fuesen ciertamente inimitables. De ordinario se advierte suma irregularidad en sus planes; poca cohesión en los infinitos incidentes de sus fábulas, redundancia y sobrado **conceptismo** en los diálogos y en las **relaciones**; descuidos e incorrecciones en el estilo y en la versificación, locuciones y giros desusados, que no todos comprenden. El literato sabe disimular tales defectos en gracia de los primores de otro género que saborea y admira; pero el público en general es menos complaciente. Hay pocos dramas de aquel tiempo que en nuestros días puedan representarse tales como se escribieron; y habilitarlos para la escena dándoles sin desfigurarlos algunas de las condiciones que les faltan y exige la buena crítica, es hacer honor, no injuria, a la memoria de sus célebres autores.³

The reader will notice the following expressions: "suma irregularidad," "poca cohesión en los infinitos incidentes," "redundancia," "sobrado conceptismo," "descuidos e incorrecciones en el estilo y en la versificación." These words, which might have come from a neo-classical manifesto of "good criticism," indicate that Bretón will recast Golden Age plays in the mold of the playwright he admired, Moratín. A study of the *refundiciones* will bear out this indication, but the problem does not stop there, for in reforming the plays of Lope de Vega and others Bretón was himself reformed. His footnote shows he disliked writing adaptations:

De cuantas tareas puede imponerse . . . ninguna tan ingrata y estéril como la de refundir comedias antiguas

Como absoluto señor,
 Mandarme verte podía.
 No juzgues a desvaríos
 Amorosos verte así:
 Con sus ojos vengo aquí;
 Que no vengo con los míos.
 El me ha prestado estos bríos,
 El te mira, que yo no:
 Mírale en mí, pues te vio,
 Para que por mí te vea:
 Que no es posible que sea
 Yo quien te ve, siendo yo.
 Yo no soy quien te quería,
 Pues vengo a mi amor traidor,
 A solicitar tu amor
 Por el César, que me envía.
 El te quiere, y yo solía:
 Mas que no lo sabe, advierte,
 El alma, pues viene a verte;
 Que se lo encubren mis ojos,
 Porque con estos enojos
 No dejase de quererte.
 Otro soy, otro sin ver,
 Para no sentir que vengo
 A verte, pues que no tengo
 El ser que me dio tu ser.
 Por ver como al fin mujer,
 En tal peligro me veo,
 Que por no verte rodeo
 Yo mismo, dentro de mí,
 Las leguas que desde ti
 A lo que verte deseo.⁷

The conceptual play of seeing and looking and not seeing and looking is in keeping with the theme of the play, contained in the title; *Si no vieran las mujeres!*; nevertheless, although these *décimas* of Federico may gratify the ear of the audience their intellect will not understand what transpires unless they see the play several times or read it many times before seeing it. This want of immediate clarity was what Bretón had in mind when he said:

... sobrado *conceptismo* en los diálogos y en las relaciones; . . .

for he reduces Federico's forty lines, or four *décimas*, to twenty verses in *romance*, the most simple of all Spanish meters. Bretón writes:

Federico

No sin ocasión lo dudas;
 que quien tan justo motivo
 para no pisar tu casa
 en tu ingratitud ha visto,
 debería para siempre

sepultarte en el olvido.
 Mas no creas, Isabela,
 que con ruegos y suspiros
 la fe de tus juramentos
 a reclamar he venido.
 El Emperador me envía:
 obedecerle es preciso.
 No ya para mí, que soy
 de tanta ventura indigno;
 para el venturoso César
 tus favores solicito.
 Le enamoraron tus ojos
 viéndole a despecho mío;
 y de tu culpa, Isabela,
 yo solo sufro el castigo.

Gone from these verses is Lope de Vega's baroque movement of women and seeing and being, which is designed to cause amazement. Gone is the poetry of wonderment, and the joy of verbal entertainment. Bretón's succinct **romances** narrate clearly the plot of the play, that is all. His destruction of Lope's linguistic recreation in the verses just cited is the most extreme example of his re-casting the language of an old **comedia**; most of his transformations are not so drastic. It seems unfortunate that a man of his theatrical talent had to engage in this kind of un-creation, **pro pane lucrando**,⁸ but it is not our role to question his motives; on the contrary, it is delightful to observe him giving the post-eighteenth century somewhat neo-classical audiences of Spain what they demanded and then "singing a palinode," first by writing a footnote to the 1850 edition of his *Obras* and then by omitting the adaptations altogether from the authoritative edition of 1883.⁹

One special kind of Lopesque **conceptismo**, which Bretón also suppresses, deserves mention; namely, the word-play based on Scholastic philosophy. In Act III, scene XIV of Lope's comedy Federico dexterously employs the vocabulary of the School: **forma sustancial, accidente, memoria sensitiva, memoria intelectual**:

De una esperanza difunta
 Soy un necio pretendiente;
 Soy un ser que no se siente
 Pues siendo el alma inmortal
 Una forma sustancial,
 La tengo por accidente.

Lope concludes this **conceptismo** with some unusually entangled verses:

Federico

Pero, como viendo estoy
 El valor del que me ofende,
 Por no ser el que lo entiende,
 Dejo de ser lo que soy.
 Que no siento es verdadera
 Proposición, pues no siento
 Que no siento; y sentimiento

De que no siento tuviera;
 Que si el no sentir sintiera,
 Viera yo que el no sentir
 Era dejar de vivir
 Y no viniera a tener
 Sentimiento de no ser,
 Que debde ser morir.¹⁰

Unaware of their amorous relationship, the emperor Otón is courting Federico's lady, Isabela, and so all of Federico's Scholastic faculties are suspended; being, seeing, living, understanging and feeling are so confused they are in a state resembling nothingness, a numbed condition surely similar to death. Bretón, sensing the aversion of his nineteenth-century audiences to verses such as these, omits them altogether from his modern adaptation. He makes no provision for baroque philosophical amazement. He simply tells Lope's story, without embellishment.

Bretón's changes of a formal nature are like those just discussed: he simplifies Lope. In his quest for variety, the source of delight and beauty, Lope had included the following verse forms in his play: **redondillas**, **letrillas**, **sonnets**, **quintillas**, **décimas**, **silvas**, **octavas reales**, **romances**, **seguidillas**, and **pareados octosilábicos**. His *¡Si no vieran las mujeres!* rhymes more often in consonance than assonance, which, given the subtleties of his verses, is certainly a mnemonic device. He has an engaging story to tell, but he is also anxious to delight the ear and tease the mind of his audience with variations on the theme of a woman's seeing and being seen and the effect of her action on love, and to this end many strophes are a helpful vehicle. Bretón, on the other hand, is primarily interested in relating simply and clearly the love story of Federico and Isabela; he reduces all of Lope's stanzas to **redondillas** and **romances**, two sonnets, and some humorous **seguidillas**; the entire second act, for example, consisting of some 450 verses, is written in **romances**.

In one set of humorous verses (Bretón's play, Act IV, scene III; Lope's play, Act III, scene IV) the reader can visualize Bretón seated at his desk, writing some creative, festive lines of his own. This is the scene in which the **gracioso** Tristán describes the lady in his life. For example:

Llamarlos puedo soles,
 pero de Octubre
 que brillan al soslayo
 entre las nubes.
 Su nariz de aguilucho
 por corva y grande
 pudiera a un sarraceno
 servir de alfanje.

.....
 Ella dice que es noble:
 puede que mienta,
 pero puedo afirmarte
 que no es pechera.¹¹

In this passage Bretón needlessly altered the verses of Lope, which were themselves clear and simple, adding others of his own. He was writing the kind of sportive verses for which he was famous.

Bretón re-wrote Lope's play in **redondillas** and **romances** for two reasons. First, he wanted the play to move quickly and simply, and these strophes are considered the best for lively conversation and narration. The second reason is a theoretical justification of the first: he used these strophes because they were Moratín's prescription.

At this point we begin to suspect that the **refundiciones** were extremely important in Bretón's dramatic education; indeed, they may have been his most basic classroom of all. He tells us he idolized Moratín (he was "possessed of an almost superstitious attachment to this renowned author")¹², and his early theater, of which the adaptations are a part, bears witness to the truth of this statement. But it was then, and precisely then, that he began to have doubts about a theater only in prose, **romances**, or **redondillas** and "to sing the palinode." In his play *El Ingenuo* (1828) he has the foolish dramatist, Don Matías, say:

Allí hay
de todo como en botica.
¿ Y la versificación?
He puesto octavas, quintillas,
ovillejos, madrigales,
décimas, endechas, firsas,
acrósticos, serventesios,
sonetos y seguidillas. (Act II, scene vii)

Bretón, speaking wryly through the ridiculous Don Matías, is obviously making fun of a comedy with all these verse forms. But he later made a formal retraction; in the 1850 edition of *El Ingenuo* he put an asterisk after **seguidillas**(*) and then a footnote:

(*) Cuando esto escribía el autor estaba muy distante de pensar que se censuraba a sí mismo en profecía. ¡Cuán cierto es el proverbio de **Nadie diga de esta agua no beberé!** (*Obras 1850*, I, 169)¹³

Bretón, at first following Moratín, condemned the free use of verse in the theater. But later in his career he himself employed all sorts of verses, and his Academy speech of 1837 is dedicated to the use of versification in the **comedia**; in 1850, moreover, he wrote a palinode recanting his earlier position. Whence this change? The advent of Romanticism in the 1820's and 1830's undoubtedly had something to do with it. Another reasonable influence also presents itself: he came to see the value of "octavas, quintillas, ovillejos . . . etc." when re-writing the plays of Lope, Calderón, Alarcón, Tirso, and Coello. He loved Moratín, but he also loved Lope. Devotion to Peter does not preclude devotion to Paul.¹⁴

Another change that Bretón made in Lope's play concerns the number of acts. In *¡Si no vieran las mujeres!* Lope wrote a three-act play with more than 3300 verses, whereas Bretón wrote a five-act play with some 2400 verses, about two-thirds as long. The pace is far more rapid in the latter version. This spreading out of three acts into five seems to have been a constant in the **refundiciones** of the early nineteenth century; the contemporary critic, Larra, says as much in one of his articles¹⁵, and of Bretón's ten adaptations all but one are turned into five acts.

III. Tirso de Molina's *Desde Toledo a Madrid*

The reader will find the same pattern in Bretón's adaptation of Tirso's play that he found in his adaptation of *Si no vieran las mujeres!* In Tirso's play the opening speech of Don Baltasar runs some 200 lines, which Bretón reduces to 85 lines of simpler language. A similar simplification takes place in Act I, scene III of Tirso (Acto I, scene III of Bretón), in the verses beginning *Qué divina perfección!* Tirso's Don Baltasar pronounces twenty verses of conceits comparing the light of day with the light emanating from Doña Mayor, to the detriment of the former, whereas Bretón's Baltasar pronounces ten verses of less complicated thought.

It is worthwhile taking Act III, scene V of Tirso and comparing it with Act IV, scene V of Bretón. The latter preserves the humor of Tirso, who takes the *ca-* in the names of Carreño the man servant, and Casilda the girl servant and builds up a word-play of *cavar*, *Ca*, *Casilda*, *asilda*, *casildera*, *casildar*, *casí*, *caso*, *cabildo*, *Casildicos*, and the *Ca-Ca* of Carreño-Casilda, or *caca*.

Carreño

Del *ca* que mi nombre saca
y del *ca* que en Casilda vemos,
no es milagro que engendremos
un niño que diga *caca*.

Casilda tells Carreño, the *gracioso*, he is a "señor tahir de vocablos," and she adds: "Algo espeso es el conceto." Bretón reproduces the jollity of Tirso, which is obviously to his liking, but he changes the play on *caca* to *casar*:

de lo cual vengo a sacar
que por decreto divino
tu *Ca* y mi *Ca* en el camino
buscan el *ca* de *casar*.

"Algo espeso es el conceto": the thought is somewhat slimy. Apparently for Bretón, who applied neo-classical principles to his adaptations, a word like *caca* is inadmissible in the theater. One must exercise care in this question of propriety, however, since in *Si no vieran las mujeres!* he puns with the word *pechera*, which refers both to commoners and a woman's breasts.

IV. Calderón's *Fuego de Dios en el querer bien*

The original play by Calderón: The thread of Calderón's argument is most intricate. "Gran maraña urdiendo vas" says a servant girl, whose statement sums up the action of the play. There are veiled women, secret letters, and innumerable equivocations. So great is the confusion that just twenty-eight verses before the end of the play three men have their swords drawn and are prepared to duel to the death over mistaken offenses against

honor. But in the last few lines it turns out that Don Alvaro will marry Doña Beatriz and Don Juan will marry Doña Angela, and all is well.

Bretón's **refundición**: Bretón's adaptation, which was staged in 1847, some twenty years after the other **refundiciones**, throws a different light from theirs on the development of his theater. The plots of both his and Calderón's plays are roughly the same. Bretón's **gracioso**, Hernando, says:

¿Qué diablos de casa es ésta?
 Anoche toda alborotos,
 alguaciles y pendencias;
 hoy toda paz y descanso (Act II, scene 1)

En Madrid, señor, estamos,
 y en Madrid hay mucha maula.¹⁶ (Act III, scene viii)

Bretón simplifies somewhat the Calderonian **enredo** but not nearly as much as he had simplified Lope's and Tirso's back in the 1820's. He employs a variety of verse forms, e.g., the **silva en pareados** of Act III, scenes I-IV, and the **décimas** of Act I, scene VIII. This metrical diversity places him closer to the authors of the seventeenth century than to the neo-classical Moratín. Another sign of Bretón's proximity to Golden Age theater, specifically Calderón's, is the treatment of the **gracioso** Hernando, who is the same low figure of fun he was in the original comedy: he is an object of debasement.¹⁷

One footnote¹⁸ to the 1850 edition of *Fuego de Dios en el querer bien* shows Bretón's post-neoclassical attitude towards the questionable jokes of the Golden Age. Calderón's **gracioso**, Hernando, uses the phrases **soltar un preso**, which puns on **soltar un pedo**, whereupon Don Juan calls Hernando a vile villain and boxes his ears. Bretón converts the offensive phrase into an innocent statement, but he puts an asterisk next to it indicating a footnote. Here is the footnote:

(*) El original dice así:

.....
 ¿Quién ha de tener paciencia
 para esperar un gran lance,
 y salir con tanta flema
 con **soltar un preso**, cosa
 que cualquier dama le suelta?

Este es un chiste mal sonante, pero muy propio de un lacayo, y no carece de oportunidad. Por otra parte, nada menos se necesitaba para justificar la cólera de don Juan, de la cual naturalmente procede uno de los incidentes más dramáticos e ingeniosos de la fábula. Pero el refundidor, que tiene que habérselas con un público menos indulgente, no se atrevió a conservar este epigrama, temeroso de que algún benévolo espectador se lo atribuyese; y confiesa no haber hallado medio para suplirlo con una réplica que, sin ser indecente, tuviese bastante gracia para hacer reír, y bastante insolencia para merecer calabazadas.

In his early theater Bretón had to face friary censorship ("censura frailería") and the constraints of neoclassicism; in his later theater, for example, his *refundición* of Calderón, he had to contend with a less extreme censorship and the tastes of a Victorian audience.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ *Obras*. 5 volumes (Madrid: Imprenta Nacional, 1850-1851). I shall refer to this edition as *Obras 1850*.

² See *Obras 1850*, I, 1; I, 47, 161; and I, 169.

³ For a succinct explanation of the *refundiciones* in the eighteenth century, see Juan Luis Alborg, *Historia de la literatura española, Siglo XVIII* (Madrid: Gredos, 1972), pp.593-599. For an English translation of Bretón's footnote, see John A. Cook, *Neo-Classic Drama in Spain* (Dallas: SMU Press, 1959), p.505.

⁴ Additional elements are French *vaudeville*, the plays of Scribe, Romantic dramas, and the many French authors Bretón translated.

⁵ Here is a list of the ten *refundiciones* by Bretón:

TITLE	ORIGINAL AUTHOR	YEAR STAGED	NUMBER OF ACTS
<i>Los Tellos de Meneses</i>	Lope de Vega	1826	Five
<i>La carcelera de sí misma</i> * (Original title: <i>Peor está que estaba</i>)	Calderón	1826	Five
<i>¡Qué de apuros en tres horas!</i>	A. Coello	1826	Five
<i>El príncipe y el villano</i> * (Original title: <i>La fuerza del natural</i>)	A. Moreto	1827	Five
<i>No hay cosa como callar</i> *	Calderón	1827	Five
<i>¡Si no vieran las mujeres!</i>	Lope de Vega	1828	Five
<i>Las paredes oyen</i> *	Ruiz de Alarcón	1829	Five
<i>Con quien vengo vengo</i> *	Calderón	1831	Five
<i>Desde Toledo a Madrid</i> (co-adapter: Hartzzenbusch)	Tirso de Molina	1847	Five
<i>Fuego de Dios en el querer bien</i>	Calderón	1847	Four

The five titles with an asterisk exist only in manuscript and are to be found in Madrid: see Manuel Bretón de los Herreros, *Obras*, 5 vols. (Madrid: Imprenta de Miguel Ginesta, 1883-1884), I, xx-xxix.

¡Si no vieran las mujeres! and *Fuego de Dios en el querer bien* can be read in *Obras 1850*, I and IV. For the other three *refundiciones*, see *Los Tellos de Meneses*, comedia de Lope de Vega refundida por D. Manuel Bretón de los Herreros (Madrid: Imprenta de M. Galiano, 1863); ¡*Qué de apuros en tres horas!*, refundición de la comedia de D. Antonio Coello (Madrid: Impr. de Galiano, 1863); and *Desde Toledo a Madrid*, comedia del maestro Tirso de Molina, refundida (Madrid: Imprenta de S. Omaña, 1849).

⁶ Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* was recently adapted for the television theater, with the scene set in 1910. Bretón's simplifications include no such chronological change.

⁷ Isabela replies with a similar speech of 30 verses and Federico answers her in 50 more verses. There is no such repartee in Bretón.

⁸ One frequently encounters the idea of translations and adaptations as a source of money; see, for example, Julio Cejador y Frauca, *Historia de la lengua y literatura castellana* (Madrid: Tip. de la Revista de Archivos, 1918), Tomo VI, p. 406: "Desde esta fecha hasta 1831, hizo 62 traducciones del francés en prosa y verso y diez arreglos o refundiciones del antiguo teatro y obras de encargo, todo ello pro pane lucrando."

⁹ Although Bretón died in 1873, he exercised control over the 1883 edition of his works through his *Plan Para Una Nueva Edición de Mis Obras*: see *Obras* (Madrid: Miguel Ginesta, 1883-1884), Vol. I, lxii.

¹⁰ In his review of another author's adaptation of Calderón's *No siempre lo peor es cierto*, Bretón explicitly declares his dislike of *conceptismo*; see Bretón, *Obra dispersa* (Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 1965), I, 243.

¹¹ The word *pechera*, which means a taxpayer, thus a plebeian or commoner, also refers to a woman's breast: *fam.* "Parte exterior del pecho, especialmente en la mujeres." This kind of double-entendre is rare in Bretón's works as we read them today, although from occasional critical remarks I gather there may have been more of them in the plays when originally performed.

¹² *Obras 1850*, I, 1: see the footnote.

¹³ In his *Arte de la declamación*, Bretón has written a sentence showing his transition from Moratín to a more ample, Lopesque-like theater; see *Obras escogidas* (Paris: Baudry, 1853), II, xxxvi.

¹⁴ Other evidence will show that Bretón was being influenced by Golden Age theater: see Chapter 5 of my forthcoming book, *Manuel Bretón de los Herreros* (Boston: Twayne Press), which discusses the *talle* and gallantry of his plays, and his approach to the theme of love.

¹⁵ Mariano José de Larra, "A cada paso un acaso." Larra derogates the *refundiciones* and adds: "si consiste en decir cinco actos en vez de tres jornadas." Later, however, he praises the *refundiciones* of Dionisio Solís.

¹⁶ Several Bretonian characters will use the word *maula* to describe what is going on in a play; see, for example, *Achaques a los vicios*, *El Ingenuo*, *La redacción de un periódico*; and see Silvia Novo Blankenship Chaskin, *Social Satire in the Works of Manuel Bretón de los Herreros*, Doctoral Dissertation (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1969), p.38. This *maula* appears to be the *maraña* of Golden Age theater.

¹⁷ See Charles David Ley, *El gracioso en el teatro de la Península* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1954), p.39: "... y por la misma razón Calderón, ... sigue una tendencia contraria a la de Lope y busca envilecer todo lo más posible la figura del gracioso cargándola con gran número de vicios cómicos."

¹⁸ There are three footnotes all told, on pp.313, 314, and 329 of the *Obras 1850*, vol. IV. One has an interesting commentary on bloodlettings; the other two, like many footnotes of the 1850 edition, help the reader understand Bretón's aesthetics and attitude towards the theater.