

THE TRAGEDIES OF MARÍA ROSA GÁLVEZ DE CABRERA (1768-1806)

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SUMMARY

The aim of this thesis is to advance an understanding of the author's corpus of tragic plays, eight in total. Chapter One explores continuities and changes in Gálvez's critical fortunes in the last two hundred years. Chapter Two examines the author's commitment to write tragedy in the light of notions of the genre in eighteenth-century Spain, situating Gálvez's innovation and experimentation with generic constants both ancient and modern in the context of the contemporary debate on theatre.

The remaining eight chapters are dedicated to analyses of aesthetic, structural and thematic elements of each play: *Ali-Bek*, set in Mameluke Egypt, whose ensemble cast of characters and uncompromising portrayal of cruelty and barbarity perplexed contemporary critics; *Saúl*, which dramatised the final hours in the life of this Biblical figure in the uni-personal *melólogo* format; *Safo*, which depicted the Greek poet's passionate yet solemn act of suicide; *Florinda*, which interrogated the legend of the Moorish Conquest of Spain; *Blanca de Rossi*, in which elements of the emergent Gothic style animated the familiar tragic dilemma between public duty and personal honour; *Amnón*, which recast the Biblical story of Amnon and Tamar and engaged with earlier treatments by Calderón de la Barca and Tirso de Molina; *Zinda* which addressed issues of slavery, colonialism and nationhood, drawing on elements and techniques associated with sentimental comedy; *La delirante*, in which Gálvez approached the historical account of the rivalry between Tudor and Stuart, through the character of Leonor, Mary Stuart's daughter.

The systematic analysis of these plays reveals Gálvez as a self-conscious and skilful tragedian, able to fuse the conventions of ancient models of tragedy with the devices of new dramatic and literary forms to create a body of tragic writing which is at once experimental, innovative and essentially classicising.

CONTENTS

Introduction		1
Chapter One	Gálvez's Critical Fortunes	6
Chapter Two	Gálvez and the Fortunes of Tragedy	24
Chapter Three	<i>Ali-Bek</i>	41
Chapter Four	<i>Saúl</i>	63
Chapter Five	<i>Safo</i>	80
Chapter Six	<i>Florinda</i>	93
Chapter Seven	<i>Blanca de Rossi</i>	110
Chapter Eight	<i>Amnón</i>	127
Chapter Nine	<i>Zinda</i>	143
Chapter Ten	<i>La delirante</i>	156
Conclusion		172
Bibliography		175

ABBREVIATIONS

A.H.N.	Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid
A.H.P.M.	Archivo Histórico de Protocolos, Madrid
A.M.M.	Archivo Municipal, Madrid
B.N.M.	Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid
B.M.M.	Biblioteca-Histórica Municipal, Madrid
Caños	Teatro de los Caños del Peral, Madrid
Cruz	Teatro de la Cruz, Madrid
Príncipe	Teatro del Príncipe, Madrid

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Works are cited for the first time in full, and are referred to subsequently by short title.

SPELLING

Original spelling, accentuation and punctuation have been preserved.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on the eight original tragedies of the Málaga-born poet and playwright María Rosa Gálvez de Cabrera. These plays form part of an extensive and varied literary oeuvre which established the author's reputation as the most prominent woman writer of her generation:

Sea qual se fuese el lugar que esta ilustre dama debe ocupar entre los demás poetas de la nacion, no se la podrá privar del mérito de dar á su sexo un grande exemplo, cultivando las nobles artes, y de ser, sino la única poetisa española, á lo menos la principal y más fecunda.¹

Gálvez composed a number of original poems and dramatic works in addition to translating several French plays for the Spanish stage, and succeeded in publishing most of this body of writing before her untimely death in 1806.² The first works to appear in print, an original tragedy, a short comic piece and two translations, were included in the six-volume anthology of contemporary drama *Teatro nuevo español*.³ The subsequent three-volume *Obras poéticas*, printed at the Imprenta Real, contained the most substantial and significant corpus of Gálvez's writing and comprised thirteen original poems, one translation and nine original plays; however it did not mark the culmination of her literary endeavours.⁴ Three further poems were printed during the author's lifetime, two in contemporary literary journals and the other as an occasional poem in a separate edition, while two original and two translated comedies exist only in manuscript form.⁵ A series of letters written by or on behalf of Gálvez to her patrons, the censors and contemporary critics, in addition to documentary evidence which confirms that ten of her plays were performed in Madrid in 1801 and 1805, complete the picture of an energetic writer who participated actively in the literary culture of her day.⁶

Chapter One traces Gálvez's critical fortunes from the first contemporary responses to her writing, through to the most recent modern scholarship, analysing changes and continuities in the ways that critics and historians have understood the author and her work. I argue that the often disdainful tone adopted by contemporary commentators originated in their consternation at the ambition and complexity of the author's corpus of tragic writing. Although modern scholars have rediscovered the pertinence of Gálvez's poetic and dramatic subject matter, they have often overlooked

the significance of her experiments and innovations in tragedy, a genre which her contemporaries considered to be the noblest dramatic form, and one for which women writers were thought ill-suited.

Chapter Two begins with a brief consideration of documentary evidence and other writings in which the author outlined a commitment to revive the fortunes of Spanish tragedy. I contend that through her work, Gálvez aimed to construct an identity not as a woman, but as a writer and, above all, as a tragedian. In the rest of this section, I explore notions of tragedy in eighteenth-century Spain, and situate Gálvez's engagement with generic constants both ancient and modern in the context of the contemporary debate on theatre.

Chapter Three examines *Ali-Bek*, which triggered a venomous attack from a contemporary critic and which continues to perplex scholars, who tend to regard it as the author's least successful play. Using the specific criticisms of the contemporary reviewer as a starting point, I argue that Gálvez's deliberate subversion of the concept of tragic hero in this play has been consistently misinterpreted and undervalued. As such, this tragedy might be regarded as one of the author's most richly experimental works.

Chapters Four and Five are dedicated to *Saúl* and *Safo* respectively. My examination of these one-act dramas, often dismissed as minor pieces, in part draws inspiration from the author's treatment of the act of suicide in each. To a certain extent both works engaged with new developments in musico-dramatic genres, while remaining firmly anchored in the conventions of Greek lyric tragedy.

In Chapter Six I argue that Gálvez's determination to experiment with the conventions of tragedy prompted her to overturn the myth of the national hero in *Florinda*. Although the legendary account of the invasion of the Moors was firmly entrenched in Spanish folklore, Gálvez was the first writer to place Florinda at the centre of the narrative. This leads to a novel reinterpretation of a fundamental narrative of Spanish national identity.

Chapter Seven is dedicated to *Blanca de Rossi*, which dramatises the virtuous suicide of an historical figure whose place in the literary imagination of Italy can be compared with that of Florinda and Spain. I consider the ways in which Gálvez injected elements of the emergent Gothic style into the ancient tragic dilemma between public duty and personal honour facing the patriotic heroine.

Chapter Eight compares Gálvez's reworking of the Biblical story of Amnon and

Tamar with earlier treatments by Pedro Calderón de la Barca and Tirso de Molina. I demonstrate that in her treatment of the subject matter, Gálvez reshaped the nature and role of the characters of Amnón and Thamar to create a more human-centred view of personal destiny than that of her predecessors and to redefine Amnón as a fully rounded tragic protagonist.

Chapter Nine analyses *Zinda*. As in *Ali-Bek*, Gálvez's understanding of the relationship between European and non-European cultures appears to have influenced her choice of theme in this work. *Zinda*, unique in Gálvez's tragic oeuvre in terms of the resolution of the plot, addressed issues of slavery, colonialism and nationhood and also engaged with new models of sentimental drama.

Chapter Ten explores *La delirante*, in which the historical account of the rivalry between Queen Elizabeth I of England and Mary Stuart spurred Gálvez to create a tragedy of unprecedented power in her oeuvre. This disturbing portrayal of the demise of Leonor, Mary's innocent daughter, a shadowy historical character never previously dramatised for the Spanish stage, resonates with a brand of passion and pathos which is a hallmark of the author's tragic writing and which is here at its most intense.

Where not otherwise indicated, the analyses of these plays are based on the original printed texts. Although there are extant manuscript copies of *Ali-Bek*, *Saúl*, *Safo*, *Florinda* and *Blanca de Rossi*, they are not known to present significant variations from the definitive printed editions.⁷ The order of the chapters follows the order in which the works first appeared in print. Thus *Ali-Bek*, printed in the *Teatro nuevo español* in 1801 is examined first and the remaining plays are treated according to the sequence in which they were printed in volumes II and III of the *Obras poéticas* of 1804.⁸

¹ *Minerva, o el revisor general*, II.11 (1806), pp.49-51, reproduced in Manuel Serrano y Sanz, 'Gálvez', in *Apuntes para una biblioteca de escritoras españolas (desde 1401 al 1833)*, Madrid, 1975, vol. 269, p.455. This measured but apparently sincere praise of Gálvez's artistic achievements formed the preamble to a critique of her 'Oda en elogio de la marina española', Madrid, 1806, by an anonymous author [Pedro María Olive?], see Chapter One note 13 below. Gálvez died on October 2 the same year and this was the last contemporary critical assessment of her work.

² The 'partida de defunción' is reproduced in Serrano y Sanz, *Apuntes*, p.445. Testamento de Doña María Rosa de Gálvez, mujer de Don Joseph Cabrera Ramírez en 30 de setiembre de 1806, A.H.P.M., Simón Ruiz, Protocolo 21429, 1805-1806, unpaginated.

³ *Ali-Bek. Tragedia original en cinco actos, Catalina, o la bella labradora. Comedia en tres actos: traducida del francés, Un loco hace ciento. Comedia en un acto en prosa para servir de fin de fiesta, El califa de Bagdad. Ópera cómica en un acto in Teatro nuevo español*, Madrid, 1801, V. Although *El califa de Bagdad* is attributed to Gálvez in Agustín Durán's, *Inventario de la librería que fue del Excmo. Sr. Don Agustín Durán comprada por el gobierno de S.M. con destino a la Biblioteca Nacional*, Madrid, 1865, some scholars believe it was translated by Eugenio de Tapia. See René Andioc and Mireille Coulon, *Cartelera teatral madrileña del siglo XVIII (1708-1808)*, Toulouse, 1996, p.890 n.97, for a discussion of extant archival evidence relating to the translator of the play, and Julia Bordiga Grinstein, *Dramaturgas españolas de fines del siglo XVIII y principios del siglo XIX. El caso de María Rosa de Gálvez*, (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania), 1996, pp.123-126, for a summary of bibliographic references to the work and its Spanish translator. In the absence of any conclusive archival evidence, and in the light of the ironic allusion to the play in a letter to Gálvez printed in the *Memorial literario, instructivo y curioso de la Corte de Madrid*, IV.35 (1805), pp.378-382, 'Nos acordamos de aquella letra del *Califa de Bagdad*, (p.379), I consider the play as part of Gálvez's oeuvre.

⁴ María Rosa Gálvez, *Obras poéticas*, Madrid, 1804.

⁵ 'Viage al Teyde' in *Varietades de ciencias literatura y artes*, II.17 (1805), pp.301-308; 'Oda en elogio de las fumigaciones de Morvó, establecidas en España a beneficio de la humanidad, de orden del Excelentísimo Señor Príncipe de la Paz' in *Minerva*, III.52 (1806), pp.3-10; *Oda en elogio de la marina española*, Madrid, 1806. See Francisco Aguilar Piñal, *Índice de las poesías publicadas en los periódicos españoles del siglo XVIII*, Madrid, 1981, pp.179, 213; B.M.M., Ms. 1-74-4, *La familia a la moda, comedia en verso en tres actos*; B.M.M., Ms. 1-28-14, *Las esclavas amazonas, comedia en tres actos*. See note 6 below for details of manuscript copies of the two translated comedies.

⁶ Many of these documents are reproduced in full or in part in Serrano y Sanz, *Apuntes*, pp.443-456. See Chapters Three and Five below, for information relating to the 1801 performances of Gálvez's tragedies *Ali-Bek* and *Safo* respectively. See Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, for details of the performances of *Bión*, *Catalina o la bella labradora*, *El califa de Bagdad*, *Las esclavas amazonas*, *La familia a la moda*, and *Un loco hace ciento* in 1801 and 1805. The important researches of these theatre historians have also revealed evidence of two performed plays not previously known to have been translated by Gálvez: *La dama colérica o Novia impaciente, comedia en prosa, en un acto*, Barcelona, n.d., performed at the Caños 30-31 May, 2 October 1806 and at the Príncipe 15-16 November 1806 and 15-16 June 1807, see Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, pp.531-533, 539, 596 n.22, 679, 896 n.184; B.M.M., Ms., 120-16, *La intriga epistolar. Comedia en tres actos en verso. Traducida libremente del*

francés y arreglada a nuestro Teatro, see Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, pp.495, 745, 907 n.352. *La dama colérica*, a translation of Charles-Guillaume Etienne, *La jeune femme colère*, Paris, 1804, is traditionally attributed to Luciano Francisco Comella, see Emilio Cotarelo y Mori, *Estudios sobre la historia del arte escénico en España. III. Isidoro Máiquez y el teatro de su tiempo*, Madrid, 1902, p.237. *La intriga epistolar* is thought to be an adaptation of Phillipe-François-Nazaire Fabre d'Eglantine, *L'intrigue epistolaire*, Paris, 1792. See Francisco Lafarga (ed.), *El teatro europeo en la España del siglo XVIII*, Lleida, 1997, pp.248, 263-264 for details of manuscript and printed copies of both plays. See Chapter One note 24 below for a list of posthumous editions and performances of Gálvez's plays.

⁷ See Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, pp.329-331, 353.

⁸ Modern scholars have speculated on the date of composition of Gálvez's poetry and plays. In the absence of any conclusive documentary evidence it is only possible to establish a very general chronological framework for the creation of her oeuvre. On this, see especially Joseph R. Jones, 'María Rosa de Gálvez: Notes for a Biography', *Dieciocho*, 18 (1995), pp.173-86 (p.177-178), and Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, pp.42-48, 56-69.

CHAPTER ONE

GÁLVEZ'S CRITICAL FORTUNES

Gálvez and her Contemporaries 1801-1806

Given the variety and extent of her literary output, the reactions of her contemporaries to Gálvez's work are vital in revealing the way in which the author's writing was first received and judged. However, it is important to situate this critical attention in the context of a general and persistent marginalisation of women's writing throughout the eighteenth century in Spain.¹ In commentaries on the author's poetry and drama, praise was often tempered by an assumption of the limited creative talents of female authors. In the review of *Ali-Bek*, the first contemporary assessment of one of Gálvez's original compositions, the anonymous critic prefaced a cursory and disdainful examination of the tragedy itself with a lengthy, cliché-ridden discourse on women and writing.² Other reviewers of Gálvez's work engaged more subtly with the debate, referring incidentally and in more measured, less condemnatory tones, to the author's status as woman writer. However, this difference of degree does not mask the shared belief among critics that women were essentially ill-equipped for higher forms of literary endeavour.³

Like the reviewer of *Ali-Bek*, Manuel José Quintana introduced his analysis of Gálvez's *Obras poéticas* by addressing the question of female participation in the literary world.⁴ Quintana's article is the more stylish and more subtly argued of the two, as might be expected from an accomplished man of letters.⁵ Yet where the earlier article made explicit the critic's opinions regarding female authors, Quintana's commentary was double-edged. His sardonic remarks and equivocation in evaluating the status of women writers seem designed to disguise intrinsically cynical views behind a smoke-screen of contradictory observations and obfuscation.

At the outset of the article, Quintana appeared to favour the participation of women and rejected the currency of what he termed, 'La cuestión de si las mujeres deben o no dedicarse a las letras' as both malicious and superfluous. However, in a quick about turn, he reasoned that women writers did not pose a threat as there were so few of them and he described the potential growth in their numbers as 'el contagio', evoking imagery of disease and thereby demonstrating his disdain. Pursuing this metaphor and clearly addressing the male readers, he reassured them that there was nothing to fear: women

were employed in ‘tantas otras ocupaciones [...] más agradables y más análogas a su naturaleza y costumbres’ and thus the contagion was unlikely to spread. This rationale merely echoed the commonly-held opinion among men that women’s talents were naturally suited to the domestic not the public sphere.

Of greater subtlety was Quintana’s subversion of the concept of the literary republic, which would have resonated in intellectual circles. His confidence in the continuity of the male-dominated ‘imperio de la reputación literaria’ strikes an elitist chord and betrays a deep-seated reluctance to accept the status of women as writers.⁶ However, having declared doubtful the rise of the woman of letters, Quintana abruptly changed course once more and paid tribute to those educated women who had defied male expectations (‘los que les niegan la posibilidad de sobresalir’) by excelling in the arts and sciences. Perhaps alluding to the polemic on women, fashion and luxury which had featured in the periodical press in recent times, Quintana suggested that it was less harmful and ridiculous for women to cultivate ‘su razón’ and ‘su espíritu’ than to spend time ‘en disipaciones frívolas’.⁷ By equating femininity and frivolity Quintana criticised patterns of female conduct and appeared to encourage women to take up the more noble pursuit of writing.

In this puzzling introduction to the review of Gálvez’s work, Quintana rehearsed core elements of the debate on women writers in his own elusive literary style, creating an ambiguous context in which to set an equally enigmatic analysis of the *Obras poéticas*. The tortuous blend of approval and censure and his failure to discuss specific features of her writing in his review suggest that for Quintana, Gálvez’s work exemplified the fundamentally limited nature of women’s literary talents. He qualified and restricted even the most tentative compliments of her compositions, for example, observing that Gálvez showed ‘señales de un talento distinguido’, in ‘no pocos parajes’. The double negative here is a fine illustration of his dogged determination to avoid making a clear, positive statement of her worth, a technique which he employed with consistency throughout. His most fulsome praise, that any (male) poet would have been happy to claim certain verses of ‘La campaña de Portugal’ as his own, merely assumed and reaffirmed male literary superiority in the arts. Thus while apparently praising Gálvez’s achievements, he sought to remind the reader that this success could not be measured on the same scale as that of men.

There are further indications of the gendered nature of Quintana's criticism. Although he endorsed Gálvez's poetic style ('claro y puro'), versification ('fácil y fluída') and choice of metaphors ('agradables'), he found her choice of poetic conceits though 'generalmente dulces', not always 'fuertes y escogidos'. Thus Quintana highlighted the shortcomings in Gálvez's poetic technique by opposing fluidity, purity, charm and sweetness to power and judgement, thereby insinuating that the absence of these masculine qualities was a significant flaw. In this observation and in the presumption that Gálvez would be honoured by his cautious commendation of her lyrical verse, Quintana established certain boundaries of expectation for women's writing and marked out and claimed areas of literary territory which corresponded solely to men.

The luke-warm assessment of Gálvez's poetry was matched by a largely unfavourable analysis of her drama. Quintana's definition of tragedy as a difficult genre to master implied that Gálvez had underestimated and therefore failed the task she had set herself.⁸ Although he considered it grossly pedantic to list defects in the plays, he delivered some damning general criticisms, pronouncing the tragedies colourless and uninteresting and remarking that Gálvez had sometimes transgressed 'las leyes que [Aristotle, Luzán and Blair] han dictado'.⁹ While he conceded that several scenes in *Amnón* and the second act of *La delirante* testified to the author's 'ingenio y capacidad', for Quintana these flashes of inspiration served merely to illuminate the overwhelming mediocrity of her work in this noble, circumscribed genre.¹⁰

In forgoing a detailed analysis of Gálvez's drama, Quintana implied that the compositions did not merit critical scrutiny. Throughout the article he portrayed the *Obras poéticas* as no more than a literary oddity, the product of an unrestrained and singular feminine ambition. For Quintana, Gálvez's unconventional energy and boldness of approach to her writing had blinded her judgement and driven her to over-reach herself. He concluded that she should have reduced her dramatic output in order to guarantee the quality of her writing, but this comment only partially disguised the underlying insinuation that she should never have attempted tragedy. His final endorsement of Gálvez's oeuvre stressed the curiosity value which would inevitably attach to her work:

De todos modos nuestra literatura, que entre las mujeres que se habían dedicado a componer versos, no contaba sino escritoras de coplas, puede desde ahora darse el parabién de tener un talento que al interés que llama hacia su sexo, reúne

el mérito de haber producido un buen número de rasgos verdaderamente poéticos, que no sólo le harán respetable mientras viva, sino que pasarán su nombre a la posteridad.¹¹

That he should consider respectability to represent the height of Gálvez's literary aspirations is further proof of Quintana's determination to demarcate and distinguish masculine and feminine spheres of literary ambition in this article. His stern review of the *Obras poéticas* served to diminish the scale of Gálvez's achievement and sideline the significance of her contribution.

Quintana's voice may resonate with authority now, but his criticism was only one, highly subjective, form of commentary on Gálvez's work.¹² Although his opinions offer an insight into the type of prejudice which threatened to block the author's full participation in the literary world, there is evidence to suggest that Gálvez was more preoccupied with securing the good opinion of the censor and her patrons than that of the critic.¹³ Several of the extant censors' reports on Gálvez's plays are of significance in that they represent more than a routine rubber-stamp of approval and reveal a glimpse of a different brand of contemporary critical response to her writing.

Santos Díez González, catedrático de poética de los Reales Estudios de San Isidro and official theatre censor, praised Gálvez's dramatic talent in clear, unambiguous terms:

he examinado la adjunta tragedia original, intitulada *Ali-Bek* compuesta por la Señora María Rosa de Gálvez, cuyo distinguido ingenio se manifiesta en esta composición que puede contarse entre las dignas, así originales como traducidas, que se han representado en los teatros públicos de esta Corte¹⁴

Furthermore, in his examination of the original plays which made up the *Obras poéticas* he offset a somewhat condescending observation of Gálvez's achievement among her female contemporaries with an intimation of the sensitivity she had brought to bear on the Biblical subject matter in *Amnón* and *Saúl*:

se trata de una muger que sin ser de aquellas Matronas Romanas discipulas del máximo Doctor de la Yglesia, San Geronimo, escribe sobre asuntos tan delicados de la Historia sagrada¹⁵

Similarly, Juan Bautista de Ezpeleta, Vicario de Madrid, not only approved for publication the same plays, but elaborated on his reasons for this decision. He pronounced himself satisfied with the plays:

que son originales, que algunas se han representado en nuestros teatros con aceptacion del publico, que son recomendables por su imbencion, language, decoro y magestad; que la autora hà sabido escoger los asuntos que hà puesto en scena y hà conseguido manifestar su numen poética¹⁶

Although these fragments of opinion were never designed to reach a wider public, the distinctly positive tone of Díez González and Ezpeleta's reports allows a different perspective on Gálvez's *Obras poéticas* and suggests alternative ways in which her work was understood and appreciated by her contemporaries. Ezpeleta's commendation of Gálvez's stagecraft contrasts with specific criticisms which Quintana developed, while Díez González's comments can be read as an attempt, however chauvinistic by modern standards, to applaud what he regarded as a genuine achievement rather than to sneer at the low expectations of women's writing.

There is a similar sincerity of tone in the surviving critical reviews of Gálvez's poetry. The anonymous author of the assessment of the 'Oda en elogio de la marina española' did not hesitate to place Gálvez among the most illustrious male poets in the Spanish Parnassus and stated at the outset of the piece:

No es poco lauro para las armas españolas el que entre tantos ilustres poetas como han cantado su honor y gloria, se halle una poetisa conocida ya en el Parnaso español por otras muchas composiciones en los géneros más sublimes de la poesía.¹⁷

Although Gálvez's work and success was situated within a gender-specific context, the intention here was not to diminish her achievement but to enhance it. This critic, like Díez González, singled Gálvez out in order to applaud her success as a woman writer and used the 'Oda en elogio de la marina española' to demonstrate the feminine nature of her poetic talent in words which were reminiscent of Quintana's comments:

todos convendrán tambien, á lo menos así nos parece, en que reune á un talento naturalmente poético, fuego, facilidad, gracia y a veces armonía.¹⁸

In order to justify this high praise, the author included extracts from Gálvez's ode, accompanying each with detailed and positive commentary. The review contained no negative criticism and, with a flourish, concluded:

Por estas muestras podrán conocer nuestros lectores el mérito de esta composición: y si para algunos hemos sido difusos, sírvanos para excusa el gusto que hemos sentido leyéndola y volviéndola a leer.¹⁹

An equally approving, while more restrained assessment of the same poem had appeared in the *Memorial literario*. The critic also prefaced the analysis of Gálvez's ode with a comment which placed her work in the context of that of her male contemporaries. However, on this occasion, the comparison was justified. Mor de Fuentes, mentioned in the article, had composed an ode on the Battle of Trafalgar²⁰ tackling the same poetic subject as Gálvez, but from a different perspective, which led the reviewer to remark of Gálvez's ode:

Cada poeta gira a su modo el plan de su obra, y así cada cual tiene su mérito particular, es decir que esta oda, si bien no es tan sublime como las que ya hemos extractado, no por eso deja de merecer un buen lugar en el aprecio de los literatos. Justo es tributar a cada uno el elogio que le corresponde, y nosotros tomamos con más gusto la pluma para notar las bellezas de una obra, que para manifestar sus defectos.²¹

This approach is unique among contemporary criticism of Gálvez's oeuvre. In focusing on the ode, rather than its author and in refusing to waste ink by identifying the shortcomings of the piece, the critic conveys a sense of literary merit while avoiding excessive unction.

Having considered responses to Gálvez's printed drama and poetry it is important to complement this survey of contemporary reactions to the author's work with an examination of a rare performance review, that of *Las esclavas amazonas*.²² While this article is unusual in that it did not use the gender of the author as a critical framework, presumptions about the nature of woman were covertly expressed through the reviewer's analysis of the female lead character, Hipólita, whose resolve and behaviour the critic found exaggerated and unbelievable. It is paradoxical that the reviewer found the plot hackneyed and derivative, and yet failed to recognise the originality of Gálvez's unconventional heroine, thereby dismissing an innovative aspect of characterisation in

this comedy.²³ Of course, the assertion that many in the audience had also found Hipólita an unrealistic character may have been a rather obvious critical ploy. Nevertheless, if true, it suggests that the experimental nature of Gálvez's writing was conspicuous in performance, and that her innovation was deliberate and self-conscious.

It is clear that Gálvez's work was neither entirely neglected nor roundly condemned by her contemporaries. In fact, critics engaged subtly with Gálvez's writing, drawing on preconceived notions about female literary ability to highlight perceived strengths and shortcomings in Gálvez's compositions, covertly prescribing the limits of her talent. Thus the poems were generally praised for their graceful, lyrical expressiveness, while the plays were criticised for containing defects which revealed the author's alleged inability to master a higher literary form. Areas of experimentation and innovation in Gálvez's dramas were persistently misread as examples of her failure to follow the example of others and thus an important and exciting aspect of the author's dramaturgy was underrated and eventually lost. Ultimately, the gender bias which distorted critical commentaries on Gálvez's work perpetuated elitism in the arts, remodelling prejudices about women's writing in general and colouring interpretations of Gálvez's oeuvre for generations.

'Vida azarosa y libertina': Gálvez, Biography and Scandal 1807-1901

Despite the revival of several of Gálvez's original dramatic compositions for publication and performance in the years following her death, scholarly interest in the author's work declined after 1806 and was replaced by a preoccupation with her biography and particularly with the more (spurious) salacious details about her life.²⁴ Questions of gender, genre and participation raised by Gálvez's contemporaries in their criticisms of her work faded into the background and her plays and poems ceased to be the principal point of reference in considerations of the author's significance.

There is no known documentary evidence to suggest that Gálvez led an unorthodox, libertine lifestyle and the original source of the pernicious and highly contentious account of her conduct remains a moot point. Antonio Alcalá Galiano, Francisco Guillén Robles, Juan P. Criado y Domínguez and Padre Francisco Blanco García must bear equal responsibility for dwelling at length on entirely undocumented anecdotes about Gálvez's relationship with Godoy.²⁵ It is futile to point out the mistakes these historians made in cataloguing Gálvez's bibliography and idle to contend with their

paltry and contemptuous assessments of her literary worth. Suffice it to say that barely thirty years after her death, the prevailing caricature of Gálvez as scurrilous ‘metre maid’ bore no resemblance to the simple, dignified portrait of her as Spanish Muse conveyed in the commemorative ode ‘A la muerte de Doña Rosa Gálvez, insigne y sola española, poetisa del tiempo presente’:

A llanto y dolor nos mueve
la muerte de aquella sola
discreta Musa española
que valía por las nueve.²⁶

Renewed Scholarly Interest in Gálvez as Woman Writer 1902-1958

Emphasis on a specious biography and a neglect of her work meant that by the turn of the nineteenth century Gálvez scholarship was at a low ebb. Manuel Serrano y Sanz’s *Apuntes para una biblioteca de escritoras españolas (desde 1401 al 1833)* not only revived Gálvez’s critical fortunes, but also revealed evidence of an extraordinary catalogue of women writers whose work had mostly passed directly into oblivion.²⁷ Serrano y Sanz’s thirteen-page entry on Gálvez comprised an overview of the author’s biography and literary career, supported by primary and secondary source material, and a bibliography of her oeuvre. Although he cited some of the nineteenth-century historians whose ill-informed work had tarnished Gálvez’s literary reputation, Serrano y Sanz distanced himself from their opinions and allowed his transcriptions of contemporary documents and inventory of the author’s oeuvre to testify to her achievement. Although it is by no means a complete account of Gálvez’s life and work, Serrano y Sanz’s study, which contains few major inaccuracies, remains an impressive digest of information and continues to serve scholars well. Although the variety and extent of Gálvez’s contribution to the literature of her day is not easily compared with that of her contemporaries in this alphabetical listing, the approach situated Gálvez within a female tradition in Spanish literature and the renewed interest in Hispanic women writers was due in no small measure to his important work.

Two early female historians clearly benefited from Serrano y Sanz’s pioneering work in their own studies on women’s literature and feminism. Gálvez was a notable omission from María del Pilar Oñate’s study of the rise of feminism in Spanish literature.²⁸ Despite describing the women writers who flourished after 1750 as ‘por lo general, feministas exaltadas’ (p.195), Oñate probably excluded Gálvez on the grounds

that there was no overt feminist agenda in the author's work. However, had she read Margarita Nelken's work, Oñate might have been tempted to investigate Gálvez further.

Nelken rehearsed some of the most sensational elements of earlier accounts of Gálvez's life in a picturesque recounting of the author's alleged amours with Godoy.²⁹ Although much of the evidence in this opinionated analysis of Gálvez's literary fame was derivative, there emerged a new emphasis on the parallels between the author's life and dramatic work which continues to influence the direction of much modern scholarship. Nelken suggested a connection between Gálvez's licentious behaviour and risqué scenes in her drama, pointing to this as a reason for the objections of the censors and the critics to certain plays.³⁰ Although this interpretation of Gálvez's critical fortunes stretched credibility and relied on partial documentary evidence, it led the author to conclude that a certain hypocrisy among Gálvez's contemporaries had contributed significantly to thwarting her greater success. In this, Nelken identified the anti-women sentiment which pervaded many contemporary and nineteenth-century responses to Gálvez's work.

In different ways, the studies of Emilio Cotarelo y Mori, on Isidoro Máiquez and the theatre, and José Subirá, on Iriarte and the *melólogo*, both of which footnoted Gálvez's dramatic oeuvre, signalled a new departure in Spanish literary history of the eighteenth century.³¹ Subirá's in-depth analysis of the elusive *melólogo* form is of particular value in placing Gálvez's *Saúl, escena tragica unipersonal* in the evolution of this peculiarly eighteenth-century tragic genre, which more than compensates for his misattribution of her piece to María de Gasca.³²

It is also important to acknowledge the impact of Ada M. Coe's catalogue of plays advertised in the Madrid periodical press between 1661 and 1819, which until very recently was the standard reference tool on this crucial aspect of theatre studies. The information collated by Coe, together with the appendices to Cotarelo's *Máiquez* and the bibliography in Serrano y Sanz's *Apuntes*, recovered much lost information about the author's work.³³ While not specifically advancing Gálvez scholarship, these studies provided the building blocks with which scholars of the next generation could begin to construct a new understanding of Gálvez's oeuvre.

Gálvez and Literary Criticism 1950-present day

The last fifty years have witnessed a proliferation of academic interest in all areas of Spanish eighteenth-century studies. Seminal investigations into social, political and

cultural life in Spain in the early modern period have expanded the field beyond recognition. However, Gálvez has not always fared well. The ground-breaking text and reception based studies of the first generation of modern scholars theorised drama in broad sweeps.³⁴ This approach necessarily involved charting the indicators of significant literary trends and differentiating between major and minor figures in the theatrical world. Gálvez was not a significant landmark on these important maps of theatre history and the often subjective, occasionally opinionated nature of some of these accounts tended to solidify the male-dominated canon.

However, new bibliographies, catalogues and dictionaries of eighteenth-century writers and their works revealed the incredible diversity of cultural activity in the period and launched the careers of a new generation of theatre historians keen to reassess the contributions of previously neglected dramatists.³⁵ These indispensable reference works placed mainstream and lesser known writers alongside one another, which in itself invited a challenge to the prevailing notion of the author as either innovator or imitator. More importantly, the burgeoning interest in feminist literary studies has stimulated a series of bibliographies of the work of Hispanic women writers and histories of Spanish women's writing which have interrogated the myth of male innovation and female imitation, implicit in contemporary criticism of Gálvez's work and present in commentaries ever since.³⁶

New Paradigms: Gálvez Scholarship since 1986

Advances in feminist literary history have informed the growing body of Gálvez scholarship in recent years. Yet in comparison with her female predecessors and, perhaps more pertinently, her male peers, Gálvez's substantial corpus of writing, together with her publishing and performance success belies a traditional feminist literary historical interpretation of the invisible female author denied access to the privileged, patriarchal world of the man of letters.³⁷ Nor had Gálvez disappeared without trace from the literary map in the years following her death, and her work needed to be re-evaluated rather than rediscovered.

The first scholar to recognise this was Eva Kahiluoto Rudat.³⁸ In the first substantial article to be dedicated to Gálvez as a playwright concerned with the aesthetic preoccupations of her time, Rudat situated the author within a specific literary and cultural context and pointed to the ways in which Gálvez's engagement with genre and

the field of literary creation was crucial to an understanding of the significance of her oeuvre. Following this lead, several studies by Daniel Whitaker, have raised the profile of Gálvez as an enlightened writer. Joseph Jones adopted a similar approach in his discussion of *Saúl*, relating Gálvez's play to the complex development of the *melólogo* form in Spain and Europe.³⁹ More recently, Whitaker has examined the ways in which the author's work engaged with contemporary social concerns, and has provided a series of stimulating thematic interpretations of several plays.⁴⁰

Elizabeth Franklin Lewis has focused on Gálvez as a woman writer. Inspired by Foucault's theory of discourse and its relationship to power, Franklin Lewis's premise in her unpublished doctoral thesis was that a dominant male discourse presented women writers with obstacles.⁴¹ Her interpretation stresses those aspects of Gálvez's poems and plays in which the struggle against this stifling discourse can best be demonstrated. In her most recent work, Franklin Lewis extends this feminist literary historical approach to a study of specific themes in Gálvez's plays approached from a gendered perspective.⁴²

Other scholars have focused on biographical matters. Joseph Jones collated previously known material in an attempt to create a chronology of Gálvez's artistic endeavours.⁴³ However the most significant advances in this area of studies have been made by Julia Bordiga Grinstein, whose unpublished doctoral dissertation remains the most substantial treatment of the author's life and work to date.⁴⁴ In her thesis, Grinstein used major archival discoveries to support new interpretations of some of Gálvez's work, suggesting that the author overcame, even drew inspiration from, the difficulties which racked her personal life in the creation of her oeuvre.

One of the most obvious and immediate outcomes of this body of research is a perceptible change in the climate of opinion about women writers in general and Gálvez in particular.⁴⁵ It is no longer possible to think in terms of a fixed group of major and minor writers since the literary canon is a concept in constant evolution whose metamorphoses are always directed by concerns of the present. Frequently no more than a token footnote in surveys of literature in the past, Gálvez has finally achieved a canonical status of sorts and is cited, occasionally in a separate subsection, in the most recent literary histories of Spain.⁴⁶ While contemporary critics held Gálvez to be an example to her sex ('a su sexo un grande ejemplo'⁴⁷), modern scholars regard her as a paradigm, an example of her sex and the regrettably still less celebrated eighteenth-century Spanish women dramatists.

This shift in emphasis has not always led to an accompanying focus on Gálvez as an individual writer with a distinct body of work. For some scholars, champions of a theorised version of theatre history, Gálvez remains an example of a dramatist whose work sits uncomfortably in both the Neoclassical and Romantic camps.⁴⁸ Yet more perplexing is the stance of those historians who, ignoring the revisionist line in women's literary studies, have been disparaging about Gálvez's literary career, insisting that she used sexual charm to gain access to powerful benefactors in the court.⁴⁹ Recent archival discoveries have laid to rest some of the more colourful fictions which have persistently contorted and obscured Gálvez's artistic achievements.⁵⁰ However, these same documents have been used to forge a new set of assumptions about the relationship between Gálvez's art and life.⁵¹ It is to be hoped that the fascinating new insights into her intimate affairs will not overshadow the wider significance of Gálvez's work and eclipse the study of her relationships with patrons and censors, theatre companies and actors, writers and print culture in general.

Why Tragedy? Rethinking Gálvez the Tragedian

In modern scholarship, as the field of gendered literary history is redefined and notions of a feminist canon give way to the concept of a series of female traditions in the history of Western creative writing, so it seems appropriate to examine Gálvez's work from a more nuanced feminist perspective which places greater emphasis on questions of genre and which does not focus exclusively on the status and subjectivity of women. At a time when eighteenth-century Spanish women writers are enjoying unprecedented scholarly attention, it is important to place work and not life at the centre of any new study of Gálvez.⁵²

In the absence of any substantial archival material, Gálvez's motivations for writing remain a matter of conjecture. However the fragmentary evidence which survives, suggests that for Gálvez, writing tragedy was a personal aspiration and challenge and an important act of literary and even national renewal. It appears that Gálvez was aware of the problems facing any ambitious tragic voice, at a moment when the genre was enjoying a mixed critical and public reception. Yet this did not deter her from composing a significant number of tragic works and from seeking to establish a high profile as a tragedian through acts of self promotion and self-defence.

Gálvez's identity and status as a tragedian, although crucial to her own perception of herself as a dramatist has not been fully explored in modern scholarship. The next chapter begins with a consideration of documentary evidence and other writings in which the author outlined a commitment to revive the fortunes of Spanish tragedy, revealing the nature of her poetic vision and the extent of her ambitions for the genre. I explore notions of tragedy in eighteenth-century Spain, and situate Gálvez's innovation and experimentation with generic constants both ancient and modern in the context of the contemporary debate on theatre.

¹ Manuel García de Villanueva Hugalde y Parra's, *Origen, épocas y progresos del teatro español: Discurso Histórico. Al que acompaña un resumen de los espectáculos, fiestas, y recreaciones que desde la más remota antigüedad se usaron entre las naciones más célebres: y un compendio de la historia general de los teatros hasta la era presente*, Madrid, 1802, illustrated this tendency to marginalise women writers. He compiled an extensive list of eighteenth-century Spanish male authors, yet despite acknowledging the success of their female counterparts named only seven, of whom three were active in the eighteenth century. The nonchalant 'etc.' which ended this rather half-hearted attempt to pay tribute to female authorship in Spain is indicative of a resistance to reconstruct the predominantly male canon of national writers (p.318). Modern bibliographies testify to the extraordinary number of Hispanic women poets and playwrights who, although present in print and performance, were almost entirely absent from contemporary critical literature. See below note 36.

² This review is discussed below in Chapter 3.

³ In 1786, sixty years after the publication of Feijoo's 'Defensa de las mujeres', the debate on woman's intellect was reopened in the papers which Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, Josefa Amar y Borbón and Francisco Cabarrús wrote on the subject of the admission of women as members of the Economic Society of Madrid. These important treatises encapsulated the principal arguments of a debate which resonated throughout Gálvez's lifetime. For modern scholarship on this see, for example, Sally-Ann Kitts, *The Debate on the Nature, Role and Influence of Woman in Eighteenth-century Spain*, Lewiston, 1995; Elizabeth M. Franklin, 'Feijoo, Josefa Amar y Borbón and the Feminist Debate in Eighteenth-century Spain', *Dieciocho*, 12 (1989), pp.183-203; Edward V. Coughlin, 'The Polemic on Feijoo's "Defensa de las mujeres"', *Dieciocho*, 9 (1986), pp.74-85.

⁴ *Varietades* II, 1.3 (1805) pp.159-164, reproduced in Albert Dérozier, *Manuel Josef Quintana et la naissance du libéralisme en Espagne*, Paris, 1970, II, pp.560-562.

⁵ See Dérozier, *Quintana*.

⁶ See Joaquín Álvarez Barrientos, 'Sobre la edición de 1788 de la *República literaria* de Diego de Saavedra Fajardo' in *El siglo que llaman ilustrado. Homenaje a Francisco Aguilar Piñal*, Joaquín Álvarez Barrientos and José Checa Beltrán (eds.), Madrid, 1996, pp.55-60, especially p.59, which discusses the implications of Saavedra Fajardo's text for women's writing. In his review, Quintana's insinuation that the woman writer should be the exception and not the rule echoed some of the ideas expressed in Saavedra Fajardo's text. See also Joaquín Álvarez Barrientos, 'La republica de las letras y sus ciudadanos' in Joaquín Álvarez Barrientos, François Lopez, Inmaculada Urzainqui, *La república de las letras en la España del siglo XVIII*, Madrid, 1995, pp.7-17, and Joaquín Álvarez Barrientos, 'Cuando las letras llegaron a ser de cambio': sobre la república literaria española en el XVIII', in *De místicos, mágicos, clásicos, románticos. Homenaje a Ermanno Caldera*, Armando Siciliano (ed.), Messina, 1993, pp.33-46.

⁷ See Kitts, *Debate on Woman* and Carmen Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos del dieciocho en España*, Madrid, 1972, for a discussion of contemporary attitudes towards eighteenth-century Spanish women.

⁸ 'Son grandes sin duda alguna, y más de lo que se piensa las dificultades que tiene que vencer el poeta que actualmente se pone a escribir tragedias...', see Dérozier, *Quintana*, p.562.

⁹ ‘... el estilo de las tragedias no tiene bastante color, [...] algunos de los asuntos que ha escogido no se presentan como muy interesantes...’. *Ibid.*

¹⁰ ‘Varias escenas del *Amnón* y el acto segundo de *La delirante*, [...] manifestando su ingenio y capacidad, hacen sentir que no haya empleado exclusivamente en estas dos obras toda la aplicación y el trabajo que ha esparcido en las demás’. *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² For example, the theatre censor Casiano Pellicer, who found no evidence of Gálvez’s failure to comply with dramatic conventions in *La familia a la moda* which he declared to be ‘arreglada a las leyes del teatro’. See B.M.M., Ms. 1-74-4.

¹³ The unfavourable performance review by M[ariano de] C[arnerero] of *Las esclavas amazonas* which appeared in the *Memorial literario*, IV.31 (1805) pp.177-178, elicited a response from Gálvez in the form of a letter addressed to the editors of the *Variedades*. Gálvez explained her motives in publicly answering some of the criticisms levelled at her play, offering a valuable insight into her attitude towards literary critics, ‘pensaba no contestar á su crítica, pero porque no crean, si callo, que tienen razón, dirijo á vmds. mi respuesta, para que la inserten en su periódico, rezelosa de que los Señores Memorialistas no lo hagan en el suyo. [...] Concluyo pues suplicándoles que no hagan noticias críticas de mis obras miétras yo no se las envíe, y si no obstante se empeñan en ello, sepan desde ahora para entónces, que tendrán razón, pero yo callaré, porque no me hará fuerza en tanto que no vea el título que tienen de censores, de elogiadores’, M[aría] R[osa de] G[álvez] in *Variedades*, VII.24 (1805), pp.359-361, (pp.359, 361). See Inmaculada Urzainqui, ‘Un nuevo instrumento cultural: la prensa periódica’, in Álvarez Barrientos, Lopez, Urzainqui, *La república de las letras*, pp.125-216, for a discussion of the identities of editors and critics in the periodical press, (pp.172-181).

¹⁴ Reproduced in Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, p.330.

¹⁵ A.H.N. Consejos, leg. 5566, no. 8. Madrid, 30 August 1803.

¹⁶ A.H.N. Consejos, leg. 5566, no. 8. Madrid, 27 October 1803.

¹⁷ *Minerva*, reproduced in Serrano, *Apuntes*, p.455.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ José Mor de Fuentes, ‘El combate naval del 21 de octubre’ in *Minerva*, I (1805), pp.193-199.

²¹ *Memorial literario*, V.2 (1806), pp.49-54, reproduced in Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, pp.394-396, (pp.394-395).

²² *Memorial literario*, IV.31 (1805) pp.177-178.

²³ The reviewer of *Ali-Bek* also misread as a failure to conform to dramatic convention Gálvez’s originality and innovation in characterisation. See Chapter Three below for a discussion of this review.

²⁴ Scholars have identified several posthumous editions of *Safo* and *Saúl*: *Safo*, Valencia, 1813; *Safo y Faón o el salto de Leucades*, Cadiz, 1820; *Saúl*, Palma, 1813; *Saúl*, Valencia, 1813; *Saúl*, Valencia, 1817. See Duane Rhoades, ‘Bibliografía anotada de un olvidado género neoclásico en el teatro hispánico: “escena sola, monólogo, soliloquio, lamentación, declamación, unipersonalidad, o llámese como quisiere”’, *Revista de literatura*, LI, (1989), p.200. See also Serrano, *Apuntes*, p.453; José Subirá, *El compositor Iriarte (1750-1791) y el*

cultivo español del melólogo (melodrama), Barcelona, 1949, pp.366-367; Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, pp.147-149, 402. Both Antonio Palau y Dulcet, *Manual del librero hispanoamericano; bibliografía general española e hispanoamericana desde la invención de la imprenta hasta nuestros tiempos*, Barcelona, 1948-77, VI, p.30, and Juan P. Criado y Domínguez, *Literatas españolas del siglo XIX*, Madrid, 1889, p.102, cite an edition of Gálvez's *Un loco hace ciento*, Cádiz, 1816, reworked as an opera by D.A.S.U and with music composed by Estebán Cristiani (according to Criado y Domínguez). The following original plays were revived for performance after the author's death: *La familia a la moda*, Príncipe, 4 October 1807, see Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, pp. 541, 718, A.M. Coe, *Catálogo bibliográfico y crítico de las comedias anunciadas en los periódicos de Madrid desde 1661 hasta 1819*, Baltimore, 1935, p.95, and Cotarelo, *Máiquez*, p.685; *Las esclavas amazonas*, Príncipe, 14-18 October 1807, see Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, pp. 541, 711, and Cotarelo, *Máiquez*, p.685; *Un loco hace ciento*, Príncipe, 25-29 May and 31 May-1 June 1816, see Cotarelo, *Máiquez*, p.793. Manuscript evidence suggests that *Las esclavas amazonas* was performed in 1817, see B.M.M., Ms. 1-28-14 Apunte B and *La familia a la moda* in 1824, see B.M.M., Ms. 1-74-4, Apunte 1.

²⁵ Antonio Alcalá Galiano, *Literatura española del siglo XIX*, Vicente Llorens (trans.), Madrid, 1969 (original 1834), pp.30, 89; Francisco Guillén Robles, *Historia de Málaga y su provincia*, Málaga, 1874, p.681; Criado y Domínguez, *Literatas españolas*, pp.33-35, 102; Francisco Blanco García, *La literatura española en el siglo XIX*, Madrid, 1891, pp.43, 60.

²⁶ *Diario de Madrid*, 14 October 1806, reproduced in Serrano, *Apuntes*, p.445.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 443-456.

²⁸ María del Pilar Oñate, *El feminismo en la literatura española*, Madrid, 1938. Chapter Six, which covers the eighteenth century, discusses the work of Margarita Hickey, Josefa Amar y Borbón, Inés Joyes y Blake, María de Laborda, María de las Mercedes Gómez Castro de Aragón and Beatriz Cienfuegos, pp. 157-198.

²⁹ Margarita Nelken, *Las escritoras españolas*, Barcelona, 1930, pp.182-183.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.182.

³¹ Cotarelo, *Máiquez*, and Subirá, *Iriarte*. See above note 24.

³² Subirá, *Iriarte*, pp.366-367.

³³ Coe, *Catálogo*. See above note 24.

³⁴ John A. Cook, *Neo-Classic Drama in Spain. Theory and Practice*, Dallas, 1959; Jorge Campos, *Teatro y sociedad en España (1780-1820)*, Madrid, 1969; Ivy L. McClelland, *Spanish Drama of Pathos, 1750-1808*, Liverpool, 1970; René Andioc, *Teatro y sociedad en el Madrid del siglo XVIII*, Madrid, 1987; Joan Lynne Pataky Kosove, *The 'Comedia Lacrimosa' and Spanish Romantic Drama*, London, 1977; María Jesús García Garrosa, *La retórica de las lágrimas. La comedia sentimental española, 1751-1802*, Valladolid, 1990; Jesús Cañas Murillo, *La comedia sentimental, género español del siglo XVIII*, Cáceres, 1994.

³⁵ Francisco Aguilar Piñal, *Bibliografía de autores españoles del siglo XVIII*, Madrid, 1981-1999; Francisco Lafarga, *Las traducciones españolas del teatro francés (1700-1835)*, I: *Bibliografía de impresos*, Barcelona, 1983, and II: *Catálogo de manuscritos*, Barcelona, 1988; Jerónimo Herrera Navarro, *Catálogo de autores teatrales del siglo XVIII*, Madrid, 1993; Tomás Rodríguez Sánchez, *Dramaturgos españoles del siglo XIX*, Madrid, 1994; René Andioc and Mireille Coulon, *Cartelera*; Lafarga (ed.), *Teatro europeo*.

- ³⁶ Constance A. Sullivan, 'Las escritoras del siglo XVIII', *La literatura escrita por mujer desde la edad media hasta el siglo XVIII*, in *Breve historia feminista de la literatura española (en lengua castellana)*, in Iris M. Zavala (ed.), Madrid, 1997, IV, pp. 305-330; Carolyn L. Galerstein, *Women Writers of Spain: An Annotated Bio-bibliographical Guide*, Westport, (Connecticut), 1986; Katharina M. Wilson, *An Encyclopaedia of Continental Women Writers*, Chicago and London, 1991; Cristina Ruiz Guerrero, *Panorama de escritoras españolas*, Cadiz, 1997; Fernando Doménech, 'Barroco e ilustración. Autoras en el teatro español, siglos XVI-XVIII', in *Autoras en la historia del teatro español (1500-1994)*, Juan Antonio Hormigón (ed.), Madrid, 1996, pp.389-604.
- ³⁷ On a number of occasions in this thesis, I shall have recourse to the term 'patriarchy', often used in feminist discourse to denote a male-centred social system organised and controlled in such a way as to privilege men above women. See M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Fort Worth, 1993, pp.21, 234, and K.K. Ruthven, *Feminist Literary Studies: An Introduction*, Cambridge, 1984. See also below note 52.
- ³⁸ Eva M. Kahiluoto Rudat, 'María Rosa Gálvez de Cabrera (1768-1806) y la defensa del teatro neoclásico', *Dieciocho*, 9 (1986), pp.238-248.
- ³⁹ Joseph R. Jones, 'María Rosa de Gálvez, Rousseau, Iriarte y el melólogo en la España del siglo XVIII', *Dieciocho*, 19 (1996), pp.165-179.
- ⁴⁰ Daniel S. Whitaker, 'Los figurones literarios of María Rosa Gálvez as an Enlightened Response to Moratín's *La comedia nueva*', *Dieciocho*, 11 (1988), pp.3-14; *idem.*, 'Darkness in the Age of Light: *Amnón* of María Rosa Gálvez', *Hispanic Review*, 58 (1990), pp.439-453; *idem.*, 'A New Voice: The Rise of the Enlightened Woman in Eighteenth-Century Spain', *Continental Latin-American and Francophone Women Writers*, 11 (1990), pp.31-40; *idem.*, 'Clarissa's Sisters: The Consequences of Rape in Three Neoclassic Tragedies of María Rosa Gálvez', *Letras Peninsulares*, 5 (1992), pp.239-251; *idem.*, 'La mujer ilustrada como dramaturga: El teatro de María Rosa Gálvez' in *Actas del X Congreso de la Asociación de Hispanistas*, Antonio Vilanova (ed.), Barcelona, 1992, II, pp. 1551-1559; *idem.*, 'Absent Mother, Mad Daughter, and the Therapy of Love in *La delirante* of María Rosa Gálvez', *Dieciocho*, 16 (1993), pp.167-76; *idem.*, 'An Enlightened Premiere: The Theater of María Rosa Gálvez', *Letras Femeninas*, 19 (1993), pp.21-32; *idem.*, 'Introduction to *Safo*', *Dieciocho*, 18 (1995), pp.189-210.
- ⁴¹ Elizabeth McCoy Franklin Lewis, *Feminine Discourse and Subjectivity in the Works of Josefa Amar y Borbón, María Gertrudis Hore and María Rosa Gálvez*, (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Virginia), 1993.
- ⁴² Elizabeth Franklin Lewis, 'Breaking the Chains: Language and the Bonds of Slavery in María Rosa Gálvez's *Zinda* (1804)', *Dieciocho*, 20 (1997), pp.263-375; *idem.*, 'The Tearful Reunion of Divided Femininity in María Rosa Gálvez's Neoclassic Theater', *Letras Peninsulares*, 9 (1996-7), pp.205-216.
- ⁴³ Jones, 'María Rosa de Gálvez: Notes for a Biography'.
- ⁴⁴ Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*.
- ⁴⁵ The recent publication of a modern edition of three of Gálvez's plays testifies to the reassessment of the author as a significant figure in Spanish literary history. See María Rosa Gálvez, *Safo. Zinda. La familia a la moda*, Fernando Doménech (ed.), Madrid, 1995.
- ⁴⁶ Francisco Ruiz Ramón, *Historia del teatro español*, Madrid, 1992; David Gies and Russell P. Sebold (eds.), *Historia y crítica de la literatura española. Ilustración y neoclasicismo: primer suplemento*, 4.1, Barcelona, 1992; Guillermo Camero (ed.), *Historia*

de la literatura española. Siglo XVIII, Madrid, 1995; Emilio Palacios Fernández, 'Teatro' in *Historia literaria de España en el siglo XVIII*, Francisco Aguilar Piñal (ed.), Madrid, 1996, pp.135-233.

⁴⁷ *Minerva*, II.11 (1806), pp.49-51, in Serrano, *Apuntes*, p.455.

⁴⁸ Juan A. Ríos, 'La polémica teatral dieciochesca como esquema dinámico', *Cuadernos de teatro clásico*, 5 1990, pp.65-75.

⁴⁹ See Paloma Fernández-Quintanilla, *La mujer ilustrada en la España del siglo XVIII*, Madrid, 1981, and Juan F. Fernández Gómez, *Catálogo de entremeses y sainetes del siglo XVIII*, Oviedo, 1993, who both suggest that the circumstances in which the *Obras poéticas* were printed derived from the unwholesome influence which Gálvez exercised over Godoy.

⁵⁰ Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*.

⁵¹ Grinstein uses the documentary evidence she has uncovered to provide a fascinating new reading of *El egoísta* as an essentially autobiographical drama. However, such an approach risks a kind of closure and limitation in the understanding of her work. I would argue that drama, as a physical, highly public very collaborative art form can never be reduced to first person narrative.

⁵² In approaching Gálvez's corpus of tragedies, I have been inspired by one of the guiding principles for Janet Todd in *The Sign of Angellica: Women Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800*, London and New York, 1986, to endeavour 'to let works speak as much as possible for themselves', (p.8) by illuminating aesthetic, structural and thematic elements of the plays. However, in the light of contemporary critical responses to Gálvez's writing, I have occasionally employed a more obviously feminist literary historical approach in order to examine the relationship between gender and genre in Gálvez's oeuvre and, more specifically, to explore the opposition of male and female role models in the plays.

CHAPTER TWO

GÁLVEZ AND THE FORTUNES OF TRAGEDY

Although she left no theoretical writings on tragedy, evidence shows that Gálvez was sensitive to its place and importance in Spanish literature and to the significance of her contribution to the genre. In a document addressed to Carlos IV, Gálvez mentioned with evident pride that two of the projected three volumes of her *Obras poéticas* consisted of tragedies.¹ Later, in the opening section of the 'Advertencia' to the second of these volumes, the author made explicit her predilection for tragedy and hinted at a determination to reanimate what she considered to be a less popular genre:

Las tragedias que ofrezco al público son fruto de mi afición á este género de poesía, y de mi deseo de manifestar, que la escasez que en este ramo se advierte en nuestra literatura, es más bien nacida de no haberse nuestros ingenios dedicado á cultivarlo, que de su ineptitud para haber dado en él pruebas de su fecundidad. En efecto, hasta ahora casi se puede decir que no tenemos una tragedia perfecta; pero ¿cómo las ha de haber en una nación que recibe con poco gusto estos espectáculos, y cuyos actores huían no hace mucho al solo nombre de tragedia de exponer al público este género dramático, que hace las delicias, y constituye la mejor parte del teatro de otras naciones cultas? A la verdad en estos últimos tiempos parecía que iba mejorando la suerte de la tragedia en España: se han representado algunas con aceptación; pero por desgracia no podemos hacer gloria de ella, porque solo se han aplaudido las extranjeras.²

Gálvez demonstrated an awareness both of the theoretical pre-eminence and the parlous state of tragedy in Spain and it is significant that her explanation of this discrepancy emphasised a lack of will rather than skill on the part of national dramatists, given that Du Perron de Castera's controversial assertion that Spanish writers had not composed tragedy had long since been refuted by Agustín de Montiano y Luyando.³ However, in insisting on the near absence of 'tragedia perfecta' in Spain, Gálvez insinuated that the genre lacked the prestige which it enjoyed in other literary cultures.

Gálvez's condemnation of the negative attitudes of actors and audiences to tragedy was more direct and in recognising the vital contribution of committed theatre companies and a receptive public to any revival of the fortunes of the genre in Spain, the author demonstrated an understanding of the lack of fit between theoretical models and the practicalities of the theatrical world. However, if Gálvez's assessment of the state of

tragedy emphasised a general malaise, her prognosis was optimistic. In sensing a new readiness on the part of performers and audiences to embrace the genre, she placed the onus on dramatists to rise to this challenge and to substitute indigenous for imported models of tragedy.

Using Gálvez's reflections as a starting point, in this chapter I will explore the development of the theory, practice and reception of tragedy in Spain, which frames any understanding of the author's engagement with the genre.⁴ I will investigate the origins of Gálvez's esteem for tragedy in the words and examples of theorists and practitioners in the first half of the eighteenth century, before going on to consider how later generic innovations impacted on the success of tragedy and obliged versatile, classicising writers like Gálvez to develop strategies for preserving the status while enhancing the popular appeal of this privileged genre.

The Status of Tragedy: Defining a Noble Genre

There is good reason to believe that in Gálvez's lifetime the ideas expressed in Ignacio de Luzán's *La poética* had been widely diffused and absorbed by writers and critics.⁵ Although it is difficult to trace a direct line of influence between Luzán's theory and Gálvez's practice, the continuing presence and authority of *La poética* in literary circles throughout the period suggest that Luzán's discussion of tragedy must have impacted on Gálvez's understanding of the genre.⁶

The boundaries of dramatic genres in the Golden Age in Spain had been fluid and ill-defined. Luzán consciously broke with this tradition and in *La poética* established a clear distinction between comedy and tragedy.⁷ While acknowledging that both genres shared many techniques, Luzán emphasised the different aims of each and described the different qualities needed to achieve these.⁸ Although careful to avoid an explicit privileging of tragedy above comedy, Luzán's definitions and explanations revealed certain key contrasts of status and interest between the two genres: tragic characters were 'reyes, príncipes y personajes de gran calidad y dignidad' (p.433), who displayed 'pasiones violentas' (p.530), whereas comic characters were 'personas particulares o plebeyas' (p.528), whose passions were 'más moderadas' (p.530), and while tragedy dramatised 'una gran mudanza de fortuna' and 'caídas y muertes, desgracias y peligros' (p.433), comedy dramatised 'un hecho particular y [...] un enredo de poca importancia para el público' (p.530). Extreme emotions experienced by the audience of, 'el terror y la

compasión', were deemed 'tan propios de la tragedia como improprios de la comedia' (p.529) and although both genres shared a moralising aim, the lesson of tragedy was considered especially pertinent to the noble and the powerful.⁹ These unambiguous definitions of distinct genres led to the creation of discrete identities for each which inevitably resulted in tragedy becoming associated with a set of values which elevated it above comedy.

In separating the genres, Luzán acknowledged that he was following the example of Aristotle.¹⁰ However, his determination to propose a modern framework for tragedy led him to depart in significant ways from the ancient model.¹¹ Aristotle had identified six qualitative elements of tragedy: plot, mimesis of character, verbal expression, the mimesis of intellect, spectacle and song-writing.¹² In his definition, Luzán pared down these categories, focusing on the centrality of plot and character to the structure of the genre and observing the powerful cathartic and edifying effect of successful tragedy.¹³ Luzán's approach pinpointed the essentials of the genre and therefore certain Aristotelian elements, such as music, were dismissed as superfluous.¹⁴

In effect, Luzán refashioned tragedy as a pure and rarefied form, the flexible terms of *La poética* concealing a refining tendency which was grounded in a fairly inflexible notion of the essence of the genre. However, Luzán's classicising model presented practitioners with a problematic choice, given that to aspire to this ideal would necessarily involve the re-education of audiences and actors accustomed to rich theatrical spectacle. This tension fuelled much of the debate on tragedy and prompted Gálvez, among others, to test the limits of the genre in subsequent years.¹⁵

Contemporary and modern critics have concurred in their respect for Montiano, who drew on a range of models and followed the advice of ancient and modern preceptists to compose two tragedies, *Virginia* and *Athaulpho*.¹⁶ He prefaced each with a substantial *Discurso* in which he demonstrated not only a wide-ranging understanding of tragic traditions in and beyond Spain, but also a determination to complement contemporary precept with practice. The ostensible spur and point of departure to Montiano's first discourse was a desire to counter Du Perron's criticism, but the ultimate aim of his tract was to promote tragedy as the principal dramatic type and to encourage his peers to revive what he regarded as a genre which had lost much of its lustre.¹⁷

In his treatise, Montiano set out many aspects of his dramaturgy and explained the rationale for the creation of *Virginia*, adopting a confidential and candid style which

conveyed a sense of the dramatist at work. Montiano's understanding of tragedy, like that of Luzán, developed out of his reading of a range of commentators: Aristotle and Horace, Pinciano and Cascales, Feijóo and Corneille and, naturally, Luzán himself. It is therefore surprising that his emphases were significantly different from those of *La poética*. Where Luzán had insisted that the essence of the action in any tragedy lay in a great change of fortune¹⁸, Montiano made the nature rather than the progress of the action central to a definition of the genre.¹⁹ Ultimately Luzán's model of tragedy was both aristocratic and courtly, but in his *Discurso*, Montiano showed that his vision was more obviously based on ancient civic models. Luzán had insisted on elevated social status as a prerequisite of tragic characters, but Montiano showed that protagonists could achieve the necessary elevation through superior moral worth and virtuous actions.²⁰

In the second *Discurso* Montiano proceeded from his discussions of the nature and status of tragedy to consider how the essential nobility of the genre might be conveyed in theatrical practice. This entailed a close analysis of those elements of tragedy which were not the specific preserve of the author, but which were crucial to the successful transformation of a written ideal into dramatic reality. The first *Discurso* was principally aimed at the writer of tragedy, but the second, which reads more like a practical manual than a theoretical tract, seemed to be directed at theatre companies. Montiano touched on almost all aspects of the performance of a tragedy, including guidelines for stage decoration, recommendations for the location of the prompter and advice on costume. The author's over-riding concern with maintaining verisimilitude in performance derived from his awareness of how tragedy could be undermined by incompetent stage management, distractions of theatrical programming, but, above all, lax acting.²¹ Thus the greatest part of his advice and observations were designed to hone the skills of actors.²²

In the same way that Luzán had made tragedy and comedy distinct and separate dramatic entities, so Montiano emphasised that each required a different approach to performance.²³ In the case of tragedy, the acting style should always accentuate the nobility of the genre and Montiano dedicated much of the tract to elaborating on aspects of an actor's art.²⁴ There is a perceptible shift in tone between the first and second *Discursos* which moves from an apologetic defence of Spanish tragedy to a more provocative and practical exhortation to all members of the world of the theatre to

transform stage practice to meet the challenges posed by the elevation of the genre in theory.

The State of Tragedy: Theory in Practice

By 1753, Luzán had produced a theoretical model for tragedy and Montiano had devised guidelines to ensure that this could be translated into practice. However, nearly ten years later it was clear that a revival of Spanish tragedy had not taken root. 'Pensamiento IX', which appeared in *El pensador* in 1762, came to a gloomy conclusion about the state of the genre.²⁵ The 'Pensamiento' took the form of a satirical comic dialogue between a South American visitor to Madrid and the cynical host who has taken him to the theatre. Using the familiar and effective trope of the bemused foreign spectator, the author ridiculed sentimental comedy in order to drive home a more profound criticism of the confusion of genres on the contemporary Spanish stage.²⁶

During the course of the piece, the author insisted on the distinctive natures of tragedy and comedy and advocated a clear separation of the genres. The observation that tragic characters must be 'personages de la más alta esfera' revealed the full extent to which this view of tragedy had been shaped by Luzán's definition of the genre.²⁷ It is evident that the author believed theatre companies, actors and audiences to be complicit in the perpetuation of a state in which tragedy as conceived by Luzán and Montiano could never flourish. However, the author looked to dramatists, the ultimate object of the criticism, to provide the initial impulse for the revival of the genre.

In 1763 two playwrights printed tragedies on a classicising model. In the preface to *Jahel*, Juan José López de Sedano declared his desire to reform Biblical tragedy through the further refinement and purification of the genre.²⁸ He stressed the novelty of his omission of any 'love-interest' from the plot, but this, together with the studied eloquence of the versification, suggested that the author had jeopardised the possibility of performance in pursuit of an ideal of tragedy.²⁹ Contemporary critics and satirists mocked the printed play, but López de Sedano had already anticipated that it could never be performed.³⁰

Nicolás Fernández de Moratín appeared more modest in his ambition for the revival of the genre. In his preface to *Lucrecia* the author stated that he had followed the advice of ancient and modern preceptists and intended his play to serve both as a practical illustration of these theories and as a stimulus to other dramatists to write

tragedy.³¹ Modern critics have commented on the well crafted verse and subtle poetic devices which were Moratín's hallmark in this and other plays.³² However, these very qualities suggest that the author's principal aim in *Lucrecia* was poetic beauty rather than dramatic feasibility. It seems that for Moratín, the writing of tragedy was essentially the fulfilment of an ideal according to preordained models.

The ambivalent contemporary critical reaction to *Hormesinda*, performed in 1770 might be seen as further proof that Moratín, like López de Sedano, appeared to privilege poetic over dramatic structures and adherence to theoretical precept over questions of stagecraft in his approach to tragedy.³³ The genre seemed destined to remain an ideal communicated only in print rather than on stage. To counter this possibility, writers had to create tragedy which appealed to audiences, but equally importantly, this commitment to the genre had to be shared by performers and the public.

Yet until the mid 1770s, theatre companies and audiences were as resolute in their resistance to what Tomás Sebastián y Latre termed 'novedades de los que afectan erudición' as dramatists were determined in their refusal to compromise aesthetic principle for stage spectacle.³⁴ Sebastián y Latre observed that new plays were often lacking in dramatic punch, but also recognised that 'los actores no dan un caval desempeño en su representación'.³⁵ His belief that a deliberate and co-ordinated campaign of resistance was being waged against new theatre and its advocates led him to fear that an unsuccessful performance could be mischievously used as proof of an inherently misguided project.³⁶

A Model of Success: Spanish National Tragedy

Sebastián y Latre's fears appeared to have been allayed in 1778 with the successful performances of two new tragedies: Ignacio Lopez de Ayala's *Numancia destruida* and Vicente García de la Huerta's *Raquel*.³⁷ Both of these plays treated Spanish historical narratives according to new theoretical principles and it is likely that their patriotic appeal accounted for much of their popularity with theatre audiences.³⁸ However, the fact that Moratín's *Guzmán el Bueno* printed the previous year was not performed and apparently not well-received by critics suggests that heroic Spanish narratives did not of themselves guarantee theatrical success.³⁹ Both López de Ayala and Huerta brought a range of dramatic and poetic techniques to these two works which distinguished them

from other less successful tragedies and which must have contributed to their overall impact in performance.⁴⁰

López de Ayala and Huerta's success signalled a new and promising direction for Spanish tragedy. Even though an immediate and sustained revival in the fortunes of the genre did not ensue, the potential of this dramatic blueprint did not go unrecognised. In 1786, the *Memorial literario* added its voice to the call for Spanish national tragedy, articulating in persuasive tones the merits of indigenous models which might break the dependence of the Madrid stage on French works.⁴¹ By ascribing the public's antipathy towards tragedy to the prevalence of poorly executed and adapted translations, the author suggested that the dominance of the Gallic model was wholly responsible for the failure of the genre in Spain.⁴²

The author argued that the characteristic coldness of French tragedy, which produced only, 'razonamientos largos, pocos ó ningun afecto, menos interés, languida trama, episodios flojos, estilo vago y ratero, &c.' undermined the powerful emotional effect of the genre which he regarded as central to its privileged status and elevation above comedy.⁴³ This new emphasis revealed a shift in understanding of the essence of tragedy. Luzán and Montiano, reviving the precepts of the ancients, had given pre-eminence to the nature and structure of the action in their ideal of tragedy, but the *Memorial literario* praised 'la dulzura que causa la comocion de los más tiernos afectos del corazon humano, el embeleso que produce la pintura y muestra de las mas fuertes pasiones del hombre.'⁴⁴ This emphasis on the emotional intensity of tragedy would be crucial to the engagement of the next generation of writers with the genre.

Although the main thrust of the criticism focused on the debilitating impact of the numbers of French tragedies on the Spanish stage, the author underscored key contrasts between theatrical practice in France and Spain, establishing qualitative distinctions between an austere inflexible French model and a more nuanced Spanish model of tragedy. Despite gently reproving Spanish dramatists for their lack of dynamism, Spanish actors for their lack of sophistication and Spanish theatre audiences for their lack of taste, the final rallying call to national playwrights, performers and public revealed the full extent of the critic's reforming patriotic agenda:

solo falta dar ánimo á nuestros ingenios, docilidad é instruccion á nuestros Actores, interés á nuestros dramas, decoracion y aparato co respondiente á las escenas, y actividad en todo á todos.⁴⁵

Tragedy under Threat: Generic Innovations in the 1790s

Yet the development of tragedy during the last decade of the eighteenth century took a still more complex and less predictable path. The pure and rarefied model as defined by Luzán, which made tragedy the preserve of the noble, became increasingly difficult to achieve and even anachronistic in the face of new experiments in dramatic genres which made their fullest impact on the Spanish theatrical scene at this time. The success of Jovellanos' *El delincuente honrado* established the feasibility of *comedia sentimental* on the Spanish stage and opened up new possibilities for national dramatists which would inevitably impact on the writing of tragedy.⁴⁶ This modern hybrid genre colonised elements proper to comedy and tragedy and blurred the carefully elaborated distinctions between these two ancient genres.⁴⁷

Tragedy was most threatened by innovations in characterisation in this new genre. The protagonists of *comedia sentimental* belonged to the middle classes, but were elevated in stature in such a way as to make their dilemmas, actions and morals of universal interest. Not only did this challenge the long-standing assertion that tragic protagonists must be drawn from elite strata of society, but ultimately it questioned the validity and relevance of the models of tragedy so rigorously championed by preceptists and practitioners throughout the century.

A second generic innovation profoundly affected the development of tragedy in Spain in the 1790s. The première of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Pygmalion* in Spain in 1788 inspired a series of Spanish *escenas líricas* or *melólogos*. This musical genre evolved rapidly and became a vehicle not only for tragedy, but also for comedy and satire. However, the prototypes drew their subjects principally from the tragic repertoire, combining national historical narrative with intense emotional rhetoric to powerful effect.⁴⁸ The uni-personal one-act formula allowed the distillation of dramatic pathos into one highly emotionally charged scene and permitted an extended exploration of psychological turmoil and conflict on stage. In doing so this genre purloined some of the most characteristic devices of tragedy, notably the soliloquy and *hamartia*, to create a tragic scene without recourse to the traditional structures associated with three and five-act tragedy.

The popularity of these new genres presented both problems and possibilities to prospective writers of tragedy at this time. On the one hand, they testified to the appetite of contemporary audiences for intense emotional drama, historically the province of

tragedy and proved that the tragic could have broad appeal on the Spanish stage. On the other hand, their nature and success threatened to eclipse and ultimately supersede traditional models of tragedy. The debate between old and new drama was entering a new phase: the central tension was no longer between seventeenth-century Spanish and revived Classical models, and the ideals of Luzán and Montiano which had challenged old precept and practice were in their turn being tested by new concepts and genres.

Gálvez and the Spanish Tragic Tradition in the Eighteenth Century

Gálvez's tragedies engage both with the relative certainties of eighteenth-century Spanish theoretical precept and with the manifest uncertainties of contemporary theatrical practice. The wide dissemination of Luzán's ideas, reinforced by the reprinting of an augmented *La poética* in 1789, lent an enduring authority to his judgements on the qualities of good drama and his work remained a touchstone for critics and practitioners throughout the period. His emphasis on the elevated status of tragedy ensured that it remained an aspiration for committed writers and a guarantee of seriousness and integrity in elite literary circles which must have influenced Gálvez's concept of the nature and importance of the genre.

Gálvez's surviving correspondence reveals her to be an ambitious author, sensitive to hierarchies of literary value, who regarded the creation of tragedy as a means of forging a reputation as a woman of letters. In her supplication to the King, in which she requested financial support for the printing of the *Obras poéticas*, Gálvez distinguished herself from predecessors and contemporaries both at home and abroad by insisting on her status as tragedian:

el deseo de hacer público un trabajo que en ninguna otra mujer, ni en nación alguna tiene ejemplar, puesto que las más celebradas francesas sólo se han limitado a traducir, o cuando más han dado a luz una composición dramática; mas ninguna ha presentado una colección de tragedias originales como la exponente.⁴⁹

Tragedy was central to Gálvez's sense of identity as a writer. In the letter to the Juez Protector de Teatros in which she requested a new censor's report on *Un loco hace ciento* which had not been granted a performance licence, Gálvez explained that this one-act *fin de fiesta* was written to support *Ali-Bek*, showing that she viewed the tragedy as

the more important of these two pieces and as the work more likely to ‘contribuir al lustre del teatro español’.⁵⁰

Gálvez was acutely aware of the ways in which tragedy elevated both the status of the writer and that of the national stage. She was equally conscious of the difficulties and challenges which continued to face would-be tragedians. The first tragedies written according to Luzán’s principles were often misunderstood and undervalued by critics and audiences. Although they served as models from which subsequent generations of writers could learn and against which they could measure their own artistic endeavours, their limited popularity sent a clear signal to Gálvez and her contemporaries that the much prized precepts were not easily translated into dramatic reality. The ultimately frustrated ambitions of Montiano and Moratín among others to create successful tragedy according to theoretical principles reaffirmed the sense that the genre was as yet an unfulfilled ideal.

Gálvez recognised the ongoing tension between theory and practice and the hostile atmosphere in which tragedy was often received, and in the ‘Advertencia’ to volume two of the *Obras poéticas* noted with obvious irony:

el miserable Español que se atreve á escribir una tragedia ¡triste de él! Aunque haya en ella primores que compensen sus defectos, aunque prometa para lo sucesivo el ingenio del autor alguna considerable mejoría; no hay remedio; se critica, se satiriza; en una palabra, se le hace escarmentar, ó acaso maldecir la negra tentacion en que cayó de escribir original, y no traduccion.⁵¹

In this lengthy prologue, Gálvez not only alluded to the harsh criticisms and mockery which confronted tragedians and their works, but pointedly distinguished between blind and servile acceptance of translated tragedy and blanket rejection of original Spanish works which prevailed:

es indudable que en las de otro pais se disculpan los defectos, y se exâgeran con entusiasmo las bellezas, al paso que en las originales no hay la menor indulgencia, lloviendo críticas, y aun sátiras indecentes sobre qualquiera que se atreve á emprender esta dificultosísima carrera.⁵²

Gálvez’s concern that Spanish tragedy was being stifled by the pervasive and pernicious influence of fashionable foreign models seems to have been one of the key motivations, not only for her writing of tragedy, but for her entire dramatic project. Gálvez’s determination to produce work which was self-consciously new and original led

her to engage with some of the most innovative and experimental developments in drama in an effort to reclaim tragedy for Spanish authors. Given this clear patriotic agenda it is unsurprising that Gálvez should be drawn to national tragedy. The regular revivals of *Numancia destruida* during the 1790s in Madrid demonstrated not only that successful classicising tragedies should adopt a more flexible approach to the application of theory and make extensive use of powerful dramatic situations, but more significantly, proved the potency of Spanish historical narratives as vehicles for tragic drama. Gálvez's *Florinda*, which dramatised one of the founding narratives of Spanish nationhood in a striking and unprecedented way, might be viewed, in part, as the author's attempt to associate herself with this patriotic current.

National tragedy was only one of several possibilities for the animation of the genre which Gálvez explored in her tragic oeuvre. Indeed the range and diversity of subject matter, themes and structure in her tragedies testifies to Gálvez's willingness to embrace new dramatic devices and forms in the search for successful models. Perhaps the single most obvious example of this ability to absorb and learn from contemporary theatrical innovation was *Saúl*, in which Gálvez drew on the popularity and potential of a musical genre to produce a work whose combination of orchestral colour and rhetoric within an Aristotelian framework was evocative of Greek lyric tragedy.

The equally popular and successful *comedia sentimental* form provided Gálvez with more material with which to embellish tragedy. Much of the interest of *Zinda* is explained by the author's fusion of elements of classicising tragedy with features of sentimental drama. Likewise, *Blanca de Rossi* drew on devices of the Gothic literary style to enhance its emotional appeal, central to later definitions of tragedy as evidenced by the *Memorial literario* in 1786. Nevertheless as *Amnón*, *La delirante* and *Safo* proved, older, more traditional models remained central to Gálvez's engagement with the genre and ensured that her work was always recognisable as tragedy. Although the author's experiments and innovations moved the genre away from the rarefied visions of Luzán, her knowledge of and respect for ancient precept and practice as well as Spain's own tragic tradition marked out her commitment to the continuation of a noble genre.

Gálvez's Tragedy and the Challenge to Patriarchy

Gálvez adopted an orthodox self-deprecatory tone in announcing her tragic oeuvre and professed disinterest in literary fame.⁵³ Yet in truth she was far from modest in her

appraisal of the novelty of her achievement in writing two volumes of tragedy. Far from eschewing all references to her sex, Gálvez consistently referred to it and at the heart of her assertion of her literary worth lay an awareness of her unique status and privileged position as a female tragedian.

Gálvez underplayed her erudition and instead foregrounded the spontaneous and natural qualities of her work.⁵⁴ Although in adopting this strategy Gálvez might appear to have pandered to male assumptions of the limits of feminine creativity, it might also be interpreted as a pragmatic and even disingenuous technique to disarm her readership ahead of a series of tragedies which in many ways were structurally and thematically unorthodox. In fact Gálvez's persistent references to her sex seem to represent a calculated challenge to contemporary notions about women and about tragedy.

Moreover each work contained experiments and innovations which interrogated the essentially masculine frameworks on which tragedy had been built and ultimately led to a questioning of wider patriarchal values. For example, the de-centring and remodelling of the tragic hero in *Ali-Bek*, was not only a significant experiment in dramatic characterisation but also probed the nature of heroism itself. Similarly, *Florinda* offered much more than a sympathetic reappraisal of a much maligned legendary figure. In this tragedy, Gálvez defamiliarised a staple narrative and in doing so challenged many of the assumptions about guilt and responsibility which underlay accepted readings of this powerful national myth.

Gálvez's work developed out of a theoretical tradition which sought to emulate ancient models in order to elevate tragedy and re-establish the genre in Spain. However, Gálvez's practical involvement with tragedy coincided with a moment when the classicising literary project, as apparently previously embraced by government and enlightened intellectuals, appeared to have lost momentum and was increasingly under pressure from new dramatic currents. One of the most fascinating aspects of Gálvez's corpus of tragedies is her apparently self-conscious aim to bridge the gap between tragic tradition and dramatic modernity, while never abandoning a commitment to the essential utility and nobility of the genre. In subsequent chapters, I analyse the particular aesthetic qualities and dramatic innovations of each of the eight tragic works and argue that Gálvez's contribution to the practice of tragedy was both highly experimental and essentially classicising.

¹ ‘... expone: que ha compuesto tres tomos de poesías, entre ellos dos de tragedias originales’, document of 21 November 1803, reproduced in Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, pp.356-357.

² ‘Advertencia’ in Gálvez, *Obras poéticas*, II, pp.3-8, (p.3).

³ ‘Pour des tragédies espagnols, n’en font point’, Louis-Adrien Du Perron de Castera, *Extraits de plusieurs pièces du théâtre espagnol; avec des réflexions et la traduction des endroits les plus remarquables*, Amsterdam and Paris, 1738, p.4, quoted in Agustín de Montiano y Luyando, *Discurso sobre las tragedias españolas. Virginia. Tragedia*, Madrid, 1750, p.6.

⁴ Whereas other studies of the development of tragedy in this period have centred on thematic issues, this chapter focuses on aesthetic and generic innovations and continuities. René Andioc’s ground-breaking work has done much to illuminate the relationship between tragedy and the socio-political sphere, see ‘La tragedia neoclásica’ in *Teatro*, pp.381-418. Although my emphases differ from those which frame his work, I will have recourse to Andioc’s insights on the broader significance of several key tragedies. See also, Rinaldo Froldi, ‘La tradición trágica española según los tratadistas del siglo dieciocho’, *Criticón* 23 (1983), pp.133-151; *idem.*, ‘La tragedia *El Numa* de Juan González del Castillo’, *Dieciocho* 22 (1999), pp.385-395; *idem.*, ‘La tragedia “Polixena” de José Marchena’, in *Teatro español del siglo XVIII*, Josep María Sala Valldaura (ed.), Lleida, 1996, pp.397-415; Carero (ed.), *Historia de la literatura. 6.*, pp.430-446, 510-541; José Checa Beltrán, ‘Teoría literaria’ in Aguilar Piñal (ed.), *Historia literaria*, pp.428-511.

⁵ In his edition of *La poética* Russell Sebold asserts that Luzán’s theories had become ‘diseminado hasta el punto de convertirse en propiedad pública’. See Ignacio de Luzán, *La poética o reglas de la poesía en general y de sus principales especies*, Russell P. Sebold (ed.), Barcelona, 1977, p.55. All further citations from Luzán’s work are from this edition.

⁶ Sebold, *La poética*, suggests that Leandro Fernández de Moratín and Quintana doubted the impact and influence of Luzán’s *La poética* on writers of their generation, p.55. This contention has been answered by David Thatcher Gies, ‘Creation and Re-creation: Leandro Fernández de Moratín’s Version of his Father’s Life and Works’, *Dieciocho*, 3.2 (1980), pp.115-123. In his review of Gálvez’s *Obras poéticas*, Quintana insisted on the author’s failure to comply with Luzán’s principles as evidence of a lack of dramatic competence, ‘¿Y nosotros nos permitiríamos la pedantería grosera de citarla ante el tribunal de Aristóteles, de Luzán y de Blair, y denunciarla rigurosamente por las faltas cometidas contra las leyes que ellos han dictado?’, which suggests that he regarded *La poética* as a critical yardstick, even if he underrated the value of the text as a practical and creative influence. For a complementary view of the significance of Luzán’s text, see Philip Deacon, ‘Luzán y los Moratín en los programas escolares del siglo XVIII’, in Álvarez Barrientos and Checa Beltrán (eds.), *El siglo que llaman ilustrado*, pp.237-244.

⁷ In the third book of *La poética*, Luzán divided poetry into three classes; epic, lyric and dramatic, splitting this last category into ‘... dos importantísimas especies de poesía, que son la tragedia y la comedia, cuyas reglas, calidades y diferencias explicaremos en este libro...’. Luzán, *La poética*, pp. 429-430.

⁸ ‘Conviene la comedia con la tragedia en muchas cosas, aunque en otras es diversa.’ Luzán, *La poética*, p.528.

⁹ ‘sirviendo de ejemplo y escarmiento a todos, pero especialmente a los reyes y a las personas de mayor autoridad y poder.’ Luzán, *La poética*, p.433.

¹⁰ 'El mérito y la autoridad de Aristóteles, [...] requiere, con justa razón, que no omitamos la idea que nos dejó de la tragedia en su definición.' Luzán, *La poética*, p.432.

¹¹ 'en gracia de los que no entendieren bien la definición de Aristóteles, que es algo obscura, séame permitido proponer aquí otra más clara, a mi entender, y más inteligible, como asimismo más adaptada a los dramas modernos.' Luzán, *La poética*, p.433.

¹² Aristotle, *Poetics*, M.E. Hubbard (trans.) in D.A. Russell and M. Winterbottom (eds.), *Classical Literary Criticism*, Oxford, 1989, p.58. Further citations from Aristotle's *Poetics* are from this edition.

¹³ 'se puede venir en conocimiento de la suma utilidad que al público podría resultar de la representación de buenas tragedias, en las cuales podría todo género de personas aprehender insensiblemente la moderación de sus pasiones y deseos, logrando en el teatro una oculta enseñanza y una deleitosa escuela de moral'. Luzán, *La poética*, p.492.

¹⁴ It is typical of Luzán's non-dogmatic, persuasive style that he did not reject outright the use of music in tragedy. Nevertheless, he suggested that in comparison with ancient practice, music had a limited function on the modern stage and argued that it was entirely dispensable in contemporary tragedy. Luzán, *La poética*, pp.514, 537.

¹⁵ See Guillermo Carnero, 'Los dogmas neoclásicos en el ámbito teatral', in Carnero (ed.), *Historia de la literatura. 7.*, pp.489-510. Carnero provides a provocative interpretation of the development and practice of Spanish dramatic theory in the period, attributing the rise of domestic tragedy and sentimental comedy in Spain to what he terms 'la rigidez neoclásica' (p.510).

¹⁶ Taking his lead from Leandro Moratín's assessment of Montiano's tragedies, John Dowling notes that the author's poetic talent was somewhat lacking but that 'sabía, como buen mentor, explicar la lección y dar el modelo académico.' See John Dowling, 'Planteamiento de la polémica teatral desde las exigencias neoclásicas', in Carnero (ed.), *Historia de la literatura. 6.*, p.427. Andioc points to more political reasons for the failure of these tragedies to reach the Spanish stage. 'tal vez no se deba tanto al temor de someterlas al juicio del público como a la presencia de ciertos elementos tenidos por difícilmente compatibles a la autoridad del gobierno, pues en ambas se da muerte a un monarca, se amotinan parte de los súbditos', see Andioc, *Teatro*, p.387.

¹⁷ Montiano, *Discurso*, p.79.

¹⁸ 'Con decir una gran mudanza de fortuna, me parece que toco lo esencial del argumento de la tragedia y evito las disputas y obscuridades, pues todos convienen en que la fábula trágica ha de contener una gran mudanza de fortuna.' Luzán, *La poética*, p.433.

¹⁹ 'es la imitación de una acción heroica completa'. Montiano, *Discurso*, p.85.

²⁰ Luzán claimed that his definition of tragic protagonists, like that of many other commentators and theorists, derived from Aristotle, 'que las personas de la tragedia deban ser ilustres y grandes, como reyes, héroes etc., es conforme a la doctrina de Aristóteles y al común parecer de todos los intérpretes y autores de poética.' In fact, Aristotle's definition imposed no such restriction and emphasised only the moral superiority of tragic protagonists, 'First and foremost, the characters represented should be morally good', see Aristotle, *Poetics*, p.69. Montiano's thoughts on the subject apparently unconsciously echo this ancient advice, although the author recognised that his creation of the character of Virginia was atypical. Montiano, *Discurso*, pp. 86-87.

²¹ Montiano favoured the removal of the *sainete*, *entremés* and *baile* between the acts of a tragedy, but recognised that the public would strongly resist such a move. See Agustín de Montiano y Luyando, *Discurso II sobre las tragedias españolas. Athaulpho. Tragedia*, Madrid, 1753, p.41.

²² Montiano recognised that actors might not be receptive to this instruction. See Montiano, *Discurso II*, p.18.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp.66-67.

²⁴ Montiano gave advice on: the actors' familiarity with their own and all other roles, (*Discurso II*, pp.63, 65); the use of gesture, including arms, hands, head, eyes, mouth (pp.69-93); intonation and diction (pp. 94-112).

²⁵ *El pensador matritense*, Barcelona, n.d., I, pp.191-222. See Urzainqui, 'Un nuevo instrumento cultural', pp.159-160, for reference to the uncertain authorship of *El pensador*, (pp.159-160).

²⁶ 'Pensamiento IX', pp.193-194.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Juan José López de Sedano, *Jahel. Tragedia sacada de la Sagrada Escritura*, Madrid, 1763.

²⁹ See Cook, *Neo-Classic Drama*, pp.209-210, and McClelland, *Spanish Drama*, pp.119-122.

³⁰ In his *La nación española defendida de los insultos del Pensador y sus secuaces. Discurso II.*, Madrid, 1764, p.198, Francisco Mariano Nipho singled out *Jahel* for particular criticism. Tomás de Iriarte further lambasted the tragedy in the self-styled *Diálogo joco-serio* entitled *Donde las dan las toman*, Madrid, 1778, remarking on the inconvenience of lengthy speeches for actors. In the preface to the 1763 edition of the play, López de Sedano suggested that *Jahel* would not be to the taste of contemporary audiences: 'en España no se escriben tales obras para representarse, no son compatibles con las monstruosidades que tienen tomada la posesión de sus teatros, en donde se abomina, y del todo se ignora lo que es arte, regularidad y buen gusto, y sólo reina la confusión, la indecencia el pedantismo y la última barbarie, sostenidos de una antigua, vergonzosa y mal tolerada costumbre.' p. xlv. See McClelland, *Spanish Drama*, pp.119-122, 330, n.8; Cook, *Neo-Classic Drama*, pp.209-210.

³¹ Nicolás Fernández de Moratín, *Lucrecia. Tragedia*, Madrid, 1763, p.7.

³² See, for example, Nigel Glendinning, *A Literary History of Spain. The Eighteenth Century*, London, 1972, p.97.

³³ Modern critics tend to balance Ramón de la Cruz's renowned description of 'la monstruosa y detestada *Hormesinda*', see Ramón de la Cruz, *En casa de nadie no se meta nadie, o el buen marido*, Madrid, 1770, with Leandro Moratín's observation of the far-reaching impact of his father's first performed tragedy: 'Él desmintió la opinión absurda de que los españoles no gustaban de tragedias, confundió a los ignorantes que suponían imposible que una obra escrita con regularidad y buen gusto agradase al público de Madrid, introdujo este género en el teatro a pesar de la resistencia que le opusieron.' See 'Vida del autor' in Nicolás Fernández de Moratín, *Obras póstumas*, Barcelona, 1821. There is reason to suspect that each was partial in their assessments. Both quotations are reproduced in John Dowling, 'La batalla contra el teatro barroco, profano y religioso', in Carnero (ed.), *Historia de la literatura. 6.*, p.445. *Hormesinda* ran from 12-17 February 1770 at the Príncipe, the successive

performances realising 6109, 5049, 1675, 3117, 2035, 877 *reales*. See Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, p.93.

³⁴ Tomás Sebastián y Latre, *Ensayo sobre el teatro español. Progne. Filomena*, Zaragoza, 1772, (unpaginated).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Ignacio López de Ayala, *Numancia destruida*, Madrid, 1775; Vicente García de la Huerta, *Raquel* in *Obras poéticas*, Madrid, 1778. Andioc views Ayala's play as 'un llamamiento a la concordia y a la unidad, que corresponde, en las esferas del poder, a la voluntad de llegar a la unión nacional, a la centralización y homogeneidad politicosocial', see Andioc, *Teatro*, p.390. See also his important interpretation of the immediate literary and political context and wider social and political significance of Huerta's play, 'La *Raquel* de Huerta y el antiabsolutismo', *Ibid.*, pp.259-344.

³⁸ *Numancia destruida* ran from 9-15 February 1778 at the Cruz, each performance realising 6849, 5006, 4186, 4335, 3750, 2498, 7147 reales respectively; *Raquel* ran from 14-18 December 1778 at the Príncipe, each performance realising 2899, 2926, 2976, 2522, 1715 reales respectively. See Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, pp. 344 and 347.

³⁹ Dowling refers to 'la hermosa tragedia *Guzmán el bueno*', citing Moratín's resignation that the play would not be performed: 'Bien sé que esta tragedia no es para los teatros de hoy día, donde sólo reina la abominación y la barbarie', pp.445-446. Although Sempere y Guarinos regarded the play as inferior in quality to *Hormesinda* he commended the resolution of the plot, in which vice was not punished and virtue not rewarded, as appropriate to tragedy, since it aroused terror and compassion in the spectators, *Ensayo de una biblioteca de los mejores escritores del reynado de Carlos III*, Madrid, 1969, IV, pp.125-126.

⁴⁰ *Numancia destruida* was reprinted in 1791 and 1793 and revived for performance in Madrid in 1790, 1793, 1798, 1800 and 1801. See Aguilar Piñal, *Bibliografía*, and Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, p.798. Although never re-staged in Madrid during the period, *Raquel* was revived for performance in Barcelona in 1790 and 1793. See Josep María Sala Valldaura, *Cartellera del teatre de Barcelona (1790-1799)*, Barcelona, 1999, pp.48, 49, 77, 195. The more enduring popularity of both these plays after their initial performance success testifies to the renewed interest in patriotic subject matter for audiences and playwrights alike during these years. See Andioc, *Teatro*, pp.393-396; McClelland, *Spanish Drama*, pp.185-188, 196-216, and Cook, *Neo-Classic Drama*, pp.280-289.

⁴¹ *Memorial literario*, VIII.30 (1786), pp.245-250.

⁴² 'si hemos de medir el gusto de las tragedias por las traducciones francesas que nos suelen dar de cuando en cuando, ¿cómo nos convenceremos de cuánto aquí celebramos?', *Ibid.*, p.249.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.248-249.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.248.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.250.

⁴⁶ *La razón contra la moda*, Madrid, 1751, Luzán's translation of Pierre-Claude Nivelles de la Chaussée's *Le préjugé a la mode*, Paris, 1735, is often regarded as the first example of the new genre in Spain. See García Garrosa, *La retórica de las lágrimas*, pp.51-53, 92 and Cañas Murillo, *Comedia sentimental*, pp.31-40. The first original Spanish model was that of

Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, *El delincuente honrado*, Madrid, 1787. The play first ran from 8-15 August 1791 at the Príncipe, each performance realising 4174, 3275, 3005, 3153, 2174, 1727, 2597, 2652 *reales* respectively. See Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, pp. 685, 426.

⁴⁷ García Garrosa, *La retórica de las lágrimas*, p.254-255. See also María Jesús García Garrosa, 'Algunas observaciones sobre la evolución de la comedia sentimental en España', in Sala Vallaura, *Teatro español*, pp.427-446, for a provocative discussion of what she terms 'un sincretismo genérico en el panorama teatral española' (p.428) in the first decades of the nineteenth century, in which the rise of *comedia sentimental* coincides with 'la deformación del canon neoclásico de la tragedia' (p.428) and the influence of new foreign dramatic types, 'el teatro alemán, el melodrama francés y la novela gótica inglesa' (p.428). García Garrosa cites Gálvez as an example of a number of authors whose works reveal them to be 'poniendo de manifiesto que la tragedia concebida al más puro estilo neoclásico es inoperante y no puede cuajar en estos años en los que demasiadas influencias teatrales han venido a congregarse para dar lugar a una fórmula que, partiendo del *drama serio*, pasando por la *comedia seria*, y el *drama sentimental*, llegaría al *drama trágico* y desde él, al *drama romántico*.' (p.445). I would argue that Gálvez's tragic oeuvre might better be understood as testament to her determination to preserve and strengthen tragedy on a classicising model by recourse to the devices of new literary genres.

⁴⁸ See Chapter Four below for a discussion of the progress of this new musical genre in Spain and its impact on the writing of Gálvez's *Saúl*.

⁴⁹ See above note 1.

⁵⁰ See Serrano, *Apuntes*, p.451.

⁵¹ Gálvez, *Obras poéticas*, II, p.4.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ 'Atrevimiento es en mi sexo y en estas desgraciadas circunstancias de nuestro teatro ofrecer a la pública censura una colección de tragedias [...] Ni ambiciono una gloria extraordinaria', *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁵⁴ 'tal cual sea su mérito, es más bien debido a la naturaleza que al arte', *Ibid.*

CHAPTER THREE

ALI-BEK

This chapter examines *Ali-Bek*, a tragedy which was explicitly associated with the 1799 Plan for theatrical reform; it was one of the exemplary new plays approved for performance and printed in the Government-sponsored *Teatro nuevo español*.¹ Given her declared commitment to Spanish tragedy, it is unsurprising that Gálvez should contribute to this initiative to encourage native dramatic talent. The reform project thus provides an important context for any understanding of the composition and reception of Gálvez's first printed tragedy. The general prologue, 'Al lector' to the six-volume *Teatro nuevo español*,² Gálvez's brief 'Advertencia' to *Ali-Bek*³ and a contemporary review of the printed play⁴ will frame my analysis of this tragedy.

Theatrical Reform and the *Teatro nuevo español*

The *Teatro nuevo español* has been described as the 'empresa editorial complementaria' of the plan to reform the public theatres in Madrid, approved by Real Orden on 21 November 1799.⁵ The prohibition of plays 'que puedan influir en la corrupcion de costumbres, y en el descrédito de la Poesía Dramática Española' was a key feature of this regulatory act.⁶ However, this purge was to be offset by the sponsorship of exemplary new drama which might reinvigorate the Spanish stage.

There were two major ways in which the composition of plays was to be encouraged and promoted. Firstly, it was determined that annual prizes, two in each of three classes, should be awarded to dramatists who wrote, 'Comedias y Tragedias, arregladas, y dignas de representarse en los Teatros Públicos.'⁷ The terms of the competition were made known in the *Diario de Madrid* and *Gazeta de Madrid*.⁸ This conspicuous official approbation was designed to boost the reputation of the playwrights and, by extension, the success of the reform enterprise. It was hoped that the new plays might assist the formation of a new theatrical canon to compensate for the loss, both perceived and real, of banned material.

Secondly, and arguably more importantly in terms of the long-term success of the project, the dramatists were afforded practical, financial incentives relating to the

performance and printing of their plays, as the notices which appeared in the *Diario* and *Gazeta* outlined:

Previénese también que además de las respectivas medallas, se concede á los Autores de las piezas premiadas el privilegio de exigir un tres por ciento del total de las entradas que produzcan, así en los Coliseos de la Corte, como en todos los teatros fijos de España, las veces que se repita su representación por espacio de diez años; quedando á beneficio de los Teatros de Madrid el privilegio de imprimirlas, formando una colección de ellas, que se publicará á costa de los mismos Teatros con el título de *Teatro Español*.⁹

As a further inducement, it was determined that the author of any play approved for performance, but not deemed prize-worthy, should be entitled to the same financial privileges relating to theatre ticket sales. These works would form ‘otra colección impresa á costa de los Teatros de Madrid á cuyo beneficio deben quedar, como una propiedad de sus fondos.’¹⁰ Although prizes were never awarded and the first collection of prize-winning drama was never printed, five hundred copies of the first volume of this ‘other collection’, entitled *Teatro nuevo español*, were printed, and subsequently advertised in the *Gazeta* on 12 December 1800 at the cost of 12 reales each.¹¹

‘Al lector’: Introducing the *Teatro nuevo español*

Each of the first five volumes of the *Teatro nuevo español* was prefaced by a list of the plays whose public performance was banned throughout Spain by the newly appointed *Mesa Censoria* of the *Junta de Dirección y Reforma de Teatros*.¹² The general prologue to the series, ‘Al lector’, which appeared in volume one, made explicit the nature of the link between the anthology and the reform project, emphasising the integral role of the plays in the renovation of Spanish theatre and demonstrating the origins of the intellectual impetus of the reform enterprise in the Enlightenment emphasis on didacticism in drama: ‘Las composiciones dramáticas arregladas son el objeto principal de la reforma, como que de ellas pende el que el pueblo se instruya al mismo tiempo que se recrea honestamente.’¹³

However, by effectively juxtaposing condemnation of the old and praise of new drama, one might argue that the *Junta* discouraged critical approval of the works in literary quarters hostile to the ideological thrust of the reform.¹⁴ Irrespective of any claims or statements of intent, the layout of each volume in the series implied that the new plays were considered as replacements for the prohibited dramas. The anonymous

author of 'Al lector' appeared to sense the tension which might result from this opposition between old and new, prohibited and approved drama, although the content of the prologue did little to pre-empt this.¹⁵ In fact insistence on the necessity and validity of the reform project reaffirmed antagonism between old and new theatre. Efforts to emphasise positive aspects of the changes seem lacklustre, as the writer was obliged to acknowledge that hostility to the enterprise was an inevitable consequence of the reform.¹⁶

An air of uncertainty, perceptible throughout the prologue, is particularly in evidence when the author contemplated the manner in which the plays in the collection would be assessed:

Es de esperar que el público será justo en la graduacion que hiciere del mérito de las piezas que formen el *Teatro nuevo español*. No ignoran muchos que en toda Europa no hay una nacion que pueda jactarse de presentar seis tragedias, o seis comedias perfectas en todas sus partes y sin defecto notable para el teatro. Con tal que las bellezas sean en mayor número que las fealdades, es muy suficiente para que las composiciones dramáticas den gloria y esplendor al teatro de cualquiera nacion.¹⁷

This thinly veiled entreaty for a moderate critical response was made more explicit later. However, if the writer was fearful that the plays would be judged harshly, the expression of these concerns in authoritarian terms with a hint of cynicism, appeared destined to provoke rather than placate: 'No deben, pues, oirse las sátiras de críticos mordaces, y talvez mal intencionados, cuyo fruto no es otro que el de infundir en los ingenios una cobardía perjudicial' (p.xvi).

The author's subsequent assertion that sceptical critics would be progressively won over by the appearance of further volumes in the series, must have seemed unconvincing in the light of the tacit admission that the plays in this initial tome were less than impressive, 'si las piezas que se incluyen en la colección no tuvieran todo el mérito que se desea, a lo menos no serán monstruosas' (p.xvii). The result was a cautious prologue which lacked the confident tone necessary to trumpet the appearance of an anthology of drama which was intended to revive the splendour and glory of the Spanish stage.

Gálvez Addresses the Critics

Given the perplexing lack of ambition or enthusiasm for the plays expressed in 'Al lector', it is surprising that relatively few playwrights who contributed to the *Teatro*

nuevo español, accepted the invitation to ‘hacer alguna advertencia, ó discurso preliminar sobre sus composiciones, con tal que sea muy breve’ (p.xxv) as a means of countering the seemingly indifferent note struck in the general prologue.¹⁸ Gálvez, one of only five authors who elected to preface their works, perhaps recognised that the ‘Advertencia’ afforded her an opportunity to disclose her priorities in writing *Ali-Bek* and to prepare her public for the innovations and experimentation in the tragedy. In marked contrast to the general prologue, her piece boasted a forthright, confident tone which was evident from the opening sentence where Gálvez paralleled her own unique status as Spanish dramatist with the originality of the tragedy, insisting on the novelty and dramatic effect of her adaptation of an historical source: ‘La novedad de ser esta composicion obra de una señora española, la del asunto mismo, no tratado hasta ahora por otro’ (p.117). Signalling her Aristotelian credentials, Gálvez claimed that her additions to the narrative embellished fact with fiction in order to transform ‘lo estéril del asunto’ (p.117) into an engaging and lively piece of theatre.¹⁹

From this self-conscious statement of her competence as an author, it is clear that Gálvez’s preface was directed primarily at the critic rather than the general reader. She adopted a lively, combative stance in the face of the likely reception of her tragedy, which she hoped would be ‘juiciosa y urbana’ (p.118), and remarked, with ironic humility, that she would welcome constructive comments and responses to her work, ‘admitirá gustosa qualquiera advertencia razonable; y ofrece, con tal que lo sea, aprovecharse de ella para corregirse en otras composiciones en que actualmente trabaja’ (p.118).

To a certain extent these words echoed the sentiments expressed in the general prologue. Yet where Gálvez aimed to provoke, the anonymous author wavered between pleading and preaching:

Un prudente disimulo, ó una advertencia atenta y juiciosa anima á los poetas, les abre los ojos, y no los intimida, y retrae como una sátira avinagrada, mordaz, y aun maligna. Critiquense enhorabuena las piezas del *Teatro nuevo*, pero hágase la crítica con aquel juicio, atencion y urbanidad á que son acreedores de justicia los que por su parte hacen cuanto pueden en obsequio del Rey y de la patria.²⁰

Thus, although different in tone, both Gálvez’s ‘Advertencia’ and ‘Al lector’ testified to a shared concern with critical reaction to the *Teatro nuevo español*. However, if the intention was to circumvent adverse criticism, the effect fell short of this. The curious

blend of supplication and exhortation in the general prologue established an awkward, confrontational relationship between writer and reader which must have deepened existing antipathy towards the plays in the collection suggested by unprecedented low ticket sales on their performance.²¹ Although the tenor of Gálvez's prologue differed significantly from the dominant hectoring tone in 'Al lector', the tragedy was nonetheless ruthlessly criticised.

A Contemporary Reaction to Gálvez and *Ali-Bek*

Setting a precedent which Quintana and others followed in subsequent years, the contemporary review of *Ali-Bek* opened with a lengthy discussion of the aptitude of women for 'el cultivo de las letras' (p.10).²² From the outset, the tone of the piece was heavy-handed and sardonic. The author did not attempt to disguise his gender, but rather emphasised the male assumptions and attitudes on which his opinions were founded.²³ It is clear that despite his protestations to the contrary, the brief analysis of Gálvez's tragedy in the final four paragraphs, merely served to justify the rehearsal of 'la cuestión de si las mugeres son ó no aptas para las ciencias' (p.10) which formed the central plank of the piece.

The critic proclaimed the mediocrity of much female writing, although he conceded that women surpassed that which might be expected of their sex in the composition of epistolary narrative, novels, short stories and light verse which 'requieren viveza, sensibilidad, imaginacion y gracia' (p.11). In damning with faint praise, the reviewer vaunted his credentials as literary critic, and more significantly, bolstered his primary contention that women were incapable of writing tragic drama. Finding it impossible to argue that there were no female playwrights, he observed that their success was limited to a narrow sphere of theatrical production, 'sencillos dramas' written 'en prosa lisa y llana'(p.12), a clear allusion to sentimental comedy. By according women writers a degree of eminence in a literary field considered to be less intellectually demanding, he subtly affirmed the hierarchy of genre in which male writers occupied an exclusive position as tragedians and authors of serious drama.

These sneers and jibes, which served as a prelude to the critical assessment of *Ali-Bek*, dissuade the modern reader from accepting the reviewer's opinion of the tragedy at face value. Beyond the relentless attempt to colour with cynicism the tone of the piece, the author raised few expectations, either in respect of Gálvez's play, or his own

examination of it. He implied that a drama written by a woman did not merit scrutiny, disguising his contempt with feigned courtesy towards 'el bello sexo'. In prefacing his analysis of *Ali-Bek* with a sarcastic tribute to Gálvez's achievement, he mocked her evident pride both in the originality of her work and her own status as female Spanish tragedian.²⁴

Yet despite the prejudice against women's writing inherent in the review, the critic raised a number of issues relating to Gálvez's experiments and innovations in *Ali-Bek* which provide a useful starting point for any analysis of the tragedy. He focused on the alleged absence of realistic characters in the play, perhaps a veiled reference to Gálvez's perceived failure either to follow Aristotelian precept or to fulfil one of the implicit prerequisites for new Spanish drama as outlined in the general prologue of the *Teatro nuevo español*.²⁵ The short, ironic character sketches on which he based the piece suggested that he regarded poor characterisation as the principal shortcoming of Gálvez's tragedy.

Significantly, the critic did not begin with the eponymous protagonist, but Amalia, according her the dual status of victim and heroine of the drama. Ali-Bek, ostensibly the tragic hero, was dismissed as a bloodthirsty 'rebelde' (p.12), while his main adversary, Morad, earned a description befitting the main protagonist, 'un buen musulman, héroe de profesion, noble y valeroso hasta el extremo.' (p.12). Hassan was written off as 'el monstruo mas horrendo' (p.13) and Mahomad fared little better as 'un mameluco tan malo y tan infame que todos le aborrecen y á todos aborrece' (p.13). By way of conclusion, Ismael, the least significant character, received the sympathy of the reviewer, who referred to him as 'un pobre diablo' and used this to incorporate a final critical flourish, declaring the tragedy a 'deshecha borrasca' (p.13).

The avowedly hostile reviewer did not conceal the fact that he found little to praise in the composition of Gálvez's tragedy. His criticism pivoted on a pointed refusal to treat Ali-Bek as the eponymous tragic protagonist, most evident in the wry observation that Amalia 'es la heroina del drama de Ali-Bek, Hassam, Mahomad y comparsa' (p.12). However, though crudely articulated and necessarily exaggerated, the sarcastic portraits were curiously perceptive, since that which the critic identified as technical inadequacy is precisely what I contend is Gálvez's conscious innovation. In pouring scorn on the construction of character, the critic revealed, surely unintentionally, a major aspect of experimentation, which will serve as a framework for my interpretation of this tragedy.

Characterisation and Experimentation in *Ali-Bek*

The de-centring of the tragic protagonist in *Ali-Bek*, so apparent to the contemporary critic of the *Memorial literario*, might be viewed as a deliberate strategy on Gálvez's part to remodel the parameters of characterisation in tragedy. In effect, there are five important characters in *Ali-Bek* rather than the single principal character we might expect.²⁶ The inter-relationships of these characters and the fluctuations in their respective fortunes are central to the exposition, development and resolution of the plot.²⁷ Thus rather than regard *Ali-Bek* as a tragedy without a tragic hero, one might better understand the work as an ensemble piece in which Ali-Bek's demise takes place in the wider context of a complex series of relationships and dramatic conflicts which arise out of contrasts in status, values and desires between the characters. These are predominantly psychological in nature and evolve primarily through dialogue, although physical confrontation features through minor on-stage and reported action.

a) Ali-Bek: A New Model of Tragic Hero

In creating Ali-Bek, Gálvez embraced both antique models and contemporary Spanish theories of tragedy. As Bey of Egypt he possesses the title and authority which make him a suitably elevated figure in Luzán's terms. Furthermore, in accordance with Aristotle's concept of the importance of moral goodness as a prerequisite for any tragic protagonist, Ali-Bek's integrity is apparent both in virtuous acts and a desire for self-improvement and Gálvez makes him both more aware and more proud of his military and civic achievements than of his powerful position. Rebuking Mahomad's observation that 'La fortuna al nacer nos hizo iguales' (III,iv), Ali-Bek stresses the distinct moral code by which each now lives:

Iguales al nacer, ¡quán diferentes
hemos sido en vivir! Yo en mi carrera
[...]
logré por mis hazañas que vivieran
en paz y libertad los oprimidos;
y tú por tu avaricia, donde quiera
que mandabas, viviendo aborrecido
contra tí alzaba el grito la inocencia (III,iv)

Ali-Bek's virtue and lack of greed are contrasted with Mahomad's unscrupulous and grasping nature. Ali-Bek recognises 'la sed del oro' (III,iv) in the man he elevated to prosperity and who rewarded this act of faith with treachery, but he is dignified in the

face of his corrupt adversary and offers Mahomad the opportunity to repent his past actions.

In this scene, Gálvez appears to attribute to Ali-Bek the necessary moral integrity and social standing for a tragic protagonist and yet in the course of the tragedy, she consistently and deliberately undermines this stature and hints that these qualities are superficial and transient. The striking feature of the creation of Ali-Bek is that from the beginning of the action his power and moral worth fail to convince. Prior to his first appearance on stage (II,iii), Ali-Bek is depicted by his enemies as 'rebelde', 'tirano' 'infame' (II,iii) and it is only later that his moral regeneration and renunciation of violence and licentiousness become clear. Thus at the outset, Ali-Bek's past brutality is foregrounded, prefiguring the violent resolution of the tragedy, but, more significantly, contributing to the sense that his character and morality are not immutable, but contingent. Furthermore, his temporal power and status as leader are compromised, since throughout the action he is effectively a prisoner. Gálvez presents a surprising and ultimately fragile eponymous protagonist whose dilemma is not central to the action and whose tragic status is never fully established.

This precariousness of status is accentuated by Gálvez's depiction of Ali-Bek as physically frail, passive and dependent on others, from his first appearance on stage (II,iii) to his undignified death by poison. He enters bearing wounds to the head sustained in combat with Morad. Although willing to continue fighting, Ali-Bek's breathlessness, conveyed through his heavily punctuated dialogue testifies to his weakened and exhausted state. Seconds later, 'Desfallecido' he raises his hand to his forehead, a gesture reminiscent of a woman on the verge of fainting and collapses into Amalia's arms, before being helped off the stage (II,v).

In this remarkable and inauspicious first appearance, Gálvez reverses stereotypes of gendered behaviour to signal clearly that Ali-Bek is not a conventional heroic tragic protagonist. His physical weakness is thrown into relief by Amalia's superior fortitude and throughout the remaining action, Ali-Bek appears to lack dynamism and inner strength. He is deeply troubled and insecure and toys with the idea of suicide. However, as the contemporary reviewer of the tragedy implied, somewhat sarcastically, he seems to lack the necessary resolve to undertake such an action and instead, dies an inglorious and lingering death at the hands of Hassan.²⁸

Gálvez's treatment of the manner of Ali-Bek's death and of three important structural elements of ancient tragedy, hamartia, peripety and anagnorisis,²⁹ corresponds to the ambivalent tragic status accorded to his character. The vindictive poisoning of Hassan, which must constitute Ali-Bek's error (hamartia) is unsurprising, even predictable, given the frequent allusions to his latent barbarity. His repressed violent nature finally and inevitably emerges from beneath the veneer of civility. However, Gálvez diffuses much of the dramatic impact of this action by presenting it as no more than an angry and vengeful *reaction* in the face of his own humiliation, loss of power and imminent death. The discovery that Hassan has poisoned him (IV,vi), is the act of recognition (anagnorisis) which prompts Ali-Bek to determine to avenge himself. However, the absence of any deep meditation on the appropriate course of action (V,i) betrays the lack of tragic resonance afforded to his character.

The tragic dimension of Ali-Bek's life also seems to be lessened by Gálvez's alteration of the traditional causal relationship between error, and reversal of fortune (peripety). Ali-Bek's killing of Hassan does not precede, but rather follows his own defeat and capture, ostensibly the starting point of his demise. In fact, from this unusual exploitation of the classical conventions of the genre, Gálvez de-emphasises the downfall of Ali-Bek the warrior hero in order to refocus the tragic interest of the play on the nature and fortune of his relationship with Amalia and the wider repercussions of this for the other characters as evidenced in the climactic penultimate scene of the tragedy.

b) Amalia: Heroic Virtue

One of the surprising features of the characterisation of Ali-Bek is the extent of his physical and emotional dependence on Amalia, his wife. It indicates the importance of their relationship to the progress, rhythm and final resolution of the tragedy and contributes to the de-centring of Ali-Bek's character and the corresponding focusing on that of Amalia. The ambiguities and contradictions which serve to define Ali-Bek's character are entirely absent from that of Amalia, who, as the critic of the *Memorial literario* review somewhat ironically observed, might be regarded as the heroine of this tragedy. However, where the reviewer presented her as a passive victim 'oveja tímida é inocente, cercada de tigres feroces' (p.12), using familiar animal imagery to perpetuate received notions of gender, this simplification of her characterisation belies her dynamic role in the play.

At the outset, Gálvez shows that their relationship is founded on mutuality. However, it is made clear that this has been achieved through a transformation of Ali-Bek's personal morality and behaviour, effected by Amalia, as she acknowledges with obvious pride:

Si fué esclavo Ali-Bek, ya solo es héroe:
su bondad, sus victorias y sus lauros
le hicieron digno de mandar el pueblo,
que de un infame yugo ha libertado.
Si él me nombra su esposa; si en mi obsequio
las tiránicas leyes del serrallo
para siempre rompió, si compasivo
concede libertad á los Christianos,
contra tantas virtudes mal pudiera
negarle un corazon, que ha conquistado
amante y generoso. (II,viii)

Virtue and constancy are the hallmarks of her nature, although they are not signs of meekness and compliance but of an inner strength which renders her brave and bold. She is perspicacious, as evidenced in her dealings with Mahomad (I,vii), and her repeated heroic actions and assertions of her beliefs confound audience expectations of a model of feminine modesty on stage. Morad is disarmed when Amalia places herself bodily between his sabre and Ali-Bek's chest in order to preserve her husband's life (II,iv). It is an act of intervention which foreshadows that which takes place in the closing scenes of the play when she is emotionally and physically trapped between the conflicting demands of her dying father and husband (V,iii). Similarly, Mahomad is dismayed by Amalia's rejection of his offer of 'rescue' (IV,iii), and Hassan cannot accept his daughter's blank refusal to regard herself as the victim of a tyrannical and unworthy spouse (IV,ii).

In fact, Amalia is shown to have a greater agency over her actions than the passive Ali-Bek and in this Gálvez seems to place her character at the centre of the moral and emotional interest in the tragedy. In emphasising the equality of their marriage, Gálvez invites the audience to compare the two characters and Amalia is seen to be the equal of Ali-Bek, but in some senses also his opposite and superior: where he faints, she supports him physically (II,iv), where he weeps and is afraid, she supports him emotionally (III,ii). Gálvez invests in Amalia a set of qualities which belies traditional notions of submissive, subservient womanhood and remodels feminine virtue as essentially heroic and dynamic.

c) Morad: An Altruistic Hero

The other character to whom Gálvez ascribes heroic traits in this tragedy is Morad, whose altruistic heroism also serves to displace Ali-Bek as the centre of interest. In his altercation with Mahomad (I,ii), Morad is revealed as a principled warrior, who abhors duplicity and who insists on a strict honour code. Mahomad attempts to excite less noble aspirations in him, suggesting that the exhilaration achieved in the heat of battle is superior to the pleasures of love which he defines as:

Una sombra fugaz, una voz vaga,
que en el Harem gozamos sin peligro,
sin susto, ni temor; (I,ii)

However Morad is incensed by this outmoded confusion of sexual gratification, love and politics and in this Gálvez marks him out as an admirer of European values and civilisation:

¡Tú comparas
el tierno amor con el brutal deleyte,
el amor, que en Europa ofrece el alma
en voluntario don á quien adora
con las caricias tristes y forzadas
que hace la esclavitud á sus tiranos! (I,ii)

In privileging sensitivity over brutality and equality over tyranny, Morad exhibits a sophisticated and enlightened concept of mutuality in love which is tested in respect of his own feelings for Amalia which she is unable and unwilling to reciprocate. When she convinces him that she is devoted to Ali-Bek of her own free will (II,viii), he abandons his quest to win her affection. Although he can never deny the love he feels for Amalia, he endeavours to overcome it, showing respect for her constancy to her husband and compassion for her suffering and loss at the end of the play. He pursues a course of action which is not of his choosing, but which he knows to be right, observing the paradox of his situation in an aside which makes plain the extent of his compromise: 'Amalia, por tu llanto, por tus quejas / defiendo á mi enemigo' (IV,vi).

Throughout the tragedy, Morad undertakes a series of wise and morally good actions, so that at the dénouement it is clear that he is the worthy and legitimate successor in Egypt to Ali-Bek: he insists on noble battle tactics (I,iii); he abandons his selfish pursuit of Amalia (II,viii); he disassociates himself from Mahomad's ignoble cause

(IV,v); he warns Ali-Bek of Hassan's plot to poison him (IV,vi); and ultimately he undertakes to see Amalia's safe return to France after the death of her husband (V,iv). This virtuous trajectory ensures that Morad, like Amalia, is the object of audience admiration, but more tellingly, his integrity casts Ali-Bek's uncertain moral status in an increasingly grey light. He is almost too worthy and perhaps represents an idealised figure, the imaginary fusion of enlightened European wisdom and indigenous pride, heroism and bravery.

d) Hassan and Failed Fatherhood

If the key to understanding Gálvez's portrayal of Morad is his moral integrity and respect for enlightened attitudes towards love and good leadership, then Hassan might best be interpreted as a character who has abandoned ethical principles and whose morality is suspect. The act of selling his daughter into slavery is a betrayal of enlightenment values of freedom and more crucially of paternal love and in the course of the play he continues to be motivated by selfish and barbarous instincts. More than this, though, he deliberately abuses his knowledge and power as a doctor to secure his revenge on Ali-Bek, revealing his calculated rejection of civilised values.

Yet despite depicting Hassan's malevolent and vindictive behaviour in this play, Gálvez allows his character to repent past actions and to express bitter regret. He frequently betrays awareness of his own moral slide and in this way Gálvez seems to accord Hassan some of that deep introspection and self-scrutiny which is normally proper to the tragic hero. His first substantial speech is laden with guilt, self-loathing and Christian contrition:

pero el alma
me penetra el peligro de una hija
que puede en este dia ser tu esclava.
Este nombre afrentoso, que ha sufrido
desde los tiernos años de su infancia,
yo le fixé por siempre: he profanado
de la naturaleza las sagradas
leyes consoladoras: (I,iv)

Although a profoundly unappealing character, Hassan's soul-searching and remorse arouse audience sympathy and by the resolution of the tragedy he has become a figure of

pathos. In this lies further evidence of Gálvez's dispersal of attributes normally centred on the tragic protagonist among other characters in this play.

Ultimately Hassan may be regarded as a symbol of enfeebled patriarchy. He is an ineffectual and self-confessed failed father, deprived of much of his power and abusing that which remains to him. Gálvez shows that since fleeing the French court he has persistently succumbed to the forces of circumstance and been unable and frequently unwilling to act with integrity, preferring to regard himself as a victim (I,iv, IV,ii, V,iii). He is one of a number of complex, but somehow inadequate father figures in Gálvez's tragic oeuvre who often contrast with principled and dynamic younger women.

e) Mahomad: Manipulation and Brutality

One of the functions of this character is to remind audiences of Ali-Bek's past barbarism. His cynical conflation of love and sexual gratification, his ruthless and dishonourable battle tactics, his brutal treatment of enemies seem designed to reveal Mahomad to be a savage who exists outside the codes of civility, honour and virtue. Amalia describes him as 'un monstruo, / formado por la cólera del cielo, / para sembrar el crimen en la tierra.' (IV,iii). However, far from being ignorant and bestial, Gálvez depicts him as cunning and manipulative. His vaunting ambitions for power have prompted him to betray Ali-Bek and infiltrate his former master's troops in order to usurp the position of Bey at the start of the action. He is shown to possess the necessary political acumen to plot and secure his personal advancement and his accompanying skills of oratory aid his duplicitous designs (III.iv).

In the early stages of the play, Mahomad's schemes are important mechanisms for driving the plot. However, with Amalia's refusal to regard Mahomad as her 'libertador', but rather as 'un traidor infame' (IV,iii), and, more importantly with the loss of Morad's support, Mahomad's fortunes begin to wane (IV,v). The resistance of Amalia and Morad to his rhetoric and machinations not only serves to contrast virtue and vice, but also halts the momentum of Mahomad's self-serving cause. It is indicative of the extent of his dwindling importance that he does not appear in the last act. In the final scene his cowardly flight is reported, and the audience is left to ponder the significance of a man whose unscrupulous nature and corrupt behaviour go unpunished.

Dramatic Structure: Convention and Innovation

The *Memorial literario* reviewer recognised in *Ali-Bek* ‘una tragedia enteramente original, en cinco actos, en versos corrientes, y en donde están guardadas las tres unidades’ (p.12).³⁰ It is true that Gálvez adheres to the conventions of classicising tragedy and this might be interpreted as evidence both of her determination to maintain structural constants which guaranteed the elevated status of the genre and of her desire to prove herself as a tragedian.³¹ Given that *Ali-Bek* was the first of her tragedies to be performed and printed, it would have been important for Gálvez, as for any aspiring tragedian, to demonstrate her knowledge of precept and her ability to translate this into practice. Moreover, in addition to legitimising her as a writer, Gálvez’s adherence to norms also helped to sanction the more radically innovative aspects of her dramaturgy. Paradoxically though, the conventional structure of *Ali-Bek* threw into sharp relief Gálvez’s experimentation with character. It was precisely this juxtaposition of innovation and conformity which seems to have perplexed her contemporaries.

Even though the overarching structure of the tragedy conforms to generic norms and audience expectations, Gálvez’s experimentation with character impacts on some aspects of the overall shape of the work. The majority of the scenes in each act consist of rhetorical dialogues between two of the five major characters which enables Gálvez to develop their stage personalities and histories. Ali-Bek’s appearances on stage must take their place among these dialogues and are thus largely confined to the third and fifth acts. This quantitative account of his physical presence offers further proof that Gálvez does not make him central to the development of the plot.

The action in *Ali-Bek* unfolds gradually: incident is limited and occurs mainly off-stage and rhetorical exchanges provide the framework for each scene. This pattern, familiar from much classical tragedy, is conspicuously ruptured by the two penultimate scenes of the play which mark the dramatic climax (V,iii-iv). In the first of these scenes Amalia, alerted to the cries of Hassan, enters and learns that her father and her husband have poisoned each other (V,iii). In an attempt to justify his actions, Ali-Bek produces and hands Amalia a piece of paper - the contract by which she was sold as a slave to Ibrahim. Morad and the remainder of the cast enter into this heightened emotional situation shortly before Amalia faints (V,iv). Prior to her regaining consciousness, Hassan, barely alive, is taken off stage and Morad reads the piece of paper which fell

from Amalia's hand. With Ali-Bek close to death, Amalia implores Morad's help to secure her freedom and he vows to see her safe return to Europe.

In contrast with the measured, rhetorical exchanges which dominate the action prior to this moment, the dialogue in this pair of scenes is characterised by brevity, intensity and urgency: Ali-Bek, Hassan and Amalia's words are heavily punctuated with suspension points, questions and exclamations. The frequently broken speech is accompanied by an increased emphasis on gesture and non verbal communication: kneeling, weeping, fainting, trembling, the eloquent use of the hand and arm to physically support, restrain and implore another. The incorporation of a significant object, in this case an important document, is a further notable feature of these scenes.

This combination of elements, so obviously inspired by plays with a strong appeal to sentiment, is an unexpected departure which breaks with the rhythm established in the preceding action and marks these scenes out in the tragedy. It is likely that Gálvez, experienced in the writing of *comedia sentimental*, deliberately exploited some of the techniques and devices associated with this new and popular genre.³² One of the most striking effects of this surprising and innovative borrowing is to disperse the spectator's interests and sympathies among the four main characters on stage by the penultimate scene. The closing moments of this tragedy echo those of many sentimental comedies in which a number of family members gather for revelations and reunifications and where no character becomes the single focus of audience attention. Thus, Amalia's suffering, Hassan's agony and Morad's rational and restorative interventions all serve to de-emphasise, even belittle Ali-Bek's death throes. Gálvez's apparent readiness to integrate into tragedy devices and conventions proper to another genre is a sign of a flexibility and a willingness to experiment with dramatic form and structure which is even more conspicuous in other tragedies.³³

***Ali-Bek* and Orientalism**

The de-centring of Ali-Bek's character, particularly in evidence in these two penultimate scenes, might be viewed as part of a dominant discourse in this tragedy. Gálvez's choice and treatment of the subject matter invites a reading of the play which focuses on her construction of the relationship between Europe and Egypt. *Ali-Bek* is undoubtedly a work which might be categorised according to what has been defined as 'orientalist' discourse, in which non-European civilisation was presented as cruel, despotic,

undeveloped and intellectually passive, and contrasted with the Enlightenment conception of itself as tolerant, liberal, progressive and intellectually fertile.³⁴

On a superficial level, the fashionable Egyptian setting of Gálvez's tragedy must have appealed to the taste of an audience who enjoyed visually impressive theatrical decor and who were accustomed to Oriental travesties in comic plays.³⁵ Mahomad's tent 'magníficamente adornada al uso oriental' (p.116), is the setting for all five acts of the play. Gálvez complements this luxurious setting with thrilling plot incidents such as French courtly intrigue, emigrés, pirates and captivity, drawing on travel narratives which contributed to and perpetuated the simultaneously exotic and barbaric image of the East.³⁶ However, where much comic drama was both geographically and temporally vague, Gálvez's tragedy was both geographically and historically specific. At the time of the performance and printing of *Ali-Bek*, Egypt was the focus of Napoleon's plans to consolidate revolutionary gains.³⁷ News of the French Egyptian campaigns was relayed to Spain³⁸ and the reading and theatre-going public must have been aware that *Ali-Bek* dramatised a series of events whose consequences were reverberating in their own time.³⁹

Yet the Orientalism goes beyond the evocation of local colour and topicality in this tragedy, and is embedded in Gálvez's approach to characterisation. Although his capture and wounding at the start of the action render him weak and devoid of agency, Ali-Bek is portrayed as fundamentally barbarian, a leader whose latent violence always threatens to surface and finally does break through the façade of his reformed nature. In the construction of his character Gálvez fuses the barbarity and passivity central to European understandings of the nature of Oriental man. Furthermore, since Ali-Bek reveals no propensity for reasoned internal debate or stoic altruism he is unfavourably contrasted with characters who possess these very qualities. Gálvez presents the paradox of a tragedy whose eponymous protagonist lacks a full tragic range and whose undermined status serves as a foil for a different, arguably superior ethical code.

This goes some way to explaining the centrality of Amalia's character whose solid inner core of goodness, virtue and fortitude seem representative of the values of Enlightenment culture. Amalia advocates mutuality of feeling in marriage, she exercises a powerful civilising influence on Ali-Bek and she demonstrates filial piety and compassion. Perhaps most significantly, Amalia's self-identification with Europe at the

resolution of the plot demonstrates Gálvez's opposition of feminine superiority to ethnic inferiority in this tragedy.

At first sight the figure of Morad might seem to contradict this opposition. In fact the construction of his character represents a more subtle piece of colonial prejudice, in that his value system has been acquired precisely through contact with Europe, a debt he explicitly acknowledges. Similarly Hassan, the 'Easternised Westerner' possesses a capacity for self-conscious analysis which is an outward manifestation of his European roots and accounts for much of the audience's sympathy for his character. The deaths of Ali-Bek and Hassan, which constitute the resolution of the plot, mark the end of cultural intermixture and it is significant that Gálvez excludes the future possibility of union between the apparently well-suited Morad and Amalia. Their voluntary separation symbolises the separation of worlds and the return of a status quo in which Europe retains cultural superiority and dominance. The albeit clichéd view of Egypt in the *Memorial literario* review suggests that audiences would have concurred with Gálvez's colonial vision in this tragedy.⁴⁰

Conclusions

The disparaging contemporary critical reaction to *Ali-Bek* in the *Memorial literario* set the tone for much modern criticism. My analysis in part attempts to redress the balance by focusing on Gálvez's experimentation and innovation within the recognised conventions and traditions of tragedy. *Ali-Bek* might be regarded as a response to a particular moment in literary, cultural and political history since it appeared on stage and in print during a period of intense activity and change in the theatrical world. By submitting a play for inclusion in the *Teatro nuevo español*, Gálvez not only signalled a personal commitment to the writing of tragedy, but also aligned herself with those intellectuals who championed the project to renovate the theatre in Spain.

Of her eight tragedies, the action in *Ali-Bek* drew on the most contemporary events and the focus on recent Egyptian history is likely to have stimulated the interest of a public who were regularly informed of the turbulent events taking place in North Africa at the time of its performance and publication. It would have appealed to contemporary taste and sensibility and in its way, was as Orientalising as Vivant Denon's celebrated *Voyage* which appeared in French the following year. Although Gálvez's experimentation with character might be seen as the chief source of interest for a modern

audience, the wider cultural significance of the underpinning colonial vision in *Ali-Bek* should neither be underestimated nor ignored.

¹ María Rosa de Gálvez, *Ali-Bek. Tragedia original en cinco actos* in *Teatro nuevo español*, Madrid, 1801, V, pp.113-192. The play was performed at the Príncipe from 3 to 10 August 1801 and realised 6125, 2865, 1736, 1747, 820, 607, 2337 and 997 *reales* at each respective performance. See Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, pp.486-487, 594 n.5, 617. It is interesting to note that the printed play was advertised mid-way through the thirteen day performance run in August 1801. See *Gazeta de Madrid*, 7 August, 1801, p.840.

² 'Al lector', *Teatro nuevo español*, Madrid, 1800, I, pp.iii-xxv.

³ 'Advertencia', in Gálvez, *Ali-Bek*, pp.117-118

⁴ *Memorial literario*, II.10 (1802), pp.10-13.

⁵ Campos, *Teatro*, p.79. The plan of reform, written by Santos Díez González, is reproduced in Charles E. Kany, 'Plan de reforma de los teatros de Madrid aprobado en 1799', *Revista de la Biblioteca, Archivo y Museo*, VI, (1929), pp.245-284. See p.273 for a reference to the anticipated creation of the *Teatro nuevo español*.

⁶ *Diario*, 14 January 1800, p.53. See Andioc, *Teatro*, pp.541-553, for a description of the legislative content of the plan of reform and an account of the potential impact of the changes on theatrical life. See also Campos, *Teatro*, pp.70-90.

⁷ The prizes consisted of gold medals weighing 3, 2 and 1½ *onzas*, corresponding to first, second and third classes respectively. *Diario*, p.53

⁸ *Ibid.* The same notice appeared in the *Gazeta de Madrid*, 14 Jan 1800.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.54.

¹¹ Andioc, *Teatro*, pp.113-115, reveals some fascinating data pertinent to the publication of the six volumes which comprise the *Teatro nuevo español* to draw conclusions about the likely nature of the readership ('fue un público bastante acomodado, y relativamente culto', p.114) and the popularity of individual plays, single volumes and the series as a whole. Out of a print run of 500 copies per volume, 112 copies of Volume V, containing Gálvez's *Ali-Bek* were sold. Andioc observes that individual plays in the anthology were also sold as *suestras* at the cost of three *reales* each. In a letter to the *Junta*, 21 May 1801 (reproduced in Serrano, *Apuntes*, p.451), Gálvez mentioned that *Ali-Bek* was 'absolutamente vendida', but although second editions of several plays were printed, her tragedy is not known to have been re-edited.

¹² The titles of approximately 615 prohibited plays appeared in each 'Lista de las piezas dramáticas que conforme a la R.O. de 14 de enero de 1800 se han recogido prohibiendo su representación en los teatros públicos de Madrid y de todo el Reino español'. At the end of the sixth and final volume, the following note was printed: 'Se suspende por ahora la continuación de la lista de piezas que deben recogerse, hasta tanto que se tenga un número suficiente de las nuevas, originales o traducidas, con que suplir la falta de las antiguas, que merezcan desecharse.' Campos, *Teatro*, p.79, interprets this as 'una de las confesiones de fracaso del plan de la Junta.'

¹³ 'Al lector', p. xii.

¹⁴ Andioc, *Teatro*, pp.548-549 outlines some of the hostilities to the reform and alludes to others.

¹⁵ Critics have speculated on the identity of the author: Emilio Palacios Fernández favoured Leandro Fernández de Moratín, in J.M.Díez Borque (ed.), *Historia del teatro español*, Madrid, 1988, II, pp.189-90, while José Checa Beltrán favoured Santos Díez González, in 'Ideas poéticas de Santos Díez González', *Revista de Literatura*, LI (1989), p.427. More recently in 'El Teatro nuevo español, ¿antiespañol?', *Dieciocho*, 22 (1999), pp.351-371, René Andioc has presented a new argument to support his personal inclination towards Díez González, pp.354-355.

¹⁶ 'Al Lector', pp.vii-xii.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.xiv-xv.

¹⁸ In 'Una colección dramática entre dos siglos: el Teatro Nuevo Español (1800-1801)', *EntreSiglos*, Bulzoni, 1993, pp.183-194, Francisco Lafarga observes that only six of the twenty-eight dramas which comprise the collection featured a prologue, p.185. Gálvez wrote two of these. See pp.183-194, for a fuller description of the dramatists who contributed to the collection and a discussion of the content and nature of their works. See also Campos, *Teatro*, pp.113-116, for general observations on the plays in the anthology.

¹⁹ Considering the evidence of a number of tragedies and taking into account a range of theoretical advice, but principally that of Aristotle, Luzán agreed that the most successful tragedies were those based on historical subject matter and above all 'historias y acciones antiguas y apartadas de nuestra edad.' Luzán noted that Muratori, among others had advised against the selection of 'los argumentos de historias muy modernas' principally because they would be so familiar to many in the audience that it would be difficult for the playwright to 'variar las circunstancias y los nombres y adaptar el hecho al teatro y a lo verisímil.' Nevertheless with characteristic even-handedness, Luzán acknowledged the example of Racine who 'juza no sin razón que también puede el poeta servirse de casos modernos y recientes, como sean de países muy distantes, porque para el vulgo lo mismo es la distancia de mil leguas que la antigüedad de mil años'. Luzán, *La Poética*, pp.453-455.

²⁰ 'Al Lector', p.xvi.

²¹ With the exception of *El padre de familia* which premiered at the Caños on 16 April 1803, the plays which comprise the collection were first performed and printed between 1800 and 1802. Campos, *Teatro*, p.75, presents a picture of unmitigated box-office failure. However, although Lafarga, 'Una colección dramática entre dos siglos', accepts that the performances were not 'clamorosos éxitos', he suggests that six plays, translated rather than original, were more successful than the others and were revived for performance after their initial run. They were: *El abate de l'Epée*, *El califa de Bagdad*, *Cecilia y Dorsán*, *La ópera cómica*, *La prueba caprichosa* and *El solterón y su criada*.

²² *Memorial literario*, p.10. The anonymous review was probably written by Pedro María Olivé who directed the periodical between 1801 and 1804. See Inmaculada Urzainqui, 'Crítica teatral y secularización: El Memorial literario (1784-1979)', *Bulletin Hispanique*, 94, (1992), pp.203-243 (p.207) and Urzainqui, 'Un nuevo instrumento cultural', pp.176-177.

²³ In the first sentence, the critic openly revealed, one might argue boasted, his masculinity. Alluding to the debate on woman, he observed '[la cuestión] viene a ser la misma que la de si nos igualan o nos son inferiores en talentos.'

²⁴ 'no conocemos alguna que haya tenido ánimo para calzarse el coturno trágico, gloria que parece estaba reservada á nuestra nacion. Así pues podemos alabar el ingenio natural, el entusiasmo, y sobre todo la noble arrogancia de la autora de Ali-Bek, pues todo esto es necesario para componer una tragedia enteramente original, en cinco actos, en versos

corrientes, y en donde están guardadas las tres unidades', *Memorial literario*, p.12. The reviewer clearly intended to mock Gálvez's own declaration, 'La presente tragedia es enteramente original', Gálvez, 'Advertencia', p.117.

²⁵ The importance of the depiction of protagonists who were true to life was mentioned in 'Al Lector', pp.xviii-xix. Campos, *Teatro*, p.90, observes that 'en el espíritu de la renovación hay también algo que afecta al sentido de la comedia: el afán de representar un cierto realismo', suggesting that this explains the condemnation of *comedias de figurón* in the general prologue and the decision to exclude such dramas from the *Teatro nuevo español*.

²⁶ The Ali-Bek of Gálvez's tragedy corresponds to the historical figure of Ali Bey, (b. 1728, Abkhasia, Caucasus [now Abkhaziya, Georgia]- d. May 8, 1773, near Salihyya, Egypt). Ali Bey was the slave of Ibrahim Katkhuda, the emir of Egypt, from whom he was freed and promoted to the rank of district governor (*bey*) of Egypt under Ottoman suzerainty. Having strengthened his position by obtaining slaves and placing them in high positions, Ali Bey was made mayor (*shaykh al-balad*) of Cairo, and worked to overthrow Ottoman Turkish rule. He succeeded in becoming the virtually independent ruler of Egypt, gaining control of Mecca and then Syria, to where he fled in 1772 after being betrayed by his army commander. He was defeated and captured, dying of the wounds he suffered in battle. Summarised from 'Egypt: Mameluke power under the Ottomans', Britannica CD, Version 99 © 1994-1999. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. Grinstein lists three pieces of contemporary French travel writing, which provided accounts of the actions of Ali Bey in Egypt. Of these, she identifies the French translation of [Sauveur Lusignan], *A History of the Revolt of Aly Bey against the Ottoman Porte*, London, 1783, as the principal source of Gálvez's tragedy, *Dramaturgas*, pp. 161-162. Preliminary researches have failed to locate a reference to this work in French translation.

²⁷ At the opening of the tragedy, Ali-Bek, born a Caucasian slave, is now Mameluke Bey of Egypt. He owes his past military success and the respect of the people he governs to the good influence of his wife, Amalia, daughter of French emigrés Roberto, Conde de Bassancur and Adelaida de Vandoma, who were captured by pirates and enslaved to Ali-Bek's master Ibrahim. Amalia barely remembers her parents or childhood sweetheart, Morad, Bey of Alexandria and is ignorant of her true identity and family history, believing herself abandoned by her father after the death of her mother before being married to Ali-Bek. In fact, in order to buy his own freedom, Roberto sold Amalia, renounced Christianity and took the Muslim faith, assuming the name Hassan and becoming a herbal doctor. He claims he was duped into selling Amalia and is thus the natural ally of Mahomad, Ali-Bek's slave, who, motivated by greed and envy, has inveigled Morad into overthrowing his master. At the start of the action Amalia has been captured to draw Ali-Bek into combat. Morad and Ali-Bek battle off-stage while Mahomad and Hassan wait their victory. In the closing scenes of Act I, Amalia is brought before Mahomad before being imprisoned. Act II opens with reports from the battlefield, swiftly followed by the appearance of Morad and Ali-Bek, wounded, defiant yet all but defeated. Amalia's physical intervention stays Morad's cutlass and preserves her husband's life. Although now a prisoner, he is escorted off stage to be treated by Hassan, whose true identity at this point becomes obvious to all. The meeting between Morad and Amalia which closes this act, is dominated not only by her concerns for Ali-Bek but also by her desire to be reunited with her father. In Act III, Amalia dissuades her anguished husband from committing suicide. There follows a lengthy debate between Ali-Bek and Mahomad in which the latter attempts to expose the former as a tyrant in order to justify his treachery. At the close of the act Ismael reaffirms the loyalty of troops to Morad. In Act IV Hassan and Amalia meet and in addition to forgiving his past actions she attempts to convince him of her

love for Ali-Bek before rebuffing Mahomad's offer to free her from a tyrannical husband. There follows a series of revelations: Amalia learns that Morad plotted with Mahomad to kill Ali-Bek and own her as his wife; Morad learns that Hassan has poisoned Ali-Bek and by turn informs Ali-Bek of this same piece of news bringing the penultimate act to a close. In Act V Ali-Bek poisons Hassan and in order to justify his action shows Amalia the contract in which her father sold her to Ibrahim. Amid scenes of heightened emotion, Hassan is escorted off stage in the final throes of death and Ali-Bek dies before Amalia and assembled cast.

²⁸ *Memorial literario*, p.12

²⁹ See Aristotle, *Poetics*, pp.64-65, 70-74, and S.H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, London, 1907, pp.278-279, 317-325, 329-331.

³⁰ See above note 24.

³¹ Gálvez uses the customary *romance heroico* verse form: the assonance is a-a in Act One; a-o in Act Two; e-a in Act Three; e-o in Act Four; i-o in Act Five. The unity of place is observed rigorously while the unities of time and action are less self-consciously observed.

³² Gálvez's *El egoísta* is an example of this new genre.

³³ Notably *Zinda* and *La delirante*, see below chapters nine and ten respectively.

³⁴ See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London, 1995, and *idem*, *Culture and Imperialism*, London, 1993 especially his analysis of Verdi's *Aida*.

³⁵ Gálvez's own comedy *Las esclavas amazonas* might be seen as an example of such a play. Although set in Siam, the plot centres on the reconciliation of four self-evidently European characters: the French generals Carlos Dorval and Alberto Dumeril and their long-lost sisters, the two friends Hipólita (Amelia Dumeril) and Adelaida (Elisa Dorval), who have been captured by pirates and now form part of the elite band of amazon warriors who guard the King of Siam.

³⁶ Perhaps the most well-known of these travel narratives, then as now, is that of Dominique Vivant Denon, *Voyage dans la basse et la haute Egypte pendant les campagnes du Général Bonaparte*, Paris, II, An X [1802]. Vivant Denon's work was extensively anthologised by Quintana in the *Variedades*. See Dérozier, *Quintana*, pp.484-489.

³⁷ Napoleon landed his famous 'Army of the Orient' on Aboukir Bay on July 2 1798. The French were defeated by Nelson in the Battle of the Nile on August 1 1798 and, after they failed to take Acre in 1799, Napoleon withdrew to France, although his army continued to occupy Egypt until their defeat by the British in 1801.

³⁸ See, for example, *Gazeta*, 25 September 1801, p.993, which reported news from Constantinople, Cairo and Alexandria for the month of July.

³⁹ I would agree with Fernando Doménech that Ali-Bek's final speech, in which he looks to Europe for the future salvation of Egypt, 'Quizá, corriendo el tiempo ... en estos climas / serán los Mamelucos maldecidos... / Quizá de Europa... una nación guerrera / á exterminar vendrá su poderío...', (V,v), appears to be a covert reference to Napoleon's expansionist campaigns, see Doménech, *Autoras*, pp.477-478.

⁴⁰ 'Algunos espíritus tímidos, espantados de tan sangrienta y atroz carnicería, clamarán contra el plan y disposicion del drama, como horroroso é inverosimil, pero los que están bien instruidos en la historia moderna del Egipto, lo hallarán muy conforme á ella y muy exâctamente pintadas las costumbres de aquellas gentes', *Memorial literario*, p.13.

CHAPTER FOUR

SAÚL

Saúl, *escena trágica unipersonal con intermedios de música* was printed as the first work in volume two of the *Obras poéticas* and is not known to have been performed.¹ In creating this one-act drama, Gálvez engaged with a modish, new genre and a narrative of enduring appeal to writers and audiences in Europe. The author's manipulation of the possibilities of this dramatic type and of the nuances of the subject matter, demonstrate her skills as tragedian and lend contemporary resonance to a familiar Scriptural story. Through her vivid, passionate and sympathetic portrayal of the tragic demise of the Biblical King Saul, Gálvez questions the ethical significance of the act of suicide and the moral authority of the church and harnesses these interrogations to a new vehicle for the exploration of the genre of tragedy.

The Origins and Development of the *Melólogo*

Gálvez's *escena trágica unipersonal* belongs to a branch of innovative drama, more readily described than named, which developed rapidly and subtly in both form and function during the *entre siglos* period in Spain. In his pioneering study, José Subirá applied the umbrella term *melólogo* to this type of theatre, although such a denomination was used neither widely nor systematically by authors or critics of the period.² In fact, diversity of nomenclature was a prominent feature of the genre and of its critical reception. It has been argued that the many and varied appellations ascribed to these plays when they were performed and printed testifies to the novelty of this dramatic form.³ Yet a more profound explanation of the range of titles may lie in the fact that the genre was not circumscribed by any aesthetic treatise or precept. As a result, writers enjoyed a certain freedom to experiment with combinations of speech, music and gesture and to reflect the particular focus of their dramas in the generic label they ascribed to their work.

The flexibility which the new dramatic type offered to authors posed a challenge to some literary commentators, many of whom feigned perplexity and claimed that the ill-defined nature of the genre, not quite opera, neither poetry nor drama, rendered it unsatisfactory.⁴ However, the *melólogo* was far from an arbitrary, rootless form. Speech,

music and gesture had been combined in various proportions in several theatrical genres in Spain in the eighteenth century.⁵ Of particular importance in tracing the origins of the *melólogo* is the rise in fortunes of the native *tonadilla escénica*, a literary-musical production which featured song and versified speech and which achieved greatest popular acclaim in the last quarter of the century.⁶

The popularity of the *tonadilla*, facilitated the development of the *melólogo*,⁷ but the impetus for its emergence on the Spanish stage was provided by Jean Jacques Rousseau's experiments in the fusion of music and drama, which culminated in the ground-breaking *Pygmalion*.⁸ Rousseau's articles for the *Encyclopédie* (1751-1780) and his *Dictionnaire de Musique* (1768) stressed the latent potential of music to inject emotional intensity into the performance of the actors and the experience of the audience.⁹ In the past, instrumental music in drama had frequently served to describe, accompany or underline external action. The originality of Rousseau's project centred on the desire to make music express internal, psychological action. In *Pygmalion*, he presented his innovative ideas for the combination of music, mime and speech in theatrical form.

The impromptu Madrid première of *Pygmalion* in French met with extraordinary public approbation. Rousseau's drama was rapidly translated, performed and printed in Spanish, first in prose and later in verse.¹⁰ This success stimulated the creative imagination and practical experimentation of playwrights in Spain who exploited the emotional intensity inherent in the genre to explore tragic themes. Although Tomás de Iriarte was not the first to pursue Rousseau's novel concept of the synthesis of music, mime and speech on the stage, his *Guzmán el bueno, soliloquio o escena trágica unipersonal, con música en sus intervalos* is generally deemed to be the most notable Spanish successor to *Pygmalion*.¹¹

There is some evidence to suggest that Iriarte's work was inspired by Juan Ignacio González del Castillo's *Hannibal*.¹² Yet, although González del Castillo was an experienced *sainetista*, Iriarte's greater prominence and established literary reputation as fabulist may, in part, account for the unequivocal popular endorsement of *Guzmán*. Luciano Francisco Comella's *Introducción* to the performance of Iriarte's play may also have assisted in its enthusiastic reception, by pre-empting and therefore diffusing any audience hostility to the new, unformulated genre.¹³

Iriarte's choice of a familiar national-historical narrative, praised by Santos Díez González, suggests that the patriotic subject matter contributed to the enduring fascination of his *melólogo* with audiences in Spain.¹⁴ However, a more profound explanation for the continuing popular appeal of *Guzmán* and for the status it acquired as literary benchmark for the genre in Spain, lies in Iriarte's enviable combination of skills and talents as dramatist, musician, composer and musical theorist which afforded him a considerable advantage over other writers of the new form. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he was an experienced playwright who also possessed a sophisticated technical understanding of the form and function of music. These practical accomplishments ensured that he enjoyed an unparalleled degree of independence in the composition of the three basic elements of the *melólogo*; music, gesture and verse. He may have been inspired by the experiments of other practitioners, but he did not rely on external collaboration in order to realize his artistic visions.

Notwithstanding the resounding approval of theatre audiences, both *Guzmán* and the *melólogo* as a theatrical form earned detractors amongst critics and writers. In the years before the Napoleonic invasion of Spain, the genre evolved in an increasingly tense literary atmosphere characterised by authorial experiment, substantial critical hostility and extensive popular approval.¹⁵ Playwrights adapted diverse subject matter, from classical antiquity, Scripture, ancient history, Spanish legend and contemporary politics, to the new form.¹⁶ Furthermore, their innovations induced a spate of parodies which themselves achieved a measure of success in performance and print.¹⁷ These literary incursions formed part of a growing debate on the form and function of musical drama and its place in Spanish theatre which prolonged the interest of writers and the public into the second decade of the nineteenth century.

Gálvez's instinct for theatrical innovation probably spurred her engagement with this relatively uncharted, experimental dramatic genre with an inherent potential for the exploration of tragic narratives. However, at the turn of the century, the prevailing direction of the *melólogo* was towards a more diverse range of subject matter and tone, presented in a form in which music and mime played an increasingly dominant role. Gálvez's drama runs counter to this current and it is ironic that a major aspect of the innovation of *Saúl* lies in its revival of the original tragic purpose of the *melólogo*. Gálvez exploits the possibilities of the new genre to refocus attention intensely and

uniquely on the Biblical character of Saul in order to reinterpret and reanimate this ancient narrative and recast the story of Saul as a tragedy.

The Tragedy of Saul: Sources and Antecedents

The Bible (I Samuel 8-31), charts the rise and fall in fortunes of Saul, from his anointing as the first King of the Israelites, to his suicide on Mount Gilboa, in often moving human terms. The onset of Saul's downfall is recounted in Chapter XV. His benevolent decision to spare the life of Agag, King of the Amalekites, contravenes God's orders to annihilate the race and consequently he falls from favour. In vain he attempts to exculpate himself and even when he proves his desire to atone by killing Agag, it is clear that he has committed a grave and costly error.

In subsequent chapters, Saul's demise is conversely paralleled by the rise of David, who flourishes under God's protection. Jealous and suspicious of the younger man's prowess on the battlefield, Saul attempts to harness David's influence by bringing him into the family fold through marriage to his youngest daughter, Michal. When this does not diminish David's stature, Saul makes several increasingly desperate attempts to kill David which forces him to flee.

The final four chapters detail Saul's last battle with the Philistines when the fatal consequences of his earlier disobedience become apparent. Frustrated by God's refusal to hear or advise him, he seeks the assistance of a necromancer (*pitonisa*) at Endor who summons the ghost of Samuel. The prophet informs Saul that God has abandoned him and intends the Israelites to be defeated by the Philistines and Saul and his sons to die on the battlefield.

As predicted, the Israelites are routed on Mount Gilboa and Saul's sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua are killed. After he is wounded with an arrow in the stomach, Saul asks his armour-bearer to run him through and, faced with the man's refusal, he is forced to fall on his own sword. I Samuel concludes with the grim description of the Philistines treatment of Saul's body which is stripped of weapons and armour, decapitated and displayed on the wall of Beth-shan. Later the corpse is recovered by the Israelites and anointed with spices before being buried.

The Old Testament account of the life of Saul presents a puzzling, equivocal assessment of the first King of the Israelites. Biblical scholars have noted that the pro and anti-monarchical positions of the narrators of the early chapters of I Samuel are evident

in their contrasting reactions to Saul's acclamation as King. As the Biblical narrative progresses, Saul is increasingly marginalised and stigmatised by his biographers. He is unfavourably compared to David and loses any vestiges of his early heroic stature. The overarching ambivalence towards Saul's status is most obviously represented in the conflicting accounts of the manner of his death. Although I Samuel plainly describes Saul's desperate and definitive suicide, in II Samuel an Amalekite tells how he dealt a fatal blow to Saul as he suffered the final throes of death.

Despite the obvious contradictions and prejudices in the Biblical biography, eighteenth-century European tragedians clearly recognised that which modern commentators have since acknowledged: Saul emerges as 'a tragic hero, [who] displayed a strength in battle and an ability to inspire his followers that place him high in the ranks of the military great.'¹⁸ The many dramatisations of the life of Saul attest to the potency of the Old Testament account with writers and audiences in Europe, and although none of these dramas was translated into Spanish or performed on the Madrid stage during the eighteenth century,¹⁹ it is likely that the most well-known of them, Alfieri's acclaimed tragedy *Saul*, circulated in Spain in the original Italian (and also possibly a French edition).²⁰ It is known that his drama inspired Francisco Sánchez Barbero's two-act *Saúl*, *Melo-Drama sacro original*, which appeared on the Madrid stage in 1805.²¹

It is nonetheless significant that Gálvez was the first playwright to make a dramatic version of the narrative of Saul available to the reading public in Spain. Although it has been argued that she derived creative inspiration from specific sections of Alfieri's celebrated work, complex networks of literary influence link many theatrical treatments of the story and this renders problematic the search for a single, dominant dramatic source of *Saúl*.²² Indeed, the evidence of the text itself reveals that the familiar, complex and powerful Biblical narrative was the major reference for Gálvez's rendition of the tragedy of Saul.

From Scripture to Tragedy - The Figure of Saul

Saúl is firmly based on events recounted in Scripture. As in other plays, and in accordance with Luzán's advice, Gálvez modifies, suppresses or removes certain details in the original account in order to realize their dramatic and, more significantly, their tragic potential. In this play, which begins with the abandonment of Saúl by his troops and ends with his defiant suicide, Gálvez exploits the textual ambiguities in I Samuel,

selecting and amplifying details which accentuate the tragic turn of events and which reveal Saúl as a complex, emotionally engaging figure.

Gálvez's Saúl recuperates the noble and heroic traits attributed to the character in the early Biblical accounts. These are vital to his establishment as a tragic protagonist. His elevated status is in evidence at the outset and sustained throughout the monologue in the values and attitudes he possesses and the rhetorical manner in which he expresses these. At the beginning of the play, Gálvez juxtaposes the cowardly flight of the Israelites with Saúl's dignified reaction to the imminent triumph of the Philistines and Stoic attitude to the prospect of death. He regards retreat as dishonourable and is quick to pronounce his preference for 'la ilustre muerte' above 'la afrentosa vida' (14-15) in the face of military defeat. The question of how to achieve an illustrious death remains a powerful undercurrent throughout the drama.

At the outset, Gálvez alludes to Saúl's pomposity, a feature of I Samuel.²³ In regal fashion, he refers to himself in the third person as part of a futile attempt to reassert his sovereign authority and regain command over his troops (1-3).²⁴ However, Gálvez quickly qualifies this tendency towards the grandiose by showing that layers of uncertainty and self-doubt lie beneath the superficial arrogance and self-delusion. Although ostensibly addressing God, Saúl's rhetorical questions underscore his struggle to define his position:

¿No soy yo aquel Saul por tu decreto
Destinado á lograr la regia pompa
Y entre millares de varones justos
Buscado en Israel? ¿No soy quien goza
De ungido del Señor el sacro nombre? (23-26)

Saúl's acknowledgement of the loss of his stature and power (28-32) is indicative of his sincerity which testifies to a more subtle nobility of character. Later, Saúl's concerns for the welfare of his people demonstrate a virtuous absence of self-interest (101-146). This same characteristic is in evidence yet again when he articulates fears for the ignominious future of his relations (167-186). Ironically, the cumulative effect of Saúl's insistence on his lapsed status as leader and protector of his people and family is to bestow a new dignity upon him as his honesty and integrity emerge.

In parallel to her emphasis on Saúl's virtues, which posit his nobility and arouse the sympathy of the audience, Gálvez presents evidence of the error of judgement which has brought Saúl to his present state. Early in the speech, Saúl lists aspects of his

character which he believes to have provoked Divine wrath: 'audacia'; 'soberbia altivez'; 'ambicion loca' (33-42). However, these human failings are not responsible for his demise and although on two separate occasions he refers to the true cause of his downfall, as yet he appears oblivious to it. He first mentions a specific action, the transgression of holy law (43) and later identifies a decision, pardoning the Amalekites (188). However, it is not until the final phase of the monologue, when he recalls the encounter with the spirit of the prophet Samuel (291-299), that Saúl acknowledges the connection between the decision and the action, thereby recognising the full nature and extent of his error, the hamartia central to the Aristotelian concept of tragedy.

Saúl's meeting with the necromancer at Endor, who summons the spirit of Samuel on the eve of the battle, is a striking detail in the Biblical account which Gálvez elaborates in her drama. Having recounted aloud Samuel's prophetic words, Saúl appears to see the spirit for a second time and, as if in a trance, dialogues with the vision who seems to urge him to suicide (317-328). Gálvez's exploitation of the original Scriptural story renders the ghost central to the climax and resolution of the play and signals her engagement with both ancient and modern dramatic traditions. Saúl's dialogue with the ghost is designed to fulfil the remit of the *melólogo* to disturb and affect the spectators, although in keeping with eighteenth-century dramatic practice the spectre is neither visible nor audible.²⁵ As in the Shakespearean tradition, in *Saúl* an encounter with a ghost is a dramatic device used to signify extreme introspection and to amplify the inner anguish of the protagonist.²⁶ Moreover, Gálvez's deployment of the ghost in this play also draws on an Aristotelian mode of tragedy in which recognition (*anagnorisis*) plays a major part. The ghost becomes the vehicle for Saúl's recognition of the error which has brought about his change in fortunes.

Gálvez affords Saúl a tragic status which an audience familiar with the aesthetics of classicising tragedy would have appreciated. This status is accentuated in the manner of his death which is far removed from the ambiguities and ambivalence of the Biblical narrative. Saúl's suicide is the result neither of desperation nor cowardice, but is in fact a positive assertion of his free will. In a dignified action, which is in direct contrast to the humiliating stripping of Saúl's corpse at the end of 1 Samuel, Gálvez's protagonist removes his cloak and crown, the symbolic accoutrements of Monarchy and makes a final defiant and heroic pronouncement before falling on his sword.

Dramatic Innovation in *Saúl*: Fusing Elements of *Melólogo* and Tragedy

Gálvez's characterisation of Saúl as a noble, virtuous and heroic individual is reinforced by aspects of her dramatic technique. Gálvez privileges words over actions, thereby according with the emphasis on introspection and the externalisation of emotion which are key features of the *melólogo*. Physical action on-stage is reduced to a minimum in order to give precedence to psychological action which reveals the inner workings of the mind. Language and, more specifically, the emotionally charged rhetorical speech patterns so often a feature of classical tragedy, contribute significantly to the construction of a sympathetic and dramatically convincing tragic protagonist.

In *Saúl*, the *romance heroico* verse form common to all Gálvez's tragedies serves as a foil for the linguistic richness and poetic power which the author incorporates into the fabric of the text in order to create a heightened emotional atmosphere. Vivid, passionate language conveys the depth and intensity of Saul's circumstances throughout the monologue. Graphic and repulsive descriptions of the dead and the dying (88-89) are matched by powerful, harrowing evocations of terror (119-122) which convey the gravity of Saúl's situation and the appropriateness of his emotional response.

It is possible to trace a crescendo effect in the movement and development of the language. Out of the silence and the darkness described early in the play (64-69), Saúl's speech evokes sound and vision with mounting fervour. His language, dominated by imagery of the senses and the elements, allows the audience to hear and see the pictures and noises he calls forth. For Saúl, the sight of the battlefield is indelibly imprinted in his memory (72-74). However, when he describes the bloodied, mutilated corpses of his people (87-89), and the cries and groans of those in the final throes of death, (97-100) the audience becomes party to the experience of horror. Images of freezing, burning and bleeding, cold, fire and blood, present at various points throughout the text, finally come together to signal his imminent end.

This gathering intensity of images is mirrored in the rhetoric of the drama, as Saúl seeks to convince himself and, by extension, the audience of the injustice and irrationality of God's punishment of him and the logic of his own decision to kill himself. In *Saúl*, Gálvez deploys rhetoric not only to reveal the noble, tragic status of her protagonist, but as a vehicle for the expression of his suffering. Saúl's controlled and measured introspection at the start of the play is gradually replaced by a more spontaneous, urgent and intense questioning.

The 328 lines of text are divided into six segments of speech of approximately equal lengths. Although each phase marks the progression towards a more instinctive and emotionally charged eloquence, there are highs and lows within each section which correspond to Saúl's varying moods as he externalises and rationalises his thoughts. The language of the first phase is dominated by questions which reveal the paradoxical behaviour of the Almighty (17-19). However Saúl is not oblivious to his own human failings, nor does he attempt to excuse or justify them. Indeed, he catalogues his own misdemeanours and foibles, showing by the very listing of them that they are commonplace and contrasting this ordinariness with the extreme nature of the Divine response (34-43). Saúl's suggestion that he alone should be a scapegoat is an implicit challenge to the wisdom of permitting all the Israelites to suffer for one man's human frailty (44-50).

The sound of trumpets which signify the victory of the Philistines during the opening six lines of the second phase, also signals a change in Saúl's mood from the confrontational to the melancholic. Yet even as Saúl begins to realise the implications of his isolation and abandonment, as the exclamation '¡Qué espantoso silencio!' (69) demonstrates, dejection rapidly gives way to fear. Saúl is gripped with terror and this is revealed in his morbid detailing of the dying postures of his comrades (83-100). This sequence represents at once Saúl's emotional nadir and a turning point in his development as a tragic protagonist. His extensive and graphic description of the battlefield is the means by which he recognises and accepts his own military defeat and personal loss of power.

In the next two sequences Saúl widens his ruminations to consider the implications of the victory of the Philistines for his people and for his family and contrasts his own powerlessness with the omnipotence of God. It is not an abdication of his responsibility, but rather an observation of his own diminutive status in comparison with God's supremacy. At the opening of the third phase, Saúl's lament at the gravity of the situation of his countrymen serves as a pretext for the expression of his Apocalyptic vision of their future. This harrowing description is initialised with an '¡Ah!' (111), then sustained across twenty-two lines of unbroken speech before a second exclamatory '¡Ah!' (134) which mirrors the first and brings the passage to an abrupt halt. A brief yet emphatic pause offsets the rhetorical question implicit throughout, '¿Y quién los ocasiona / Sino mi culpa?' (134-135). The accumulation of grim predictions and Saúl's

readiness to take the blame is a subtle means of questioning the authority of a Deity who permits such human suffering. There is a rueful irony in the confidence he asserts in the ability of the Divine to restore order to chaos (144-146).

In the fourth section Saúl's escalating anxiety for the welfare of his family is reflected in the number and variety of repeated words and phrases. Blood, frequently the metaphor for life, is linked here with death. Saúl compares the bloodied battlefields with the subjugation of his people and the loss of his own regal status:

Ví en tu giro el estrago de mi pueblo;
Ví desaparecer mi augusta pompa (151-152)

Another emphatic repetition in the lament 'Hasta mis hijos, mis amados hijos' (155) reveals Saúl's growing bewilderment at the impenetrable nature of Divine justice and points up the gulf between the nature of the crime and the punishment:

Y ¿por qué, si Saul fue delinquente
Perdonando á Amalec, su culpa sola
Participar os hace del castigo (187-189)

Later, the expression 'hé aquí ...' is uttered twice to drive home Saúl's sense of frustration at the unexpected and unfair outcome of events (178-182). In the next phase this confusion and disappointment mutates into bitterness. Saúl's reiteration of the words 'hé aquí' in the fifth section reveals his movement towards anger and resentment in the face of David's victory (230-231) and also foreshadows the final pronouncement he makes before his death. There is only one question in this section which is characterised by a pervasive righteous tone. Saúl's rapid physical deterioration, evident in the pauses which begin to punctuate his speech, is paralleled by his increasingly vocal animosity towards David.

In the final segment the audience recognises that Saúl has reached a determination to assert his free will and to achieve dignity in death. It is ironic that Saúl's fragmented dialogue with the ghost and use of broken speech patterns express an unprecedented clarity of mind and power of will. The emotionally heightened language of the final section with its accelerating rhythm of pauses, questions and exclamations, leads the drama to a poetic and climactic resolution. However, this passionate rhetoric does not signal the frenetic end of a broken man, but serves to highlight the ultimately noble and rational act of a tragic hero.

The Structure of *Saúl*: Time, Tension and Atmosphere

Gálvez narrows the focus of her drama to the final few hours of Saul's life. Thus, the performance time of the play appears to correspond to the temporal progress and development of the monologue. However, at a key narrative juncture, Gálvez artificially accelerates the tempo to impel the drama forward. The victory of the Philistines, observed at a distance by Saúl, is made to coincide with nightfall and the onset of his demise (61-68). This technique, which may be adapted from Iriarte's *Guzmán el Bueno*, demonstrates Gálvez's sophisticated handling of the passage of time.²⁷ The description of nightfall gives a decisive impulse to the existing gradual, almost imperceptible, increase in tension and Saul himself senses and articulates this change in pace (69-70).

The fixed temporal parameters of the play, which focus attention on the final hours of Saul's life and the tragic inevitability of his death, are punctuated by the use of narrative flashback. This technique, frequently criticised by Gálvez's contemporaries as precluding verisimilitude, is deployed to good dramatic effect. The author chronicles aspects of the former life of her protagonist, incorporating details culled from the Biblical account, which lend authenticity to this memory narrative. Furthermore, Saúl's recollections of events serve a specific structural purpose as they testify to his changing attitude to the past, which forms an integral part of the process of recognition he experiences throughout the play. Saúl is able to identify the impact of the past on his present suffering and future destiny which reinforce his tragic status.

These experiments with the temporal framework of the drama are matched by an innovative approach to the setting. The atmosphere of emotional tension is heightened by the ever more threatening and ominous darkness on stage which provides the backdrop for Saúl's increasingly vivid expression of emotion. Initially it evokes a contemplative and melancholic atmosphere. Later, paralleling the escalating passion of Saúl's rhetoric and progressive demise, the landscape is transformed into a macabre vision of violent death which magnifies Saúl's sense of isolation and abandonment.

The Structure of *Saúl*: Music and Mime

Given that language is the most powerful dramatic element in *Saúl*, the roles of music and mime, distinguishing features of the *melólogo*, contribute less significantly to the mechanics of the work. *Saúl* opens with an orchestral overture and each of the six spoken segments which comprise the text is separated by a short musical interlude, the

colour and tone of which is indicated in the stage directions.²⁸ This aspect of *Saúl* is perhaps the most obvious evidence of Gálvez's engagement with the achievements of Iriarte's seminal *melólogo*. Perhaps due to a lack of expertise in the composition of music, or possibly because of the continuing success of *Guzmán*, Gálvez generally follows Iriarte's example.

As the curtain rises in *Saúl*, the music, which the author prescribes as 'marcial y estrepitosa', establishes a rousing, defiant and belligerent tone which provides a suitably thrilling opening to the drama, heralding Saul's entry on stage. The colour and tone of the music which Gálvez envisages here is described in terms which appear to derive from the overture to Iriarte's play.²⁹ However, after the overture, the role of orchestral music diminishes in importance throughout the drama as the rhythms and rhymes of poetic speech and rhetoric create a more powerful inner music. Thus Gálvez's play breaks with the traditional reliance on instrumental music in the *melólogo* and *Saúl* contains a relatively small number of musical interludes which are only vaguely defined.³⁰

Gesture is integrated in a similar fashion in *Saúl*. The play opens with a mimed battle scene between the Israelites and the Philistines. However, after this initial pantomime which establishes the dramatic setting and prepares the audience for the entry of Saúl, there is an ever decreasing emphasis on large-scale mimed action. In the same way that music is suppressed in order to make more prominent the rhetorical and poetic facets of the text, so too mime plays a correspondingly small part. This allows the energies of the actor to be directed towards a more subtle and less histrionic performance in which character is established through the power of words rather than elaborate gesture.

Saúl: The Act of Suicide and the Challenge to Religious Authority

Throughout the play, Gálvez's experiments with genre and her adaptation and alterations of the Biblical narrative aim to create a sympathetic tragic protagonist. An inevitable consequence of this portrayal, and one which Gálvez may well have intended, is the questioning of religious authority. At various points there emerges a tension between human virtue and religious law which prompts the audience to contemplate the act of suicide and through this to examine the relationship between humanity and the Divine. Gálvez's drama engages, albeit covertly, with the established Enlightenment topic of Stoic suicide. It can be argued that Gálvez's version of the story of Saul echoes concepts

of noble, self-authored death more readily associated with narratives drawn from Greek and Roman history in which suicide becomes a paradigm of virtuous behaviour.³¹

In three stages, Gálvez skilfully marshals the responses of the audience towards an acceptance of Saúl's suicide as a noble, even heroic act. The seeds of this idea are planted in the first phase with Saúl's derision of his troops for their cowardly and ignoble flight (14-15). However, it is not until the penultimate section of the speech that Saúl explores the moral and ethical dilemma of suicide (203-205). Finally, challenging the superior authority of God, Saul exercises the freedom to determine the time and manner of his own death (324-328). This bold and defiant action is not that of a deranged, defeated and desperate man. Saúl makes a rational, moral choice. The anguish of the progress towards this choice is calculated to elicit the sympathy of the audience and to draw them into a more profound, more compassionate understanding of his action.

In a country in which the institution of the church was so powerful and yet where a growing number of intellectuals and writers were seeking to question the nature of God, the moral and theological issues raised in this drama could not have failed to have provoked a reaction. Gálvez's approach is cautious rather than overtly challenging, but her play probes the mysterious ways of a wrathful and unforgiving Deity. A contemporary audience would surely have concluded that Saúl's virtue, reinforced by his noble suicide, casts the actions of the Divine in an unclear, even unfavourable light.

Conclusions

The *melólogo* was a locus for theatrical experiment in Spain in the latter years of the eighteenth century and it is no surprise that Gálvez, whose interest in dramatic experiment is evident throughout her tragic oeuvre, should engage with this new genre. It has been argued that the innovative combination of music, mime and verse represented an attempt to make tragedy acceptable to a sceptical Spanish public.³² However, the evidence of this text suggests that rather than merely disguise tragedy as a fashionable *melólogo*, Gálvez sought to explore the dramatic possibilities of both old and new generic models.

In *Saúl*, Gálvez experiments with aesthetic convention and audience expectations, exploiting the familiar Biblical narrative and the three structural constants of the *melólogo*, overlaying these with stock elements of tragedy. The author's overt sympathy towards the problematic Biblical figure of Saul is a striking feature of her rendition of his

tragic demise, and the way in which she arouses the sympathy of the audience is the major achievement in this work. In her innovative treatment of the subject matter, Gálvez fuses the emotional intensity of the *melólogo* with the depth and resonance of tragedy to offer a new understanding of the act of suicide.

Gálvez's examination of this powerful theme is not confined to *Saúl*. Indeed, Safo, Florinda and Blanca de Rossi, the protagonists of the other tragedies which comprise volume two of the *Obras poéticas*, all commit suicide. However, it is *Safo*, which can most productively be compared with *Saúl*. Both works share the one-act form, but the particular circumstances which prompt Safo to end her life allow Gálvez to explore a range of emotions and dramatic possibilities which both contrast with and complement those presented in *Saúl*.

- ¹ María Rosa Gálvez de Cabrera, *Saúl. Escena trágica unipersonal con intermedios de música*, in *Obras poéticas*, II, pp.9-22. See Criado y Domínguez, *Literatas españolas*, p.102; Julio Cejador y Frauca, *Historia de la lengua y literatura castellana*, Madrid, 1915-1927, VI, p.312 and Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, pp.147, 353 for details of the manuscript copy of the play and Cotarelo, *Máiquez*, p.123, for brief mention of the approval of the play for performance.
- ² See Subirá, *Iriarte*, for a discussion of the many and various terms used to describe this genre.
- ³ Duane Rhoades, 'The Spanish Unipersonal Plays: 1788-1835', *Gestos*, IV, 7 (1989), pp.95-113.
- ⁴ McClelland, *Spanish Drama*, p.351.
- ⁵ Rhoades, 'Spanish Unipersonal Plays', pp. 98-100.
- ⁶ Alberto González Troyano, 'En torno a la tonadilla escénica', in Álvarez Barrientos and Checa Beltrán (eds.), *El siglo que llaman ilustrado*, pp.487-491.
- ⁷ Rhoades, 'Spanish Unipersonal Plays', pp. 98-100.
- ⁸ Although the libretto dates to 1762, *Pygmalion, scène lyrique* was first performed in Lyon in 1770. The text was not printed until 1771.
- ⁹ See Cinta Canterla, 'La teoría de los efectos de la música en el S.XVIII', in Álvarez Barrientos and Checa Beltrán (eds.) *El siglo que llaman ilustrado*, pp.153-157.
- ¹⁰ *Pygmalion* was premiered on the 25 January 1788 at the Caños del Peral. For details of subsequent performances and editions of the play in Spanish, see Lafarga (ed.), *Teatro europeo*, pp.278-279; Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, pp.813, 918, n.507; Subirá, *Iriarte*, pp. 21-26; Rhoades, 'Spanish Unipersonal Plays', p.110, note 10; Duane Rhoades, 'Bibliografía de un olvidado género neoclásico en el teatro hispánico: escena sola, monólogo, soliloquio, lamentación, declamación, unipersonalidad o llamase como quisiere', *Revista de literatura*, LI (1989), pp.191-216, (p.205-206); Jefferson Rea Spell, *Rousseau in the Spanish World before 1833: A Study in Franco-Spanish Literary Relations*, New York, 1969, pp.292-293.
- ¹¹ Tomás de Iriarte, *Guzmán el Bueno, escena trágica unipersonal, con música en sus intervalos*, Cádiz, 1790. Written in 1789, the play was first performed by Luis Navarro in Cadiz in 1790 and subsequently by Antonio Robles in Madrid: at the Príncipe, 26 February to 8 March 1791; at the Cruz 4-9 February 1794; at the Príncipe 21-23 July 1797. See Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, pp. 421, 441 and 458. The text has recently been re-edited with an introduction: Tomás de Iriarte, *Guzmán el Bueno, escena trágica unipersonal con música en sus intervalos*, in *Antología del teatro breve español del siglo XVIII*, Fernando Doménech Rico (ed.), Madrid, 1997, pp.389-406. All further references are to this edition. See also José Pallarés Moreno, 'Una apuesta teatral de Tomás de Iriarte: *Guzmán el Bueno*', *El mundo hispánico en el siglo de las luces*, Madrid, 1994, II, pp.1001-1014, for a further recent interpretation of the text.
- ¹² Juan Ignacio González del Castillo, *Hannibal. Scena lírica, original en metro endecasílabo castellano*, Cádiz, [1788]. The work was performed by Luis Navarro first in Cádiz, 3 December 1788 and subsequently in Madrid at the Cruz, 9-12 May 1795. See McClelland, *Spanish Drama*, p. 359, note 23; Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, p.450. See also Josep María Sala Vallaura, '*Hanibal* de González del Castillo en los inicios del melólogo', *Anuario de filología*, XIV, (1991), pp.49-76.

¹³ *Introducción para la scena heroico trágica intitulada 'El Guzmán' Por L.F.Comella.* See McClelland, *Spanish Drama*, pp.369-370, 569, and Jones, 'Gálvez, Rousseau, Iriarte', pp.167-168.

¹⁴ 'y representándose en ella una acción ilustre, que nos trae a la memoria el amor a la patria en que se distinguieron nuestros mayores, la hallo digna de nuestro teatro nacional', cited in McClelland, *Spanish Drama*, p.354, note 11. For a discussion of the enduring appeal of the myth of Guzmán see F. Sánchez Blanco, 'Transformaciones y funciones de un mito nacional: Guzmán el Bueno', *Revista de Literatura*, L (1988), pp.387-422.

¹⁵ See McClelland, *Spanish Drama*, pp.349-396.

¹⁶ Rhoades, 'Spanish Unipersonal Plays', pp.100-104 and pp.106-108; Jones, 'Gálvez, Rousseau, Iriarte', p.168. For detailed analysis of sixty-six *melólogos* written in Spanish, including Gálvez's *Saúl* (p.366-367) and a synoptic table of the repertoire of the *melólogo* in Spain between 1788 and 1833, see Subirá, *Iriarte*, pp.135-396, 421-429. See also Rhoades, 'Bibliografía', pp.191-216.

¹⁷ Rhoades, 'Spanish Unipersonal Plays', pp.104-106.

¹⁸ 'The Rise and Fall of Saul' Britannica CD, Version 99 © 1994-1999. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

¹⁹ See E.D. Coleman, *The Bible in English Drama: an annotated list of plays*, New York, 1931; Mireille Herr, *Les Tragédies bibliques en France au dix-huitième siècle*, Paris, 1988; Murray Roston, *Biblical Drama in England from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, London, 1968; M.A. Thiel, *La figure de Saül et sa représentation dans la littérature dramatique française*, Amsterdam, 1926; Massimo Baldini, *La genesi del 'Saul' di Vittorio Alfieri*, Florence, 1934; Lafarga (ed.), *Teatro europeo*; Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*.

²⁰ Vittorio Alfieri, *Saul*, in *Tragedie*, Sienna, 1783-5. The play was reprinted in Paris in 1789 and appeared in English as *Saul, a Tragedy in Tragedies*, trans. by Charles Lloyd, London, 1815, pp.60-126. For a discussion of the impact of Italian literature in Spain see, Joaquín Arce, 'El conocimiento de la literatura italiana en la España de la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII', in *La literatura española del siglo XVIII y sus fuentes extranjeras: conferencias pronunciadas en la primera Reunión de Lengua y Literatura española del siglo XVIII*, Oviedo, 1968.

²¹ Francisco Sánchez Barbero, *Saúl. Melo-Drama sacro original en verso, en dos actos*, Madrid, [1805]. Esteban Cristiani composed the music and the work was performed at the Caños del Peral 6-7, 9-10, 14, 17, 19, 27-28 March 1805; 3-6, 8-9, 13, 27 March 1806. See Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, pp.519, 526-527. The drama is closer to sacred oratorio than *melólogo* and is not thought to have been influenced by Gálvez's work, indeed Subirá, *Iriarte*, p.434, notes that the 'Advertencia' to the 1805 edition stated, 'varios trozos de las primeras escenas, fuera de las arias, están sacados del *Saul*, tragedia de Alfieri'.

²² Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, p.146. However, as Baldini, '*Saul*' observes, Alfieri's drama draws heavily on two French plays: Pierre Duryer, *Saul. Tragédie en cinq actes et en prose*, Paris, 1642, first performed 1639/40 and Augustin Nadal, *Saul in Théâtre de Monsieur l'Abbé Nadal de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Letres*, Paris, 1738, first performed 27 February 1705.

²³ I Samuel, 15. 12-18.

²⁴ Although not included in the 1804 printed text, I include line numbers to refer to this work.

²⁵ Baldini, '*Saul*' notes that pre-eighteenth-century dramatic versions of the Biblical story incorporated a physical representation of the ghost. However, Nadal, whose tragedy was the principal source of Alfieri's play, was the first to recognise and exploit the dramatic potential of removing the physical presence of the spectre from the stage, thus adding a valuable psychological dimension. He cites Nadal's reasons, 'J'ai derobé l'apparition de l'ombre de Samuel au spectateur, non seulement par la difficulté de l'exécution sur le Théâtre, mais encore parce qu'il m'a semblé que l'ombre en paroissant, n'ajouteroit rien a le terreur que j'ai cru qu'exciteroit la reconnoissance du roi, de la manière qu'elle est amenée.', p.46.

²⁶ Saúl's words 'es este acero el que señalas', (32) are reminiscent of Macbeth's anguished soliloquy, 'Is this a dagger which I see before me, / The handle toward my hand?' (2.1.33-34), see William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, A.R. Braunmuller (ed.), Cambridge, 1997, p.139. Jean-François Ducis' adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was performed in the Caños del Peral 25-28 November and 8 December 1803, 25 January 1804. See Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, pp.508-509, 759.

²⁷ The ostensible function of the technique is to incorporate off-stage action into the body of the monologue. Thus, Guzmán observes from the castle wall the murder of his son in the field below (381-390). His words describe rather than react to the sight, a dramatic device which enables the audience to 'see' through his eyes. Iriarte, *Guzmán*, pp.405-406.

²⁸ There is no known musical score corresponding to Gálvez's play. Subirá, *Iriarte*, p.366, introduces the idea that the musical accompaniment may never have been composed, whereas Jones, 'Gálvez, Rousseau, Iriarte', p.168, speculates that Blas de Laserna must have collaborated with Gálvez for *Saúl*.

²⁹ Iriarte called for 'música marcial y ruidosa' and that 'el estrépito de la orquesta va disminuyendo...'. Iriarte, *Guzmán*, p.389.

³⁰ *Saúl* has five musical interludes in its 328 lines whereas *Guzmán* contains nine in 396. 'The number of interludes included by Iriarte seems to have become standard for most of the serious pieces, although as the genre evolved and music was occasionally relegated to less significant roles, the number of interludes cannot be determined with total precision from the evidence in the published texts.' Rhoades, 'Spanish Unipersonal Plays', p.101.

³¹ See, for example, Pedro Estala's *Edipo tirano, tragedia de Sófocles, traducida del griego en verso castellano, con un discurso preliminar sobre la tragedia antigua y moderna*, Madrid, 1793 and Nicolás Moratín's *Lucrecia*, Madrid, 1763.

³² McClelland, *Spanish Drama*, pp.349-396.

CHAPTER FIVE

SAFO

In *Safo*, Gálvez dramatised the legendary amours of Sappho and Phaon which although familiar in European literature had never before been adapted for the Spanish stage.¹ As in *Saúl*, Gálvez exploited the possibilities of the one-act form to intensify the pathos and emotional appeal of the narrative. Gálvez's self-conscious choice of Greek subject matter might be viewed as a superficial concession to intellectually fashionable Hellenism, but it is clear from the evidence of the text that the author's engagement with the figure of Sappho is deep and complex.² For Gálvez, Safo embodies the morally unconventional creative artist, who rebels against patriarchy, is isolated and abandoned, and who takes her own life, an act of suicide very different in motivation and manner from that of Saúl. However, like *Saúl*, this short work gives evidence of Gálvez's conscious desire both to respect dramatic tradition and to embrace theatrical and cultural modernity in the search for a contemporary model of successful tragedy.

The Figure of Sappho: Sources and Antecedents

The fifteenth letter in Ovid's *Heroides* (*Letters of the Heroines*) comprises an imaginary letter from Sappho to Phaon, the point of departure for many subsequent treatments of the subject matter.³ The figure of Sappho had fascinated European writers, principally poets, for generations.⁴ However, during the 1790s, following the publication of Barthélemy's celebrated *Voyage du jeune Anarcharsis en Grèce* in 1788, there was a marked intensification of interest in the legendary life of the Greek poet which inspired a number of dramas of which Gálvez's *Safo* is the unique example in Spain.⁵ Perhaps the most significant of these dramatic precursors was Constance Pipelet's *Sapho, tragédie mêlée de chants*, first performed in Paris in December 1794 and printed the following year.⁶ The tragedy was extremely popular with literary critics and the public in France and ran to over a hundred performances in the course of its many revivals.⁷ Yet while the success of this work on the French stage points to the renewed currency of the Sappho narrative in drama, it is unlikely that Pipelet's tragedy served as a direct source for Gálvez's *Safo*.⁸ It is not known to have been performed or printed in Spain and, more

significantly, Gálvez's treatment of the subject matter differs substantially from that of Pipelet.⁹

***Safo* in Performance**

Recent archival investigations have confirmed that *Safo* was performed in Madrid in November 1801, the second of Gálvez's two tragic works to be staged.¹⁰ Although apparently well-attended, there is no known evidence of the nature of the play's reception. However, in the Archivo Municipal in Madrid a small cache of documents relating to '*la pieza heroica la Safo*' illuminates certain aspects of the staging of Gálvez's play.¹¹ The records indicate that quantities of gunpowder and flaming torches were used, ensuring that the powerful visual effects envisaged by Gálvez were translated into dramatic practice.¹² Furthermore, it is clear that this short drama featured a comparatively large chorus in the non-speaking roles of fishermen, islanders and ministers, whose brief early appearances (ii, iii, viii) are replaced by a more continued stage presence during the final four scenes.¹³ The contrast between this multi-figure one-act work and the essentially uni-personal *Saúl* could not be more marked. In fact, the new archival evidence reveals that the stage would have been even fuller than the printed text suggests, with a full cast totalling thirty-eight.¹⁴

Tragedy and the Emotional Affectiveness of Music Drama

In his introduction to one of two modern editions of *Safo*, Fernando Doménech has commented on the 'acumulación excesiva de personajes y situaciones no resueltas', the principal effect of the 'rapidez frenética' which, he contends, characterises the development of the action in the play. Doménech's observation leads him to conclude that the one-act format is not appropriate for tragedy on a classical model, in which dramatic incidents 'necesitan un tiempo psicológico para que el espectador los encuentre verosímiles'.¹⁵ However, I would argue that it is precisely in attempting to accommodate the norms of classicising tragedy into the short and intense span of a one-act dramatic form that Gálvez's innovation is evident. Even in the 618 lines which constitute the twelve scenes in the play, Gálvez exploits certain literary devices and qualities associated with classical tragedy, as interpreted by Spanish theoretical commentators: the unities of time, place and action are observed and, in common with all her three and five-act

tragedies, Gálvez uses hendecasyllabic *Romance heroico*, the recommended verse form for the genre.¹⁶

Perhaps more significantly though, Gálvez charts the demise of her protagonist in accordance with the tragic conventions of pride (*hubris*), hamartia and peripety. As in *Ali-Bek*, the reversal of fortune operates in two stages. Gálvez makes it clear that prior to the start of the action, Safo readily sacrificed her poetic success and left her homeland in order to follow her passion for Faón (vi, 330-350). Safo has lost 'el honor', but perhaps more significantly 'la esperanza' (vii, 395-396). During the action Safo is offered two opportunities to reverse her demise and in rejecting both, her death becomes inevitable. Neither Nicandro's profession of love, admiration and constancy (vi, 361-366), nor Aristipo's optimism (vii, 397-398) and shrewd appeals to her literary glory (vii, 454-457), dissuades Safo from her intended course of action. Gálvez shows that Safo's pride deliberately manipulated by Cricias, underlies these refusals and constitutes her error. He reminds her that two choices are still open to her (ii, 59-60), but persuades her that in leaping from the rock she will regain her lost status and win public admiration:

el ansioso pueblo
que ser testigo de tu gloria espera.
Todo a cumplir te obliga el juramento
de renovar la fama de Leucadia
en el orbe y los siglos venideros.
Pero si dudas, si el peligro temes... (ii, 66-71)

Although the pace of events which led to Safo's death is necessarily rapid, it is coherent and unified. Moreover, the principal effect of the compression of the action in this short drama is to emphasise the accompanying focus on emotional intensity and poetic lyricism in *Safo*. Thus, the traditional tragic framework remains sublimated and would surely not have been the most striking aspect of the play in performance. The intermingling of visual and aural stage effects with Safo's passionate rhetoric would have had a more immediate and powerful impact on the spectators. The first scene, which comprises Safo's impassioned soliloquy, opens in semi-darkness to the sound of thunder and the sight of lightning and a stormy sea.¹⁷ There is more than a hint of the legacy of *melólogo* in this particular combination, used to such compelling and original effect in two contemporary musical dramas whose tragic protagonists were also spurned and abandoned women: Durán's uni-personal *Dido abandonada* and Brandes' multi-figure

Ariadne auf Naxos, adapted for the Spanish stage by an anonymous author via the French translation.¹⁸

Gálvez's incorporation of music in *Safo*, although not on the same scale as in these works, nonetheless serves a specific emotional purpose. At the end of Scene ix, music emanates from the Temple of Apollo, and Nicandro interprets its significance, 'ya anuncian estos tristes instrumentos / el instante fatal...' (ix, 504-505). In the next scene, Safo leaps from the rock, but the music continues to resonate, perhaps literally and certainly figuratively into the final scene, in which Faón exclaims: 'El templo resonaba / con himnos clamorosos, y aunque quiero / indagar el motivo, me detienen,' (xii, 563-565). The intervention of music at this emotionally heightened juncture in the play subtly intensifies the pathos, linking Safo, Nicandro and Faón, and illustrating not only her abandonment by one man which marks her reversal of fortune, but her rejection of another which constitutes her error, both of which are central to the tragic denouement.

The Creation of Safo as Tragic Protagonist

Gálvez's creation of the character of Safo is remarkably complex given the restricted canvas on which this work is drawn. In fact, the one-act formula obliges the author to do no more than sketch the four male characters in order to represent the protagonist in greater detail. Thus by contrast, Safo's distinctiveness as well as her elevation are accentuated. Her intellectual and creative gifts, in addition to her unconventional approach to love, distinguish and isolate her from orthodoxy, as represented in this play by the Temple of Apollo and its priests. Gálvez makes this isolation primarily emotional and metaphysical, emphasising that the depth and complexity of Safo's passions are beyond the comprehension of those around her. Cricias refers with manifest incomprehension and loathing to that 'insensato y amoroso fuego' (ii, 84) and those 'delirios' (ii, 87), while Aristipo refers to her passions as a kind of blindness (x, 516-517).

One of the most powerful ways in which the character of Safo is exalted above that of the others is through the distinct voice which Gálvez creates for her. Throughout the work, the tone of Safo's dialogue is fervent and impassioned, her speeches are replete with metaphysical vocabulary and references to imminent catastrophe.¹⁹ Gálvez creates a language for Safo which is overtly lyrical and which contrasts with the more prosaic dialogue of her male interlocutors and notably that of Cricias (ii) and Nicandro

(vi). Safo uses the tropes and figures of rhetoric: invocation, self-questioning and exclamation which not only heighten the register of her language, but also point to her status as poet.²⁰ These features are particularly in evidence in the opening soliloquy, when her emotions are linked to natural phenomena. Safo invokes the storm, explicitly associating its energy and capacity for destruction with her own rage and despair (i, 1-24).

Safo's close self-identification with nature in this first scene shades into a yearning for ultimate incorporation into nature sustained throughout the rest of the action. Her desire transcends a simple wish to commune with nature and becomes a longing for oblivion, signified by the depths of the sea:

¡Ojalá que este abismo cristalino,
que baña de la roca el fondo inmenso,
me sepulte, y a ver la luz no vuelva,
si está el olvido en su profundo seno! (ii, 79-82)

Safo does not fear death, but rather craves it since it offers a release from torment (vi, 379-381). More importantly though, the ecstatic anticipation which characterises Safo's view of death suggests that for her it is an act of almost erotic self-fulfilment:

Si tú, Aristipo, en juveniles años
has logrado a gozar los embelesos
de amar correspondido; si has logrado
las delicias que logra quien viviendo
sólo en su amante, en él se vivifica,
lleno de amor, y de deleites lleno,
no extrañarás que yo así me he visto,
piense morir cuando gozar no espero. (vii, 445-452)

Thus she scorns Nicandro's avowal of his affection and attempt to save her life and regards his unwelcome declarations as an obstacle to the consummation of her desire for death (vi, 377-381).

Safo's heightened sensitivities, her identification with nature, her elevated language and complex rhetoric, her suffering and her powerful death-wish suggest that Gálvez's recreation of Safo the Greek poet drew on new literary currents and new images of the creative artist as represented in contemporary European literature and culture and there is some textual evidence to support a view of Gálvez's Safo as a Romantic heroine.²¹ However, such an interpretation overlooks many of the subtleties of

the author's characterisation. On repeated occasions in this short work Safo refers nostalgically to her former fame and glory as an acclaimed poet and part of a philosophical school:

En otro tiempo
sólo al nombre de Safo resonaba
con vivas repetidos el Liceo
de la célebre Atenas, y a mi vista
aplausos tributaba todo un pueblo (x, 520-524)

These serve as constant reminders of a classical model of the creative artist and their place in the world, diametrically opposed to the isolated and self-absorbed figure of the Romantic imagination.²² This opposition illustrates a central tension in this play, expressed in many aspects of its staging, characterisation and language, which derives from Gálvez's negotiation between classical aesthetic values and more modern artistic and philosophical preoccupations.

This tension is most obvious in the visual appearance of the stage, as far as it can be reconstructed from archival information and from the description of the setting given in the printed text. On stage the tempestuous natural world, represented by the rock of Leucadia and the stormy sea, is juxtaposed with the Temple of Apollo, which symbolises the ordered classical world.²³ This contrast between the modern and the ancient is paralleled in aspects of the characterisation of the play. Thus, Nicandro whose infatuation with Safo has been fuelled by his reading of her verse (v, 275-280), and whose passion threatens violence and self-destruction, might be viewed as a model of the new hypersensitive man of feeling exemplified in Werther.²⁴ By contrast Faón is both Olympic athlete (vii, 433-436) and dutiful son who ultimately places filial piety and civic virtue above personal passion (iii, 150-155, 162-164).

Gálvez shows how Safo belongs to both these worlds and the tensions between them are apparent in her actions and words. At the start of the play she seeks isolation and individual communion with the elements. However, her final moments take place in the context of a highly ritualised public ceremony in which her leap from the rock takes on exemplary status. Furthermore, just as Safo wavers between solitary despair and calculated, even Stoic resignation to her abandonment, her vocabulary and expression throughout the course of the action also alternate between passionate and intimate lyricism and grandiose, declamatory rhetoric.

One of the more fascinating effects of this ongoing duality is the questions it raises concerning the significance and implications of the act of suicide central to the action in this work.²⁵ The nature of Safo's yearning for death during the initial scenes emphasises the egoism which seems to motivate her intended course of action. However, even at this early stage there is an indication that far from a spontaneous, irrational act, inspired by unbridled passion, it is deliberate and pre-meditated (i, 28-29). Safo's sense of powerlessness, frustration and alienation, emblematic of the Romantic suicide, diminishes throughout and is entirely absent by the closing scenes, when it is clear that, urged by Cricias, Safo intends her suicide to be exemplary and ennobling. Aristipo observes the effect of Cricias's manipulation of Safo's rage, 'Cricias da a su rencor nombre de gloria' (iv, 231). More significantly though, even through the bitter tones of her final passionate speech, which testify to her enduring sense of betrayal and abandonment, there is evidence of a transformation of Safo's own perception of the act of suicide from one of self-fulfilment to one of example, however ironic:

¡Oh mujeres de Leucadia!
 Vosotras que miráis en mí el ejemplo
 de la negra perfidia de los hombres,
 abominad su amor, aborrecedlos;
 pagad sus rendimientos con engaños,
 pagad su infame orgullo con desprecios;
 giman a vuestros pies; vengadme todas;
 humillad para siempre esos soberbios. (x, 531-538)

SAFO AND THE ACT OF SUICIDE

In *Saúl* Gálvez recuperated the much-maligned Biblical figure of Saul, representing his suicide as noble, Stoic and even virtuous, and in doing so engaged the sympathy of the audience. In *Safo*, Gálvez transforms the tragic protagonist's overwrought, irrational passions and depicts her attitude to death as reasoned and dignified. In re-establishing the place of her character within the customs of Greek society by the end of the play, Gálvez reinstates much of Safo's lost status. The apparent outsider, desolate, isolated and abandoned at the start of the action, dies a ritualised and ceremonial death in accordance with the codes and practices of Leucadia. Human sacrifices are made in the Temple of Apollo in preparation for her leap from the rock (viii, 467-471) and Safo herself makes an offering 'para cumplir la ley que establecieron / la religión y el uso' (viii, 474-475).

Immediately prior to her suicide, Safo is serene and removes her laurel with a sense of decorum and an appeal to posterity:

Laurel glorioso, que la sabia Atenas,
concedió a las tareas de mi genio,
deja mi frente, y queda donde sirvas
a mi nombre y mi amor de monumento.(x, 511-514)

Thus, whereas in *Saúl*, the act of suicide was a defiant gesture, and an unambiguous challenge to religious authority, Gálvez's depiction of the manner and meaning of Safo's death is more ambiguous. At the start of the action, Safo appears strong-willed, even rebellious and it seems that her suicide will mark the culmination of a transgressive and individualistic path through life. However, when it comes, her death is shrouded in the ritual of the temple and presided over by Cricias and Aristipo, whose words point to the didactic value of Safo's action, 'y que le sirva / a los demás amantes de escarmiento' (viii, 481-482), while also suggesting that Safo is effectively being punished publicly for her failure to comply with society's moral codes. Perhaps ironically, through her death Safo is recuperated for the patriarchal order and made to serve its purposes.

Safo could be regarded as compliant in this process. While Gálvez highlights the sincerity and strength of Safo's passion, she does not allow her a death which transcends the social order and thus there is something anticlimactic, almost bathetic, about the final scene when she is brought to the shore. In the closing speech in faltering voice, Safo's recognition of her inability to overcome her intense love for Faón comes to represent her powerlessness in the face of society's norms:

¡Oh tú... sea, quien fueres...
que has visto de mi muerte el triste ejemplo,
publica que es ... supersticioso engaño ...
buscar aquí el olvido ... pues yo muero ...
adorando a Faón ... y hasta el sepulcro...
¡su imagen y mi amor conmigo llevo! (xii, 613-618)

An Enlightenment morality underpins Gálvez's attitude to Safo's actions. In *Saúl* suicide is portrayed as a legitimate challenge to the authority of God, but in this play Gálvez appears reluctant to fully endorse Safo's suicide, since it constitutes an act of defiance by an individual against society.

Conclusions

Some of the ambiguities and tensions embodied in the complex character of Safo are also visible on the broader level of Gálvez's dramaturgy. The language, rhetoric and tone of this play must have appealed to contemporary taste for highly emotionally charged dramatic scenes and Gálvez's choice of the term *Drama trágico* to classify her play, may be interpreted as evidence of this concession to the popularity of many of these new dramatic forms. However, the structures of tragedy and its moral and didactic purpose conspicuously remain the framework for this one-act play. There is an evident tension between old and new dramatic forms, but the passion and colour of the language is always contained within the discipline of tragedy.

For modern scholars the primary interest of Gálvez's *Safo* has tended to lie in the author's alleged self-identification with the Greek poet and with the associated theme of immoral love. Yet Gálvez's attitude to Safo cannot be viewed in unambiguously sympathetic terms, a feature which renders problematic the desire to read this play through the lens of autobiography. I would argue that Gálvez's experiments with form and her treatment of the act of suicide lend this work a wider significance and enduring interest. *Safo* is animated by a series of tensions at the level of structure, setting, language and principally characterisation, which might be seen to reflect the concerns of a writer sensitive to modern sensibility whose work is nonetheless anchored in the traditions of Aristotelian aesthetics and Enlightenment thought.

¹ María Rosa Gálvez de Cabrera, *Safo. Drama trágico en un acto*, in *Obras poéticas*, II, pp.23-56. The text has recently appeared in two modern editions: Doménech, ed.cit., and Whitaker, 'Introduction to *Safo*'. See Criado y Domínguez, *Literatas españolas*, p.102; Cejador y Frauca, *Historia*, p.312 and Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, pp.148-149, 353 for details of the manuscript copy of the play.

² See 'Sappho' in Wilson, *Encyclopaedia*, pp.1104-1106, for a bio-bibliography of Sappho.

³ 'Sappho to Phaon' in Ovid, *Heroides*, Harold C. Cannon (trans.), London, 1972, pp.100-106. Classical scholars have questioned Ovid's authorship of this letter, for a summary of the debate see pp.11-12.

⁴ For a discussion of the treatment of the figure of Sappho in Western Literature see especially Joan DeJean, *Fictions of Sappho 1546-1937*, Chicago, 1989, and also Jerome McGann, 'Mary Robinson and the Myth of Sappho', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 56 (1995), pp.55-76. Among several significant eighteenth-century literary engagements with the theme are: Claude-Louis-Michel de Sacy, *Les amours de Sapho et de Phaon*, Amsterdam, 1769; Jean du Casatre d'Auvigny, *L'Histoire et les amours de Sapho de Mytilène*, Paris, 1724; Mary Robinson's sequence of sonnets written in Sappho's voice, *Sappho and Phaon in a series of legitimate sonnets*, London, 1796, in which she described Sappho as 'enlightened by the most exquisite talents, yet yielding to the destructive controul of ungovernable passions', p.17. It is interesting to note that Mary Robinson became known as 'the English Sappho', see Judith Pascoe, *Romantic Theatricality: Gender, poetry and Spectatorship*, London, 1999, pp.25-26.

⁵ Abbé Jean-Jacques Barthélémy, *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce*, Paris, 4 vols, 1788. Sografi, *Saffo o sia i riti d'apollo leucadio, dramma per musica*, Venice, 1794; Franz Grillparzer, *Sappho: Trauerspiel in fünf Aufzügen*, Vienna, 1790; Franz von Kleist, *Sappho: ein dramatisches Gedicht*, Berlin, 1793. Julia Bordiga Grinstein offers a fascinating comparison between certain passages in Gálvez's *Safo* and in Étienne François Lantier's pseudo chronicles, *Voyages d'Antenor en Grèce et en Asie*, Paris, 3 vols, 1797, which are known to be based on Barthélémy's, *Voyage*. Grinstein argues that Gálvez appropriated many ideas from Chapter XXXII, 'L'Histoire des Amours de Sapho et de Phaon' of Lantier's text and that she even translated whole sections of this chapter to create dialogue for her *Safo*. See Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, pp.149-154 (p.151).

⁶ Constance Marie de Théis, princesse de Salm-Reifferscheid-Dyck, a.k.a. Constance Pipelet, *Sapho, tragédie mêlée de chants, en trois actes et en vers*, Paris, 1794. See Wilson, *Encyclopaedia*, pp.357-358, for bio-bibliographic details of this little studied French writer.

⁷ Pipelet transformed the Sappho and Phaon legend into a tragedy of jealous love. Initial scenes are set at the ancient academy for women which Sappho is believed to have founded. An envious female academician casts doubt on Phaon's fidelity while he is away at sea and Sappho, already suspicious, is easily duped. Believing herself abandoned she jumps to her death from the rock of Leucas before Phaon can return to undeceive her of the error.

⁸ In addition to several French translations of Sappho's verse, there was at least one Spanish translation, that of Bernabe Canga Argüelles, *Obras de Sapho, Erinna, Alcman, Stesicoro, Alceo, Ibico, Simonides, Bachilides, Archiloco, Alpheo, Pratino, Menalipides*, Madrid, 1797. Although Gálvez's dramatisation of the subject matter was unique on the Spanish stage during the period, legends of the Greek poet inspired the verse of at least one of her Spanish contemporaries, the poet María Gertrudis Hore (1742-1801), whose unpublished, 'Zagal el

más bello', contained a reference to Sappho and Phaon. See Franklin Lewis, *Feminine Discourse and Subjectivity*, pp.101-107, for a discussion of the figure of Sappho in Hore's verse.

⁹ Gálvez's tragedy begins where Ovid's fifteenth epistle ended: with Sappho's threat to commit suicide unless Phaon returns to her. At the opening of the play, Safo appears to be on the verge of carrying out her threat. Caught in a storm, she expresses her anger and disillusionment at Faón's desertion of her. Scene ii marks the arrival of Cricias, priest of Apollo and Faón's father, and Aristipo his second in command. Cricias, alarmed for the safety of his son urges Aristipo to muster a band of islanders to search the coastline for survivors of a shipwreck caused by the storm. Left alone with Safo he encourages her plan to leap from the rock of Leucadia. In scene iii Cricias is reunited with Faón, although his joy is tempered by the realisation that, having lost his wife Teagenes, his son might rediscover his buried passion for Safo. In scene iv, Cricias explains to Aristipo his reasons for keeping Safo's existence and feelings secret from Faón. In scene v, Nicandro declares his determination to leap from the rock of Leucadia should his love for Safo prove to be unrequited. Later, when Aristipo discovers that Safo is the object of Nicandro's desire, he determines to save two lives. Although he must not break the vow he made to Cricias to ensure Faón and Safo remain ignorant of each other's survival, Aristipo urges Nicandro to persuade Safo to abandon her plan for suicide. The bid fails, since in scene vi, Safo and Nicandro meet and she scorns his love for her. Aristipo himself then unsuccessfully attempts to cajole Safo into changing her mind. In scene viii, Safo declares her readiness for her suicidal act and in scene ix, Nicandro and Aristipo lament her decision. In scene x, Safo, in front of the assembled islanders, leaps from the rock and in the penultimate scene, Faón learns of her action. In scene xii Safo is brought to shore and dies proclaiming her love for Faón.

¹⁰ *La Safo*, performed at the Cruz from 4-5 November 1801, realised 9214 and 6792 *reales* respectively. See Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, pp.489, 839, 922 n.561b. See also Cotarelo, *Máiquez*, p.631, and below notes 11, 14 and 17.

¹¹ A.M.M., Ms. 1-337-2. Four documents out of the total forty-two in this dossier detail the production costs of the two night performance. They include:- items of scenery, signed and dated 5 November 1801; payments to the copyist for the month of November 1801, which included two copies of the '*pieza heroica La Safo*'; payment for costumes; production costs during the two days on which the play was staged, including stage explosive to recreate lightning in the storm scene and flammable spirit and sponges for 8 torches.

¹² Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, p.922 n.561b, note that the stage sets were designed and painted by Antonio María Tadei, one of two brothers, both painters, who were heavily involved in theatrical design and decor. Ángel, the more celebrated of the two, became a court painter in 1814. At the time of the performance of Gálvez's *Safo* Antonio María was employed as theatre designer at both the Cruz and the Príncipe. Although little is known about his movements, he appears to have been active at the Príncipe during the 1818-19 comic year and some sources state until 1828. See Cotarelo, *Máiquez*, pp.132, 423, 453; Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, *Allgemeines Künstlerlexicon*, XXXII, Leipzig, 1926, p.398.

¹³ Having referred to the stern recommendation of Horace that no more than four characters with speaking parts should be present on stage at any one time, Luzán observed that the incorporation of large numbers of characters in a play, as Lope de Vega frequently had in his dramas, was a serious error. He advised that the dramatist should '*arreglar con juicio el número de los actores y reducirlos a los menos que se pueda, para facilitar la representación*',

and warned that more than ten, 'será exceso y confusión'. However, where appropriate, he did not preclude the use of a non-speaking chorus, 'levas de farsantes como de soldados', as Gálvez seems to have envisaged in this play. Luzán, *La poética*, pp.514-515.

¹⁴ A.M.M., Ms. 1-337-2 shows that payments were made to twenty-three male and five female members of the *comparsa*.

¹⁵ Doménech, ed.cit., p.28. All citations from *Safo* in this chapter follow the line numbers, spelling and punctuation conventions adopted in this modern edition. It should be noted however, that although based on the 1804 printed edition, Doménech has not corrected the typographical error in lines 292-293, which should read, 'Sin duda considera el monumento / de su amor infeliz'. See, 'Erratas del tomo segundo' in *Obras poéticas*, II, p.236.

¹⁶ The assonance is e-o throughout. Estala observed, 'Nuestro romance, ya el endecasílabo para la tragedia ya el octosílabo para la comedia, tiene una armonía siempre varia y muy grata al oído, no ofende con el artificio manifiesto de la rima, no obliga a violentar o estropear los conceptos, y admite todas las gracias y sublimidad de la poesía más artificiosa.' Pedro Estala, *Edipo Tirano*, Madrid, 1793, p.47.

¹⁷ A.M.M., Ms. 1-337-2, shows that the stormy sea was represented by painted cloths.

¹⁸ Francisco Durán, *Dido abandonada. Pieza heroica. Soliloquio trágico dispuesto con verso de la traducción que hizo D. Tomás de Iriarte de los cuatro primeros libros de la Eneida, de Virgilio*, Madrid, 1792. Although the work did not reach the Madrid stage, it was performed in Valencia with some success in 1792 and again in the 1812-1813 theatrical year. Two separate editions of the libretto were printed in Valencia in 1817. See Subirá, *Iriarte* pp.202-203. See also Rhoades, 'Bibliografía'. [Anon] *Ariadne abandonada en Naxos. Melodrama en un acto, con periodos de música*, n.p., n.d., was a translation of Pierre-Louis Moline's, *Ariane dans l'île de Naxos*, Paris, 1782, itself an adaptation of Johann Christian Brandes, *Ariadne auf Naxos, ein duodrama mit musik*, Stuttgart, 1778, with music composed by Georg Benda. The Spanish version was performed with some success in 1793 and 1799. See Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, pp.437-438, 476, 627; Lafarga (ed.) *Teatro europeo*, p.238; Subirá, *Iriarte*, pp.27, 167-177.

¹⁹ She speaks of her own 'mortal angustia' (vi, 303) and 'odiosa existencia' (vi, 306) to cite but two examples.

²⁰ Unaware of Nicandro's presence, Safo invokes Venus, '¡Oh Venus! / Desciende del olimpo, cual solías / complacida a escuchar los dulces ecos / de mi suave lira' (vi, 298-301).

²¹ The view of Gálvez's *Safo* as a prototype Romantic drama has been advanced in the work of Ríos, 'La polémica teatral', p.72, and implied by Russell P. Sebold, 'El incesto, el suicidio y el primer romanticismo español', *Trayectoria del romanticismo español*, Barcelona, 1983, pp.109-136 (p.135).

²² Doménech notes the anachronism of the reference to Aristotle's Lyceum and, believes it to be Gálvez's deliberate attempt to identify herself through the character of Safo as a disciple of Aristotle, ed. cit., p.73. However I would contend that this aspect of the characterisation of Safo is principally designed to give the protagonist an aesthetic and poetic pedigree which emphasises the Classical as opposed to the Romantic nature of her artistic creativity.

²³ The stage directions read, 'La escena es en la isla de Leucadia. A la derecha se ve la roca del mismo nombre, desde donde se precipita Safo. Al lado opuesto, vista del templo de Apolo, con puertas practicables. En el foro el mar tempestuoso.', ed. cit., p. 50.

²⁴ He vows to end his own life, (xi, 490, 505-506) and challenges Faón to a duel (xi, 590-591).

²⁵ See Lester G. Crocker, 'The Discussion of Suicide in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 13 (1952), pp.47-72, for some insights into the debate on suicide, with special reference to France and England, during the period.

CHAPTER SIX

FLORINDA

Florinda, Gálvez's experiment with tragedy on a national theme, printed in volume two of the *Obras poéticas* is not known to have been performed.¹ It received little contemporary critical attention and has not been the focus of any detailed modern study.² In this work, Gálvez engaged with a familiar, even mythical, Spanish narrative in a novel and ultimately critical way. In placing Florinda rather than Rodrigo at the centre of the tragedy, Gálvez challenged the prevailing understanding of the legend of the Fall of Spain and the Moorish Conquest and established the character as a complex and unambiguously tragic protagonist. By fusing elements of classical precept and features of *comedia sentimental*, Gálvez created a national tragedy rooted in the dynamics of family drama. As such, *Florinda* provides further evidence of Gálvez's exploitation of certain new trends in drama in order to breathe life into ancient narratives and dramatic forms.

The Legend of 'La Caba' and the 'Pérdida de España'

Gálvez's protagonist is based on the allegedly historical figure bearing the same name, originally known as 'La Caba'. The existence of this woman has occasionally been questioned, an issue linked to the greater controversy concerning her responsibility for the Moorish invasion of 711 which resulted in the 'pérdida de España'.³ Although varying in degree and detail, the basic elements of the fable remain constant: the beautiful 'La Caba', whose real name was Florinda, was seduced by King Rodrigo and, as he was married to Queen Egilona, remained the object of his frustrated desire. Count Julián, Florinda's father, determined to exact revenge for her disgrace by assisting the Arab invasion of Spain. Subsequently, his daughter was labelled a traitor and made to bear responsibility for the Moorish Conquest.

Attitudes to Florinda compounded traditional notions of Eve's responsibility for the expulsion from the Garden of Eden and reinforced the perception of woman as a potentially disruptive and destructive influence.⁴ Male philosophical interventions in opposition to these assumptions were few. In his critical examination of 'La Caba's culpability in the 'Defensa de las mujeres' of 1726, Feijóo's thoughts on the apportioning of blame were ambiguous.⁵ However, the subsequent 'Ilustración apologética' of 1729,

clarified his position and Feijóo argued that 'La Caba' was 'the sufficient cause of the ruin of Spain because of her incidental beauty rather than the necessary cause, with all its moral and political implications.'⁶

Literary Antecedents and Sources for *Florinda*

Initial accounts of the part of 'La Caba' in the so-called *pérdida de España* were fleshed out and absorbed into historical narratives and folklore. After the Arab Conquest, historical fact merged with anecdote and apocryphal tales to create historical fictions which disguised truth from myth to such an extent that it was difficult either to verify or dispute their content. However, the dubious accuracy of these ostensibly factual accounts did not impede their serving to fuel subsequent literary inventions, each new text embellishing and adding further details to earlier works and thus transforming history into myth.⁷ The first historical and pseudo historical accounts of the Arab colonisation of Spain fed into literature through early *romances* and epic poetry, Golden Age and early eighteenth-century plays, poetry and philosophical discussions and finally to later eighteenth-century musical and prose dramas. Gálvez's tragedy forms part of a complex network of literary influence which spanned temporal, generic and national boundaries and which continued to stimulate creative writing in the nineteenth century.⁸

During the seventeenth century, serious dramatic treatments of the legend of Rodrigo and 'La Caba' were outnumbered by parodies.⁹ However, by the second half of the eighteenth century, perhaps prompted by the renewed interest in patriotic themes, playwrights began to treat the narrative with renewed gravitas. José Concha's *Perder el reino y poder por querer a una muger*, *La Pérdida de España* was designed as a six character dramatic piece for private viewing and therefore would not have reached a wide audience. Eusebio Vela's *La pérdida de España*, had a similarly limited impact on the Spanish theatrical scene, since although it was performed in Murcia in 1768, it was banned from subsequent representation two years later.¹⁰ The performance success of Juan Hernanz Dávila's *Rodrigo, scena trágica con intermisiones musicales* printed in Cadiz in 1789 must owe as much to the fashionable *melólogo* format as to the popularity of the subject matter. Hernanz Dávila referred obliquely to Rodrigo's 'crimen', but did not re-examine Florinda's legendary role in the parallel fall of the King and that of Spain.¹¹

Gálvez drew on existing literary and historical treatments of the seduction of Florinda and the subsequent invasion of the Moors as the basis of her tragedy.¹² However, although not without precedent, Gálvez's dramatisation of the events which gave rise to Rodrigo's defeat and the assumption of power by the Moors in Spain was both innovative and in its way unique.¹³ Her alterations to the familiar narrative in aspects of plot, theme and characterisation, were instrumental in recasting Florinda as a tragic heroine.¹⁴ As such Gálvez's tragedy constituted a thorough-going revision of prevailing attitudes to this legendary figure, which represented a direct challenge to the myth.

Dramatic Structure

Gálvez's use of the fundamental structural elements of Aristotelian tragedy underpins the dramatic action in *Florinda*. As in *Ali-Bek* and *Safo*, a pre-existing reversal of fortune is accentuated by a second instance of peripety early in Act I. Although Florinda is raped by Rodrigo prior to the start of the action, her abduction from the safety of Pelayo's tent, (I,v) might be interpreted as an echo, even a symbolic re-enactment, of the original crime. As a result, the hatred of the Visigoths who remain loyal to their king is exacerbated and more deeply entrenched. Conversely for those subjects who betray Rodrigo and become allied to the Moors, the abduction refuels their desire for vengeance upon a sovereign they have long detested and desired to remove from power. Thus an ostensibly private trauma begins to assume a highly public, even political significance.

Florinda's error which Gálvez shows to be rooted in pride (*hubris*) and which also pre-dates the start of the action, is one of the more complex aspects of the construction of the tragedy. Tulga reminds Florinda of her excessive vanity and pride and makes an explicit connection between these aspects of her nature and Rodrigo's behaviour:

era Monarca,
Tú jóven y orgullosa; desayrarlo
Fue irritar su poder; tu resistencia
Oponer á sus gustos era en vano:
Si humilló tu altivez, obró, Florinda,
Como Rey, como amante despreciado. (II,iii)

This insistence on Florinda's own part in her rape might seem unacceptable and distasteful to modern audiences. Yet by emphasising her pride, Gálvez accords Florinda the complexity and agency of the tragic protagonist rather than the one-dimensional virtue of the victim.¹⁵ Furthermore there is great dignity in Florinda's recognition of her own error and culpability, 'De mi vanidad los extravíos / No puedo disculpar' (II,iii) which takes on renewed significance by the end of the play. In the penultimate scene, Pelayo's condemnation of Florinda's desire for revenge serves as an act of discovery, since she comes to recognise the extent of her father's self-interest and manipulation of her cause for his own political ends.

Characterisation

Within this classicising framework, Gálvez experiments with dramatic structure in order to strengthen the perception of Florinda as tragic protagonist. Ebbs and flows in the action are interwoven with the oscillating fortunes of war. The rhythm of the battle serves as a temporal framework for the unfolding plot so that the skirmishes, truces and alliances not only mark stages in Rodrigo's descent from victory to defeat, but, more importantly serve as a metaphor for the parallel passage from shame to honour which marks Florinda's tragic progress.¹⁶ Thus at the start of the play, Rodrigo appears triumphant over the Moors, but it is clear that the victory is a sham and that his position as monarch is threatened. With the progress of the battle, Gálvez shows the gradual undermining of Rodrigo's power and influence, and his last speech (III,iv) ironically foreshadows his own unheroic death, reported in the final scene of the play. Throughout the action, Rodrigo's descent to ignominy is paralleled by Florinda's ascent to eminence and a brave, defiant suicide in which her reputation is restored and her infamy banished. Gálvez reverses expectations of both Rodrigo and Florinda: he is stripped of any of the qualities and complexities associated with the tragic hero, while she is elevated and transformed from the barely sketched Eve-like figure of myth into a complex, tragic protagonist.

One of the most obvious ways in which Gálvez signals her intention to revise the traditional representation of Florinda is through her rejection of the more colloquial and pejorative name 'La Caba' and her choice of the more poetic and sonorous Florinda. Miguel de Luna's spurious 'translation' of the 1589 *Historia verdadera del rey don Rodrigo, compuesta por Abulcáçim Tarif*, first featured the alternative name Florinda

and also provided an etymological explanation of the coexistence of two names.¹⁷ The ongoing popularity of his account ensured that in subsequent treatments of the subject matter, an author's sympathy towards the legendary figure could be measured according to their choice of 'La Caba' or Florinda.¹⁸ In the naming of her protagonist Gálvez makes clear her intention to restore dignity to her literary creation.

Florinda first appears on stage when she is forcibly brought before Rodrigo (I,vi). In this scene, not only does she remind the King of the devastating effect of her loss of 'patria', 'riquezas', 'estado' and 'decoro', but she also establishes her resistance and defiance in the face of his insidious offer that she become his mistress. She regards herself as universally 'abominada', 'odiada' and 'aborrecida' and describes the sweeping changes in her life as if they constituted a rite of passage from adolescence to adulthood, distinguishing her youth and naiveté prior to the rape from her newly discovered knowledge of 'pompa lisonjera', 'tiranía' and 'envidia'. Florinda's dignified rejection of Rodrigo's renewed sexual advances in this scene belies a certain vulnerability which is a major aspect of her appeal as a character.

However, Gálvez avoids depicting a persecuted innocent, indeed she stresses Florinda's awareness of the maturity which her trauma has occasioned and the sense of responsibility which is a key element in her later decision to end her life. In bringing rapist and victim into a powerful confrontation in this scene, Gálvez juxtaposes Florinda's moral integrity and Rodrigo's weakness and moral laxity, thereby emphasising from the outset a contrast which is sustained throughout and revealing where her own sympathies lie and where the sympathies of the audience might be directed.¹⁹

Gálvez accentuates the focus of the audience's sympathies on Florinda, the only female character in the play, by presenting her as an isolated figure at the start of the action.²⁰ She is held captive, physically separated from family and supporters, she is morally isolated by the ignominy of rape, she is emotionally bereft and abandoned by her lover, Pelayo, and she must live with the irrevocable consequences of her mother's curse (I,vi).²¹ This isolation tends to intensify the dramatic representation of Florinda's troubled emotional state. As in *Safo*, this is manifest in a series of fraught monologues, in which Florinda's consciousness of her separateness contributes to the sense of her distinctness and elevation above the other characters, pointing to the particular way in which Gálvez seeks to establish her tragic status.

One of the more significant aspects of the construction of the tragic protagonist is Gálvez's handling of Florinda's urgent and violent desire for revenge, which further distances her from a model of feminine virtue.²² The trope of female vengeance, familiar from Golden-Age drama, is deployed here to accord a sense of agency to Florinda, who might otherwise be confined to a rather passive role. To a certain extent, however, this desire for revenge arises out of Florinda's pride and forms part of her error. Florinda comes to recognise not only the futility of revenge as a means of personal redemption and, more specifically, its potential for unscrupulous exploitation, but also its disastrous consequences for the nation:

¡Padre cruel! Lograron vuestras iras
 Mi orgullo despertar por un momento;
 Llegué á vanagloriarme del estrago
 Causado por mi afrenta. ¡Qué horror, cielos!
 ¿Y lo habéis consentido? Ya Pelayo
 Del atormentador remordimiento
 Dispertó en mí las implacables furias....
 Aniquilad piadoso, Dios eterno,
 Mi vida criminal, lanzad el rayo,
 Que en vuestra justa diestra está suspenso,
 Sobre mi delinqüente vil orgullo,
 Que con loco teson pudo ofenderos; (III,viii)

The desire for revenge is replaced by a desire for death, one might also say absolution, foreshadowed at the start of the second act in Florinda's wish for oblivion:

Ven, Pelayo,
 Ven á esconder á la infeliz Florinda
 De todo el universo; ven, en tanto
 Que Rodrigo celebra tu victoria,
 A ocultar mi existencia, donde el astro
 Que ilumina la tierra aun no penetre
 Mi pavoroso asilo con sus rayos. (II,i)

However, suicide emerges as a possible course of action only after Florinda's latent sense of guilt is stirred by Pelayo's dystopic vision of the future of Spain under Moorish control (III,viii) and his accusation of her responsibility for this. Tarif's triumphant and aggressive rhetoric (III,ix) which appears to confirm the truth of Pelayo's predictions is the final spur to Florinda's self-authored death and seems to epitomise the extent to

which she is subject to male coercion in this tragedy. Yet although despairing, the act of suicide is also defiant and it is clear that Florinda is neither acting on male instruction nor motivated by cowardice. Indeed one might read her suicide as a patriotic act in which her refusal to submit to Moorish rule demonstrates her honour and courage in the face of defeat. Gálvez makes Florinda's resistance emblematic of that of Spain and in doing so, transforms her character, traditionally associated with ignominy and treachery, into a symbol of heroic patriotism.

The novelty of Gálvez's characterisation of Florinda is supported by her equally innovative approach to the character of Rodrigo, who is accorded a role in this tragedy which is at odds with his status in historical accounts. Modern critics have asserted that Gálvez mitigates Rodrigo's criminal nature through alluding to his frustrated wish to have been able to crown Florinda his queen in a long meditation (I,v).²³ However, in this same soliloquy, Gálvez exposes the selfish and despotic desires of a weak, ineffectual ruler who abuses the power invested in him, neglecting military and civic duties in favour of sexual conquest.²⁴ In many ways this is a daring characterisation. Rodrigo is shown to be devoid of any personal virtue or heroism and the unconditional loyalty he inspires in some of his subjects owes everything to his title and nothing to his actions and judgements.

By contrast with this model of tyrannical and inadequate kingship, Pelayo is depicted as a shrewd and intelligent military and civic figurehead. He is created as a steadfast patriot whose loyalty to the sovereign is paramount and his presence might be construed as a concession to the popularity of the legendary account of the Reconquest. The association of Pelayo and Florinda as lovers has been interpreted as the most innovative aspect of this tragedy, since it allows Gálvez to elevate the status of her tragic protagonist.²⁵ Moreover as a dramatic device it enables the establishment of a Cornelian dichotomy in which Pelayo places his civic and patriotic duty before his love of Florinda.²⁶ More than this, it is Pelayo who acts as the instrument by which Florinda comes to recognise the futility of her vengeance and the ignominy of life after the Moorish Conquest.

In the same way that Pelayo finds himself in an invidious position, caught between personal interest and public duty, so Tulga's loyalties are divided. Both men ally with Rodrigo, but for different reasons. Tulga's endorsement of the monarch is also founded on notions of patriotism which lead him to set aside his familial bonds with his

niece, Florinda and his brother, Count Julián. However, his patriotism is also a critique of the King, whose reprehensible personal behaviour has set Spain on a course towards certain disaster. Assuming the role of elder statesman, Tulga dispenses frank, honest and unpalatable wisdom, revealing himself to possess those qualities of perspicacity and judgement so lacking in the King. It is perhaps ironic that upon hearing the news of her uncle's banishment, it should be Florinda, whose suffering is intensified by his cruel rejection of her, who recognises his integrity and valour:

Ya comprendo,
 Que en vano por salvar la triste España
 Los valerosos Godos sus esfuerzos
 Oponen a Tarif; les falta el brazo
 Del invencible Tulga; ya perdieron
 Con él a los leales; y aun yo misma
 De su justo rigor perdí el consuelo. (III,v)

Where Tulga is the candid, loyal subject, even to a bad King, Egerico is the equivocating, disloyal turncoat and opportunist. He is a sycophant whose flattery serves to represent the debasement of the Court and Rodrigo's own pomposity and vanity. His machinations aid the plot to overthrow Rodrigo which is central to the alliance between Count Julián and Tarif, two characters who remain largely undeveloped throughout the action. Far from the vengeful father who seeks to restore his daughter's lost honour, Count Julián is portrayed as a cynical parent whose manipulation of Florinda's distress is in evidence on those infrequent occasions throughout the action when they converse. When Florinda questions the loss of life occasioned in her name, her father attempts to erode her sense of patriotism by alluding to her sullied reputation among the people and it is clear that 'el botin de las tiendas', rather than his daughter's anguish, is uppermost in his mind (III,vii). By the end of the play, Florinda's eyes are opened and she realises her beloved father, 'Amado padre' (III, vii) is no more than a cruel traitor '¡Padre cruel!', '¡Ay traydor!' (III, ix). Gálvez's representation of a denatured father figure who is embroiled in treachery and political intrigue is a striking instance of the failure of patriarchy, which in this tragedy is also represented by the weak and corrupt king, and which is a recurrent topos in the author's oeuvre.

Despite the insistence of the Visigoths on the barbarian nature and uncivilised behaviour of the Moors, Gálvez depicts Tarif, as an able military leader, whose qualities and skills cast Rodrigo in an increasingly unfavourable light. This opposition is most

obvious when the two meet to discuss a possible truce; Rodrigo is arrogant and brash where Tarif speaks with measured authority and highlights the King's feeble authority (II,viii). This contrast is re-emphasised at the end of the play when, with obvious irony, Gálvez permits Tarif the final *sentencia*:

El crimen, la traición y la venganza
Siempre tal recompensa merecieron. (III,ix)

Crime, Treachery and Vengeance: Rape and its Repercussions in *Florinda*

The rape of Florinda, which modern commentators regard as the primary source of interest in the play, forms part of what I would contend is the author's searching reflection on issues of patriarchy and the abuse of male power and authority.²⁷ The rape occurs prior to the start of the action and although Gálvez charts its devastating psychological effect on Florinda, this is not the exclusive focus. In this tragedy, the author's concern with the wider implications of the act of rape and its repercussions on family and nation are evident: dishonour, vengeance and political treachery are explored through a complex web of relationships dominated by conflicting private and public loyalties and duties.

Tulga and Pelayo profess loyalty to the King and trumpet this virtue in explanation of their opposition to Florinda, Count Julián and those who seek to usurp Rodrigo in order to avenge her rape. In this way, both men suppress personal feelings in favour of public duty. Tulga is Florinda's uncle and as such might be expected to share his brother's determination to avenge the loss of his niece's honour. Yet he ignores Florinda's suffering and diminishes the magnitude of the crime of his sovereign. For him it is a question of proportion, rape is a lesser crime than treason. Furthermore he is convinced that Florinda knowingly seduced the King and that Rodrigo responded naturally to her advances. However, his belief in her duplicity is incidental to his justification for remaining loyal to Rodrigo which is based on fervent nationalism and belief in Spain as a sovereign nation. Pelayo is placed in a more difficult position since he must sublimate the urge to defend Florinda, the woman he had intended to marry, in order to defend the monarch and the institutions he upholds. Rodrigo's rape of Florinda compels Pelayo to honour and protect in battle the man whose violent sexual assault made impossible his marriage and brought the Spanish nation to the brink of civil war.

Count Julián and his wife react to the rape of their daughter in different ways. Publicly Count Julián does not hesitate to defend his daughter's lost honour by seeking to exact revenge on the King, although the private political motives which underscore his action are thinly disguised. In contrast to her husband's apparent support of their daughter, the Countess curses Florinda from her deathbed, expressing her bitter regret at the stain on the family's honour caused not only by the rape, but principally by her husband's treacherous response to this. Throughout the play, Florinda vividly recalls her mother's cruel condemnation of her. Bereft of maternal support and love, Florinda places her trust in her father. Yet Count Julián's selfish pursuit of Rodrigo, far from redeeming his daughter in the eyes of society, actually aggravates her situation and exacerbates her infamy. At the end of the play, Florinda realises this cruel irony and the extent of her father's betrayal of his paternal duty to avenge her lost honour.

Gálvez shows a family in crisis: the 'padre ilustre' has proved treacherous; the 'madre tierna' brutal; the lover inconstant; the uncle heartless and unforgiving. Family bonds are ruptured by powerful forces of self-interest and misplaced honour. Gálvez makes this broken family unit, destroyed from within and corrupted from without, represent the turmoil of the nation, a connection made explicit at the end of the tragedy when Florinda comes to personify Spain through her defiant act of suicide. Count Julián's dishonest defence of his daughter is an image of the treachery of those subjects who conspire with the Moors in a bid to overthrow their tyrant ruler. The rejection of Florinda's suffering by Tulga, the Countess and Pelayo represents the patriotic attitude of the remainder of the population who are prepared to fight their kith and kin in order to uphold concepts of nationhood and monarchy which they believe to be superior.

If this broken family comes to symbolise a divided and crumbling nation, then Gálvez also ensures that private and public morality are intertwined symbolically. Rodrigo personifies the origin of this civil war. His reckless and selfish abuse of the power and authority invested in him as sovereign precipitates not only Florinda's downfall, but also the Moorish invasion. Pelayo is his natural adversary and personifies the heroic virtues of bravery, honesty and loyalty to a just cause. Gálvez shows the devastating national consequences of a tyrannical monarch whose social status affords him the power to rape the woman he lusts after without compunction and to sacrifice his subjects in a civil war for which his own actions are the cause. His tyranny is not without end, but nor is it without a dreadful human cost, and *Florinda* ends on a bleak note with

both villain and victim dead. However, Florinda is elevated to the level of national heroine whose personal tragedy serves as a reminder of the pernicious effects of the abuse of power and authority. By connecting family and nation, private and public in the minds of the spectators, Gálvez ensures that the tyrannical oppression and abuse of women by men is viewed in its broadest context and assumes national significance.

It is clear that Gálvez drew on traditional models of tragedy in the writing of *Florinda*. Her creation of a tragic protagonist and situation modelled on Aristotelian conventions matched with dilemmas between civic duty and personal feeling, as found in Corneille, testify to her engagement with classical theories of tragedy. However, the complex web of familial relations central to this work also owes something to the sentimental dramas of Gálvez's own age. New models of drama, including Gálvez's *El egoísta*, placed family conflict at the heart of their dynamic and their didacticism. In this tragedy, Gálvez exploits the trope of the disintegration of the family as a metaphor for civil discord and national catastrophe. *Florinda* is a national tragedy, but it is also a family drama. Gálvez's interweaving of these dramatic strands is indicative of her experimental dramaturgy which seeks to engage with both established and novel models of tragic drama.

***Florinda* and the work of Gálvez's Contemporaries and Successors**

Although Gálvez's engagement with this subject matter was unique among contemporary dramatists, a comparison between *Florinda* and two contemporary poetic treatments of the narrative is illuminating. Leandro Fernández de Moratín's sonnet 'Rodrigo', while not engaging with the figure of Florinda, describes the ignominious death of Rodrigo, which suggests an interesting parallel with Gálvez's tragedy.²⁸ Cadalso's 'Carta de Florinda a su padre el conde don Julián, después de su desgracia', quite different in spirit from Gálvez's work, offers a further interesting comparison with *Florinda*.²⁹ It has been noted that the poem:

bears an obvious relationship, in form and feminine sentimentality, to the eighteenth-century epistolary novel with its languid heroines like Clarissa and Julie. Florinda, like these figures, prefers tearful affliction to action, and Cadalso's Rodrigo is a perfect Lovelace.³⁰

However the agency which Gálvez accords to Florinda distinguishes her tragic protagonist from Cadalso's poetic heroine. Each character is aware of the power which

not only permits the King to rape, but also protects him from his avengers and which ensures he will go unpunished for the original crime and will be able to repeat it with impunity. Like Gálvez's tragic protagonist, Cadalso's Florinda craves revenge on the man who raped her, 'Venganza, sí, venganza repetía, / y al cielo y a la tierra la pedía' (170-171). She confesses she wanted to kill Rodrigo herself, 'Quise matar al Rey con estas manos' (178). Later the extent of her brutalisation by him and her subsequent need to be avenged are made obvious. She plans to bait him to his death by arousing his sexual interest, 'Se llegase impaciente / al pecho a quien creía conquistado, / con un puñal lavar en su torpeza / la mancha derramada en mi flaqueza' (187-190). Yet she knows this to be impossible because, 'solo puede castigar coronas / quien maneja los astros y las zonas' (195-196). That given, she has little choice but to turn the dagger on herself.

The desperation and resignation which characterises Cadalso's Florinda provides the clearest distinction between his literary creation and that of Gálvez, whose protagonist ultimately regards suicide as an honourable alternative to revenge, and as an active choice. Cadalso, perhaps taking inspiration more directly from the Spanish ballads, which more readily dealt with the historical topic of the loss of Spain, points up Florinda's innocence and the sense in which she should be regarded as a victim by stressing the role of fate or Heaven.³¹ Cadalso, it has been observed, ensures that Florinda, 'resulta la víctima no sólo de las perversas intenciones de Rodrigo, sino también de los cielos que permiten que se desmaye cuando quiere resistir.'³² However, Gálvez represents Florinda as a tragic heroine, accorded agency and choice, whose partial responsibility for her reversal of fortune, pride, vengeance and ultimate patriotism constitute the elements of a complex tragic trajectory.

Gálvez's innovations in *Florinda* themselves formed part of the ongoing modulation and transformation of this powerful national myth, and there is some evidence to suggest that Gálvez's revisions and nuances in the narrative impacted on several of the next generation of dramatists. It has been asserted that although they did not cite *Florinda* as a source for their engagement with their subject matter, Antonio Gil y Zárate and the Duque de Rivas were directly influenced by the originality of her perspective on historical incident and invention of certain dramatic elements which enabled her to bring the tragedy of Florinda, rather than that of Rodrigo or Pelayo, to the Spanish theatre for the first time.³³ In neglecting to acknowledge any debt to Gálvez, the

significance of her contribution to this major Spanish literary theme has been persistently underestimated, even ignored.

Conclusions

Gálvez exploited the literary heritage of which *Florinda* formed part, fleshing out the bare bones of historical and literary accounts and thereby challenging the received understanding of the nature and significance of the Moorish Conquest. In creating her tragedy, Gálvez manipulated the familiarity of the audience, both with the historical events she dramatised and the personalities which had provided the inspiration for her characters, to challenge the primacy of Rodrigo, denying him the role of tragic hero, utilising instead the disintegration of his character to elevate Florinda to the status of tragic heroine.

However, Gálvez's uncompromising characterisation of Rodrigo's cruelty and depiction of his misrule suggest that the author was not merely interested in countering perceptions of sexual difference and revising myths. The condemnation of courtly corruption, the association of the fall of Spain with the depravity of the monarch and the transformation of Florinda's act of suicide from the consequence of disgrace to an act of patriotic virtue combine to suggest that this work was intended to serve as a powerful political critique. *Florinda* is a national tragedy but it is also a family drama. Gálvez's interweaving of these dramatic strands is indicative of her commitment to experiment and ability to engage with both established and novel models of tragic drama.

¹ María Rosa Gálvez de Cabrera, *Florinda. Tragedia en tres actos*, in *Obras poéticas*, II, pp.57-130. See Criado y Domínguez, *Literatas españolas*, p.102; Cejador y Frauca, *Historia*, p.312, and Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, pp.353 for details of the manuscript copy of the play. No performance of *Florinda* is recorded in Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*. However, Grinstein contends that manuscript evidence (the frontispiece bears the words 'año de 1802' and the initials 'T' and 'C') suggest that the play was performed in the Cruz in 1802, see Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, p.353. In their *Cartelera*, Andioc and Coulon refer to the lack of archival material corresponding to certain dates during the 1802-1803 theatrical year and acknowledge the possibility that a number of plays performed during this period will go unrecorded in their catalogue. Contemporary critical reaction to the play is restricted to a sole observation that *Florinda* and *Blanca de Rossi*, 'honran por sí solas más que suficientemente nuestro Parnaso', see *Memorial literario*, IV.35 (1805), p.381. This complimentary remark may well be ironic given that this article appeared as a response to Gálvez's criticism of the unfavourable performance review of *Las esclavas amazonas*.

² Ramón Menéndez Pidal, *El Rey Rodrigo en la literatura*, Madrid, 1924, discusses Gálvez's tragedy in comparison with other literary treatments of the history of Rodrigo in Spain and Europe. Whitaker treats *Florinda* in comparison with Gálvez's other writing in two studies, see Whitaker, 'Clarissa's Sisters', and 'An Enlightened Premiere'. See also Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, pp.173-190, and Lewis, *Feminine Discourse and Subjectivity*, pp.195-205, for brief analysis of the play.

³ Menéndez Pidal, *El Rey Rodrigo*, provides the fullest discussion to date of the historical and literary accounts of the 'pérdida de España' and the legend of Rodrigo and, by extension, *Florinda*.

⁴ See Kitts, *Debate on Woman*.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.17-18.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ See Menéndez Pidal, *El Rey Rodrigo*, pp.120-136.

⁸ *Ibid.* Menéndez Pidal identifies French, Italian, German and English poetry and plays which treat this subject matter. See also Luis F. Díaz Larios, 'De la épica clásica al poema narrativo romántico' in *Historia de la literatura española. 8. Siglo XIX*, Guillermo Carnero, (ed.), Madrid, 1996, pp.509-523 (pp.516-519).

⁹ Menéndez Pidal, *El Rey Rodrigo*, p.144.

¹⁰ As Andioc notes, the depiction of a king whose tyrannical behaviour contributed to the Moorish invasion and conquest must have been 'poco compatible con la idea del monarca que trataba de acreditar el absolutismo borbónico'. Andioc, *Teatro*, p.386.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Luzán had commented on the suitability of the familiar Rodrigo legend as dramatic subject matter. Luzán, *La poética*, p.455.

¹³ The work of her most prominent male contemporaries tended to focus on the theme of the Reconquest: Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, *Munuza*, Madrid, 1792; Gaspar Zavala y Zamora, *Aragón restaurado por el valor de sus hijos*, n.p. n.d. [1790]; Manuel José Quintana, *Pelayo*, Madrid, 1805.

¹⁴ The action opens on the battlefield by the River Guadalete with the presumed victory of King Rodrigo and the Visigoths over General Tarif and the Moors. His loyal warriors Pelayo and Tulga suspect that Bishop Opas of Toledo and Count Julián, Florinda's Father, have aided the Moors in order to avenge Rodrigo's rape of Florinda. Egerico, secret confidant of the Bishop, gains Rodrigo's confidence and urges the King to pursue his lustful desire. Thus Florinda is taken from Pelayo's tent and brought before Rodrigo. When she rejects his offer to become his mistress, he orders her imprisonment in the Royal tent. Egerico informs Florinda that Bishop Opas and his supporters plan to usurp Rodrigo in revenge for her rape and demonstrates his own loyalty to her cause by arranging for her to see Pelayo, a meeting which opens Act II. Although reluctant to renew their relationship as lovers, Pelayo pledges to secure Florinda's release. Tulga's attempt to kill his niece when he chances upon her in the Royal tent is prevented by Rodrigo's timely intervention. Rodrigo subsequently agrees to Tulga's advice to release Florinda, but this is halted by news that the Visigoth troops have mutinied against Rodrigo, followed by Pelayo's announcement that Tarif has proposed a ceasefire. Egerico seizes the opportunity to persuade Rodrigo that with the enemy clearly defeated and the Visigoths victorious, he need not abandon his passion for Florinda. Having been persuaded by Egerico that the battle is effectively won, Rodrigo rejects Tarif's offer of a peace treaty and the call to arms is renewed. In the first scene of Act III Rodrigo learns of the Bishop's treachery and the ongoing mutiny of his troops, but resolves to continue fighting alongside those soldiers who remain loyal. Believing the revolt to have been prompted by his refusal to free Florinda, he permits her release, apparently no longer caring whether she lives or dies. Florinda appears equally ambivalent about her fate at this stage and it is only when she is reunited with her father that she is persuaded to forget the sufferings of her compatriots and to remember her own. Her desire for vengeance is renewed, although she harbours the knowledge that Pelayo and his men will perish before the Moorish victory and hers is certain. In the eighth scene the pair meet and Pelayo's passionate defence of his country and condemnation of what he believes to be Florinda's part in the impending Spanish defeat is matched both by her ability to exculpate herself and desire to protect him from death. Pelayo refuses to believe she was ignorant of the plot to overthrow Rodrigo and before quitting her presence, he predicts the hatred her name will arouse down the centuries. By echoing the dying words of the Countess, Pelayo's cruel prophecy acts as a brake to Florinda's vengeance and she realises her father has deceived her. Overwhelmed by her sense of guilt and need to be both punished and released from further torment, she contemplates suicide. With the Moors' victory and the reports of Rodrigo's death, she kills herself and as she dies declares her father a traitor to his country.

¹⁵ Julia Bordiga Grinstein has argued that Florinda's actions and ideas are manipulated by those (men) around her. Grinstein, *Dramaturgas españolas*, p.164. It is my contention here that, on the contrary, Gálvez accords Florinda a sense of agency, self-reflection and independence of will which contrast markedly with her physical confinement and constriction.

¹⁶ The unities of time and place are also observed. Gálvez states, 'La acción empieza al amanecer y concluye a media noche', Gálvez, *Florinda*, p.57. Act One takes place on the battlefield, Act Two in the Royal Tent and Act Three in the Visigoth Camp. As before, Gálvez employs the *romance heroico* verse form throughout: the assonance is e-a in Act One; a-o in Act Two; e-o in Act Three.

¹⁷ The authentic name Florinda was replaced by a hispanicised version of the Arabic, 'La Caba', which translated into Spanish as 'mala mujer'. For a discussion of the importance of Luna's text in the development of the Rodrigo legend, see Menéndez Pidal, *El Rey Rodrigo*, pp.126-129.

¹⁸ *Abulcáxim* was later discredited as a reliable historical source and many authors of later generations cited Luna's text only to denigrate it. Nonetheless, their own writings reveal they were influenced by the contents of a work considered to be more fiction than fact. Menéndez Pidal suggests that any writer intending to engage with this subject matter would not have failed to consult this text which by the eighteenth century had reached its seventh edition, a fact he uses to prove its enduring popularity and appeal. *Ibid.*, p.129.

¹⁹ Menéndez Pidal has contended that Gálvez's dramatic achievement in *Florinda* is diminished through the lack of sympathy she demonstrates towards the character, 'La tragedia está sentida con fuerza y novedad. Pero sin duda le aminoraron el éxito tanto la forma impopular neoclásica como el no haber sabido mirar a su heroína con ojos de compasiva ternura. Florinda, víctima de espantosas injusticias ajenas, no es de nadie comprendida; hasta su madre murió maldiciéndola. Así que el espectador de la tragedia de María Rosa Gálvez compadece a la hija de don Julián muchísimo más que la autora, que en este drama da una de tantas pruebas de la sequedad afectiva característica de tantas poetisas.' *Ibid.*, p.167.

²⁰ See Whitaker, 'Clarissa's sisters', for a discussion of the topos of the isolated female figure in Gálvez's theatre.

²¹ See Whitaker, 'Absent Mother, Mad Daughter', for a discussion of the distinctive representations of motherhood in Gálvez's oeuvre. The invention of the deathbed prediction in *Florinda* may derive from earlier pseudo-histories and the subsequent dramas inspired by them which implicated the Countess in the course of events. Chronicles dating from before the thirteenth century described how both mother and daughter were raped by the King. In Pedro Boán's, *Historia de don Servandro, obispo de Orense*, of 1153, Rodrigo seduced both the Countess Fandina, Florinda's Mother, and Florinda, who bore him a son, Alterico. The chronicle was clearly a fabrication from the first, but when José Pellicer copied the text in 1646, he ensured that the description of the 'double seduction' enjoyed renewed circulation. Certain later histories, such as Julián del Castillo's *Historia de los reyes Godos* of 1582, continued to refer to the 'double seduction'. However, it was Fray Bernardo de Britto who fully developed the idea in his *Segunda parte da Monarchia Lusytana*, Lisbon, 1609. He absolved both Rodrigo and Florinda and instead blamed the Countess who, being in love with the King herself, created an elaborate plan to seduce Rodrigo by trickery. Having ensured the King was informed of Florinda's desire for him, the Countess intended to substitute her daughter in the royal bed. Florinda remained ignorant of the entire scheme and innocent of any lust. The plans were frustrated when Rodrigo spontaneously forced himself on Florinda. The Countess then urged her daughter to solicit her father's help to avenge her honour. In Cristóbal Lozano's *David perseguido* of 1661, the Countess successfully substituted her daughter for a rendezvous with the King before Florinda was eventually raped by him. See Menéndez Pidal, *El Rey Rodrigo*, Chapters 11-14 for a fuller account of the literary development of the rape of Florinda and her mother and the possible influence of these texts on Gálvez's tragedy.

²² See Chapter Seven below for a discussion of Gálvez's engagement with the theme of revenge in *Amnón*.

²³ Menéndez Pidal, *El Rey Rodrigo*, notes 'El rey, según María Rosa Gálvez, aparece bastante despreciable; víctima de su traidor consejero Egerico, no cesa de perseguir violentamente a Florinda, aunque ésta jamás consintió su amor. Sólo tiene en su favor un buen deseo irrealizable, "¡Ah si hubiese podido mi diadema / De Florinda ceñir la hermosa frente"', p.166. He also suggests that early nineteenth-century playwrights and poets who adapted these historical events took this cue from Gálvez. In order that the last Visigoth King

be rehabilitated, they embraced the idea of the marriage between Rodrigo and Florinda and he was permitted a divorce from his wife, "Los románticos ingleses, con más simpatía por el rey, harán posible el divorcio de Egilona que María Rosa Gálvez pensó por primera vez. Para la poetisa española, Rodrigo no merece disponer de esa noble reparación. Está envilecido." *Ibid.*, p.166.

²⁴ Menéndez Pidal has traced the depiction of Rodrigo's lascivious nature back to Miguel de Luna's *Abulcáxim*. In this version of events, 'el heroico Rodrigo ideado por Corral se convierte ahora en un sanguinario, miedoso, entregado a toda clase de vicios, mayormente a los carnales' (p.126), a description which closely resembles Gálvez's dramatic creation. Furthermore, echoing the attitude which Tulga and, to a certain extent, Pelayo exhibit towards the king, Menéndez Pidal observes that in Luna's account, 'la conducta de Rodrigo es juzgada pero no condenada pues actuó dentro de las prerrogativas reales' (pp.181-182), a belief echoed in Tulga's words in *Florinda* (II,iii).

²⁵ 'Pero María Rosa Gálvez dignifica además por su cuenta a Florinda, haciéndola amada de Pelayo.' Menéndez Pidal, *El Rey Rodrigo*, p.167.

²⁶ On Cornelian tension in eighteenth-century national tragedy, see Glendinning, *A Literary History of Spain*, p.97.

²⁷ See Whitaker, 'Clarissa's Sisters'; *idem.*, 'An Enlightened Premiere'; Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, pp.173-190; Lewis, *Feminine Discourse and Subjectivity*, pp.195-205.

²⁸ 'Rodrigo', reproduced in *Obras de D. Nicolás y D. Leandro Fernández de Moratín*, Madrid, 1918, p.597. Menéndez Pidal has suggested that Moratín's depiction of the destruction of the Visigoth camp by fire may derive from the plot of Gálvez's play, 'Ese incendio no recuerdo haberlo visto en nadie antes que en la obra de Gálvez.' Menéndez Pidal, *El Rey Rodrigo*, p.168.

²⁹ José Cadalso, 'Carta de Florinda a su padre el Conde D. Julián después de su desgracia', *Obra poética*, Rogelio Reyes Cano (ed.), Cadiz, 1993, pp.45-51.

³⁰ Russell P. Sebold, *Colonel Don José Cadalso*, New York, 1971, p. 66.

³¹ See Ramón Menéndez Pidal, *Flor nueva de romances viejos*, Buenos Aires, 1938.

³² See N. Glendinning, *Vida y obra de Cadalso*, Madrid, 1962, pp.36, 180 note 20.

³³ Menéndez Pidal asserts that Antonio Gil y Zarate in his five act tragedy *Rodrigo*, 1825, and the Duque de Rivas in his poem 'Florinda', Paris, 1834, deliberately failed to attribute the genesis of their works to a reading of Gálvez's play. He believes that rather than associate their writings with the work of a female dramatist of little repute, they preferred to acknowledge their literary debts to writers perceived to be prestigious such as Jovellanos and Quintana, despite the fact that the dramatic focus of the plays written by these dramatists, contemporaries of Gálvez, was the Reconquest and not the fall of Spain. Consequently, Gálvez's play was not acknowledged as the legitimate source either of the writings of Gil y Zarate and the Duque de Rivas, or of the many Spanish, English and German works which they in turn inspired. In the absence of documentary evidence to link them, it is only through following Menéndez Pidal's comparison of plot details and character traits in works which depicted Rodrigo and Florinda after 1804 and Gálvez's play that the similarities between *Florinda* and subsequent works become obvious. See also Díaz Larios, 'De la épica clásica al poema narrativo romántico', pp.517-518.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BLANCA DE ROSSI

In formal and generic terms there are continuities between *Blanca de Rossi* and *Florinda*, the work which preceded it in volume two of the *Obras poéticas*.¹ Experiments in characterisation and the exploitation of classical models and new literary idioms are central to the construction of this five-act tragedy, the longest in Gálvez's tragic oeuvre. In *Blanca de Rossi* there are also echoes of certain thematic preoccupations which the author explores in *Florinda*: the act of rape, the act of suicide and the threat to civic society.² However, Gálvez's treatment of these themes differs in subtle and significant ways in this tragedy, since rape exists only as a threat and there are two suicides which are accorded very different motivations and meanings.

The Figure of Bianca de' Rossi: Historical Sources and Literary Antecedents

Blanca de Rossi is set in the time of the Crusades in Bassano, Italy. Given Gálvez's literary cosmopolitanism, it is unsurprising that she should turn to Medieval subject matter in the creation of this tragedy. Luzán highlighted the ongoing importance of the values of chivalry in Spain in his *Memorias literarias de París* of 1751 and likewise Jovellanos' speech of entry to the Real Academia de la Historia of February 1780 was replete with admiration for the values of that period.³ More generally, there was a revival of interest in Medieval history, art, architecture and literature in the rest of Europe at the turn of the century.⁴

However, Gálvez's interest in the Bianca narrative must surely have been stimulated by Feijóo, who, in his 'Defensa de las Mujeres', Discurso XVI of Volume I of the *Teatro Crítico Universal* (1726), had cited among examples of 'mujeres valerosas':

Una *Blanca de Rossi*, mujer de Bautista Porta, capitán paduano, que después de defender valerosamente, puesta sobre el muro, la plaza de Bassano, en la Marca Trevisana, siendo luego cogida la plaza por traición, y preso y muerto su marido por el tirano Ezelino, no teniendo otro arbitrio para resistir los ímpetus brutales de este furioso, enamorado de su belleza, se arrojó por una ventana; pero después de curada, y convalecida (acaso contra su intención) del golpe, padeciendo debajo de la opresión de aquel bárbaro el oprobrio de la fuerza, satisfizo la amargura de su dolor y la constancia de su fe conyugal, quitándose la vida en el mismo sepulcro de su marido, que para este efecto habia abierto.⁵

The most striking features of Gálvez's tragedy are present in kernel in this short historical sketch: the setting in the main square of Bassano, a city under siege by a political and sexual tyrant; Blanca's beauty, virtue and fidelity; her heroic defence of the city and the manner of her self-authored death.⁶

In much the same way that the legend of Florinda and Rodrigo occupied an important place in the Spanish literary canon, so Bianca's heroic defence of Bassano captured the Italian literary imagination and fuelled a series of fictional narratives, not least because of the unusual and virtuous manner of her suicide.⁷ Pierantonio Meneghelli's five-act tragedy, *Bianca de' Rossi* of 1798, has been identified as one of the most significant treatments of the Bianca narrative in late eighteenth-century Italian drama.⁸ Although significantly different in plot and characterisation, Meneghelli's work offers an interesting comparison with Gálvez's tragedy in respect of the visual appearance of the theatre: the single stage setting, 'a palace courtyard in which a temple is situated, its doors open to reveal a sepulcher', is echoed in the 'Templo magnífico a la derecha con entrada practicable' which provides the stage set for Act I in *Bianca de Rossi*.⁹ As in Gálvez's tragedy, the action in Meneghelli's play moves into the temple and finally alongside the tombs.

A further significant comparison might be drawn between another Italian treatment of the narrative, a five act *ballo tragico*, performed at the Teatro San Benedetto, Venice in 1793.¹⁰ Although this work is not known to have been performed in Madrid during Gálvez's lifetime, there are some remarkable coincidences in the visual conception of the stage set, and, perhaps more tellingly, in details of the plots and action between this unusual tragic piece and Gálvez's tragedy: Act I is set within the city walls of Bazano; Act II in a room in a palace; Act III in the great gallery; Act IV in Blanca's room; Act V in the cemetery; Ezzelino dislodges Bianca's helmet during a sword-fight; Ezzelino offers to exchange the freedom of Bassano for Bianca's hand in marriage; Ezzelino's rape of Bianca is averted through Battista's surprise arrival through a secret door in her room; Bianca's suicide takes place on stage; a vision of the ghost of Battista prompts Ezzelino to take his own life at the end of the piece. This final act of suicide is significant, since in Meneghelli's play, although Ezzelino suffered remorse and torment, he did not die.¹¹

Although Gálvez may have mined a rich seam of dramatic precedent in her

engagement with the figure of Bianca, she was, nevertheless, the first Spanish writer to dramatise this particular narrative. The themes of the play were recognisably part of the tragic repertoire. Female virtue persecuted by male sexual tyranny, and civic society threatened by despotism, were two often intertwined thematic constants of classicising tragedy in Spain, as exemplified by Montiano's *Virginia* and Moratín's *Lucrecia*, among others. The historical account of Blanca was well suited to the exploration of this theme: cited as an example by Feijóo, it contained the necessary tragic ingredients, in a medieval setting, which allowed for imaginative *mise en scène* and the inclusion of elements of currently fashionable literary genres.

Visual Appeal: Incident, *Tableaux* and the Gothic

Blanca de Rossi is more replete with incident than many of Gálvez's other tragedies.¹² However, on-stage activity is not spread evenly throughout the play, but is concentrated in the first and final acts. In Act I, in which the resistance of the citizens of Bazano is finally overcome, the accent is on military manoeuvres. These feature in all but the first scene, and are supplemented by offstage skirmishes, as indicated by the sound effects. The strong visual appeal of Act I lies in the historicising colour of the co-ordinated display of military armour and weaponry. However, it is significant that the only military combat enacted on stage during Act I is the sword fight between Blanca and Leopoldo (I,viii). Thus at the outset Blanca's active participation in the defence of Bazano and her heroic bravery are foregrounded.

Blanca's active intervention to save the life of her father (I,iii), is echoed in her later intervention on behalf of the nobles of Bazano when Acciolino threatens to execute them (III,v).¹³ This scene marks a significant moment of visual incident in the middle three acts, which are otherwise based on a series of dialogues. However, stage *tableaux* take on renewed importance in the final act, in which plans to entrap Acciolino reach fruition, while Blanca takes her own life in a visually arresting fashion. The balance between spectacle and rhetoric in this tragedy is part of the complex fusion of modern aesthetic devices and traditional dramatic structures which is a marked feature of Gálvez's tragic dramaturgy.

Such experimental fusions are also apparent in the stage setting and decor of *Blanca de Rossi*. In that all five acts take place in the city of Bazano, Gálvez fulfils the requirement of unity of place, but stretches the parameters of the convention for visual

impact and symbolic purposes. The comparatively detailed stage directions and instructions for *Blanca de Rossi* indicate Gálvez's ambitious conception of the visual appearance of the tragedy, and may reflect the influence of operatic and balletic representations of the Bianca narrative on her imaginative vision in the play.¹⁴

The stage set for Act I, the main square in Bazano with the temple in the foreground and the burning city walls in the background, serves not only to establish a civic identity but also a sense of imminent threat. However, during this act and throughout the tragedy, Gálvez uses the temple to create a symbolic link between Blanca and Bazano. The Temple, the scene of Blanca's marriage to Bautista, becomes the site of Acciolino's revenge for her rejection of his offer of marriage, prior to the start of the action, and, at the outset, he refuses to respect the right of the citizens of Bazano to seek asylum there. His vow to raze the building to the ground, an attempt to weaken the will of the surviving citizens, is also a metaphorical threat to the sacred bonds of Blanca's marriage and her spirit. In the final act of the play, the Temple takes on its full symbolic meaning, when both Blanca and Acciolino commit suicide there.

Act II is located in Blanca's private room in Genaro's palace. Directions for the stage set are very simple, merely indicating doors off at either side and one at the back. These prove crucial in aiding understanding of the geography of the palace beyond, which is alluded to on several occasions. Perhaps the most significant is the door to the left which leads down to the Rossi Pantheon beneath the Temple. Initially this serves to connect Blanca, in physical and psychological terms, to her husband when he seeks refuge amongst the tombs. Later, it is the door through which Bautista's loyal friends are brought to meet with him and through which he himself makes a surprise entry in order to defend Blanca from Acciolino's lustful advances.

It becomes clear in the second act that Genaro also perceives a strong link between the invasion of his space and the threat to his person and the city's civic values. Thus the plans to overthrow Acciolino (II,v) are spurred by the victor's colonisation of Genaro's palace home:

Este mismo palacio será el sitio
Que le sirva de tumba; él por albergue
Lo ha elegido en mi oprobio: en él perezca (II,v)

The setting for Act III make this symbolic resonance of the decor transparent. The action takes place in 'un salon magnífico de la casa de Genaro' which is 'iluminado, y adornado

de varios trofeos, para celebrar la victoria de Acciolino', thus symbolising his invasion of the city in the domestic architecture itself. More importantly, in Act IV the audience is aware that Acciolino's threatening presence is in close proximity to the ostensibly intimate and secure private space of Blanca's room, which he ultimately transgresses (IV,iii).

The many references and allusions to death, vaults and tombs throughout the play might suggest a certain inevitability about the location of Act V in the Rossi Pantheon. Nevertheless, the stage setting is powerful in imaginative conception. Gálvez's directions are substantial and details point to the tragic denouement. The lighting is dim, 'La escena no tiene más luz que la de una lámpara', creating a hushed, deathly atmosphere. Bautista's arms and cloak are placed at the foot of his tomb, a poignant reminder for the audience of his heroic last battle and death, and a visual and tactile connection between dead husband and grieving wife. All around, tombs bearing inscriptions of the Rossi name serve as a reminder of Blanca and Bautista's illustrious past, but it is in death that Gálvez accords Blanca a renewed elevation. The striking and unusual manner of the suicide comes as a surprise, and to allow the moment maximum visual and emotional resonance, Gálvez indicates in the stage directions that Blanca's posture in death, Felicia's horror and Acciolino's confusion are suspended as a *tableau* at the end of the scene (V,vi).

This final scene is the clearest indication of how much Gálvez's scenography owed to the emergent literary mode now known as the Gothic.¹⁵ The arched, dungeon-like architecture of the vault, the gloomy atmosphere illuminated by a single light, the bloodstained armour and the open tomb, are all recognisable props in the imaginative worlds of Gothic fiction. Although perhaps most obviously present in Spanish poetry, the Gothic had made an impression on Spanish drama in translations from celebrated French works.¹⁶ Furthermore, prior to the appearance of Gálvez's *Blanca de Rossi*, indigenous Spanish dramatic models of Gothic had been developed, most notably Gaspar Zavala y Zamora's, *El amor constante, o la holandesa*, and *El Duque de Viseo*, Quintana's adaptation of Matthew Lewis' *The Castle Spectre*.¹⁷ Blanca's suicide, which constitutes the heart of the action and interest, and her measured, heightened discourse as she approaches the tomb in order to prepare for her own death, may have also been designed as a conscious echo of *Romeo and Juliet*, which reached the Spanish stage in the 1790s via the adaptation by Jean-François Ducis.¹⁸

However, the closure and intensity characteristic of the Gothic does not dominate in this tragedy. Gálvez's depiction of the vault makes an impact primarily because of its contrast with the open, civic spaces evoked in Act I. Even in Act V, Gálvez makes the subterranean setting a space of civic action, as the citizens of Bazano enter to challenge Acciolino, and ultimately to witness his suicide. The variety and diversity of setting, from grand vista to private room and underground vault, all of which are both symbolically and physically interconnected, testify to Gálvez's expansive concept of the unity of place, which allows the connections between civic and private preoccupations to be emphasised in physical terms.

The Gothic flavour of the drama is not confined to scenography, and is most intense in Act V, in which death is a powerful and all pervasive presence. The language of this act is permeated with poetic references to light and darkness, as Genaro evokes 'las bóvedas inmensas / De este lóbrego sitio' (V, ii). The imagery of death and cadaver, and of spirits is also frequently deployed, and Blanca's language also evokes the coldness and silence of tombs (V, iv-v). However, this Gothic register does not eclipse the essentially tragic vocabulary and tone of the speeches, which invoke abstract concepts of virtue and heroism, allude to classical mythology and symbolism, and root the final act in the gravitas of tragedy rather than the sensationalism often associated with the Gothic mode. The colour of the Gothic, never obliterates the essentially tragic tenor of the language, and Gálvez's skill in fusing these registers is testament to her ability to expand the tragic framework to embrace elements of modern theatrical and literary genres.

Blanca and Acciolino: Tragedy and Conflict

Perhaps the most complex example of this fusion is Gálvez's characterisation, particularly that of Blanca and Acciolino. The opposition of virtuous and persecuted female protagonist and aggressive, sexually predatory male villain was one of the distinguishing features not only of Gothic fiction, but also of the theatrical genre of melodrama, as pioneered in France by René Guilbert de Pixérécourt, a type of drama which enjoyed some success on the Spanish stage in the early 1800s.¹⁹ In the portrayal of Acciolino and Blanca, Gálvez presents a similar opposition between virtue and vice.²⁰ Blanca is established at the outset as an *exemplum virtutis* in her father's soliloquy, in which he trumpets her 'virtudes, gracias, / Hermosura y valor' (I, i). His eulogising speech also emphasises that she gained status through her marriage to the illustrious

Bautista:

¡Oh cuántas veces de mi edad anciana
Apoyo fuiste, gloria, y alegría!
¡Oh con cuánto placer te vi enlacada
Al illustre Bautista, ese guerrero
Que con su exemplo y su invencible espada
Defiende en estos muros nuestras vidas! (I,i)

These qualities, borne out in Blanca's actions and epitomised in her fidelity to her husband, make her a paradigm of the virtuous woman. Earlier dramatic models of female virtue in Spanish tragedy, most notably Virginia and Hormesinda, had been portrayed as passive victims whose ultimate fate depended on the agency of men. Gálvez's heroine breaks this mould, since her beauty, virtue and grace are complemented by valour, which is shown in action as well as reflected in the admiration of others. By demonstrating her bravery and military prowess, Gálvez overlays virtue with the heroic and active qualities more usually associated with the male tragic protagonist.

This is accentuated in Acciolino's comparison of Blanca with the mythological figure of Pallas Athene:²¹

admira como yo de su semblante
La hermosa magestad que excede á Palas (I,viii)

This comparison is illuminating of Gálvez's projection of her heroine. Athene, the goddess of wisdom, skills and warfare was generally represented as 'a woman of severe beauty, in armour, with the Gorgon's head on her shield'²², and thus a model of a female warrior. The associations between Blanca and the wider community, and of her heroism and the struggle to defend Bazano, are strengthened by the comparison with the patron goddess of Athens, the protector and champion of the city, and of Greek cities in general.

However, this striking characterisation of Blanca as virtuous warrior heroine throws into relief the fact that this protagonist, although she possesses the necessary elevation, and suffers a reversal of fortune, makes no wrong choice, and thus her tragic demise is not caused by any recognisable error. Extreme virtue was the essential characteristic of the heroines of Gothic fiction and melodrama, but in Aristotelian precept, good tragedy should not show absolutely virtuous people 'passing from good to bad fortune' since this would not inspire fear or pity, but only outrage.²³ Gálvez's

portrayal of Blanca, like that of Leonora in *La delirante*, marks a new departure in her tragic oeuvre and distinguishes these tragic heroines from the models defined in classical theory.

In order to accord Blanca the full complexity of tragic status, and in some way counterbalance the absence of any personal error, Gálvez ensures that Blanca's moral goodness is under constant threat from Acciolino and makes clear his intention to force her to cede to his sexual desires, (I,ix). Blanca endures great emotional suffering and loss. From Act I, scene ix through to Act II, scene ii, she suffers in the belief that her husband has been killed, and in Act IV scene vi, she must endure the actual loss of Bautista as he is taken off to be killed. The pitch and intensity of her anguish reaches new heights in Act IV, scene viii, when she faints. On recovering consciousness she seems physically weakened which makes a poignant contrast with her heroic dynamism of the first four acts. Yet her speech is marked with a new intensity in Act V and thus, even in her final speeches, Gálvez ensures not only that Blanca speaks in an elevated, idiom, exploiting a complex abstract vocabulary, but also that her reason is never eclipsed by her distress, even at the point of her death.²⁴

Gálvez develops Blanca's character partly in opposition to the vices and the aggressions of Acciolino. To a certain extent, he represents an extreme of violent despotism, a villain motivated by a lust for power and for sexual gratification, parallel desires which feed and stimulate each other. His inherent capacity for violence is first revealed when his offer to free Bazano from the control of Frederick, the Holy Roman Emperor, in exchange for Blanca's hand in marriage, is rejected by the citizens of the city and by Blanca herself, whereupon he orders the nobles to be killed. Later he threatens Blanca's life and finally has Bautista killed (IV,vi). In these scenes, he appears as ingenious and unscrupulous as any villain of a melodrama or a Gothic novel.

However, Gálvez is careful to ascribe motivation and complexity to his character, which contributes to the verisimilitude of the plot and hints at a tragic quality to his character which is most clearly in evidence in his remorseful suicide. A long soliloquy (III,ii) reveals the origins not only of his present lustful infatuation with Blanca, but also his need for military conquest. Earlier in the action it emerges that, in the past, Acciolino's more noble request for Blanca's hand was rejected. He recalls the impact of this refusal:

Y aunque por ella entónces despreciado,
 Mas que el amor se resintió el orgullo;
 Pues la débil terneza abandonando,
 Volé á buscar la gloria en los combates.
 [...]

Su valor, su fiereza, el aparato
 Del acerado arnes, y hasta el cabello
 De polvo y sangre y de sudor bañado,
 Mi corazon rindiéron, no de amores,
 Sino de un nuevo ardor en que me abraso,
 Que mitigar no puedo, que consume
 Mi pecho de furor desesperado.
 Pero yo apagaré su horrible llama,
 A pesar del teson con que insensatos
 A mi poder se oponen;

(III, ii)

This emphasis on reversal of fortune, recognition of and remorse for personal error and his final act of suicide indicate that Gálvez's characterisation of Acciolino cannot be dismissed as a one-dimensional portrait of a villain. In these very glimpses into a former life and status, she attributes a significance to his character which goes beyond that accorded to the other characters. Acciolino's twin desires for political and sexual domination impact most obviously on Blanca, whose resistance creates the dynamic at the centre of the action in this tragedy. Yet Acciolino is more than the instigator of vicious action, he is himself caught in an emotional dilemma and makes a series of choices, and, by extension, errors, which contribute not only to Blanca's demise but also to his own.

Acciolino's progress and that of Blanca are thus profoundly interconnected, and in many ways his downfall is a reaction to hers. This is most clear in the final scene, when, deeply traumatised by the effect of Blanca's death, and in the thrall of visions, he commits suicide. Where Blanca dies serene, steadfast, courageous and reasoning to the end, Acciolino turns to death impetuously, desperately and in mental and emotional turmoil, but expressing deep remorse. In this final scene he is revealed to possess many of the features of the tragic protagonist, and Gálvez may have envisaged his downfall as a dramatic compensation for Blanca's lack of error, a sublimated counter-tragedy.

Blanca de Rossi and the Act of Suicide

The double suicide which ends this play is visually and dramatically arresting, and emphasises the parallel fates of the two central characters. However, the handling of the

deaths is of interest given that the act of suicide appears to be a preoccupation of volume II of the *Obras poéticas*. In many ways this marks a climax of Gálvez's exploration of this theme in her tragic oeuvre. Of the two suicides, it is Blanca's which is the most complex and significant, and it might be argued that in her portrayal of the manner and motivation of Blanca's death, Gálvez draws inspiration from her experiments in other works. Thus Blanca's death can be interpreted at once as defiance, as release and as an act of heroic virtue, echoing the suicides of Saúl, Safo and Florinda: it is defiant in that it prevents Blanca from falling victim to rape by Acciolino and, moreover, it is an act undertaken in defiance of church doctrine, as formulated with great lucidity by Felicia (V,v); it is a release from the misery of solitude, inspired by a powerful love; it is virtuous in that Blanca ensures her fidelity remains unbroken; it is heroic in that it provokes the self-authored death of the tyrant. In all these ways Blanca's suicide is seen to be elevated and exemplary, characteristics emphasised through the juxtaposition of Blanca's death with that of Acciolino - the most unexpected, least reasoned, and most tormented suicide in Gálvez's oeuvre.²⁵

Minor Characters

The conflict between Acciolino and Blanca lends the play its central tension and dynamic, since their relationship determines the unfolding action. Nevertheless, minor and supporting characters are drawn in convincing ways and in some instances are unusual in Gálvez's tragic writing. Most notable is the character of Genaro, Blanca's father. He is modelled as a compassionate and concerned father, whose love of and pride in his daughter is made explicit at the start of the play (I,i). This in itself is unusual since Gálvez's plays often feature inadequate, failed fathers as symbols of enfeebled or corrupt patriarchy.²⁶ However, Gálvez also attributes to this medieval patriarch enlightened views on the right of children to choose their partners, in remarks which echo debates which were more often explored in contemporary serious comedy, and which Gálvez herself tackles in *La familia a la moda*.²⁷

sabe que á mi arbitrio
 No está su corazón para entregarlo:
 La voluntad, la inclinacion de Blanca
 Son libres; si consiente en este lazo,
 No se opondrá su padre. (III,iii)

Another notable feature of this tragedy is that Blanca is not a lone female character. She benefits from the close friendship of her maid, Felicia, whose physical support is crucial in aiding Blanca to commit suicide in Act V. However, her function within the drama might best be regarded as that of a foil. Her common sense discourse is a device used to set off the elevation and passion of her mistress, above all during the final act.

Bautista is shown to be a noble, loving husband, who is also heroic and brave. The citizens of Bazano place their hope in him to overcome Acciolino. However, after his simulated death in the first act, he is relatively invisible until Act IV, scene vi, when he is forced to make an invidious choice between delivering Blanca into Acciolino's hands, effectively with his blessing, and watching her die. In this scene, his choice of abandonment is testament to his love, but, as Blanca observes, this effectively constitutes a betrayal of their love and, more crucially, of their duty to defy the tyrant. This not only serves to further highlight Blanca's singular constancy and valour, but might also be construed as a deliberate questioning of the nature of male heroism.

Blanca and Bazano

From the opening of the play, Gálvez establishes a series of subtle connections between Blanca and Bazano which are developed and extended throughout the action. In doing so, Gálvez emphasises that this tragedy is not simply private or domestic, but also concerns the resistance of a civic society to the threat of political tyranny. In the first two scenes of the play, in which both Genaro and Bautista discuss the resistance of Bazano to siege, a number of words and images ostensibly used to describe the city, could also apply to the threat to Blanca's virtue. In Genaro's opening speech, in which he describes his anxiety for the future of the city in the face of Acciolino's inevitable, imminent triumph, he speaks of the 'duelo' and 'desgracia' which will be born out of 'tan tristes circunstancias' (I,i). Furthermore his evocation of 'el valor y la constancia' of the city (I,ii), might be read as an evocation of Blanca's qualities. In this sequence of speeches, Genaro prefigures the close metaphorical association of Blanca and Bazano which remains a constant throughout the drama. Threats to her integrity and virtue are evoked in parallel with, or as a metaphor for, the integrity of the city:

Si humillada
Esta ciudad, despojo miserable
Llega á ser de un tirano, si de Blanca
La suerte ignoro (I,iv)

Acciolino's threats deliberately use his desire for possession in this metaphorical sense. In his speech, Bautista invokes the personal heroism of Blanca in order to rouse the valour of the citizens of Bazano for the salvation of the *Patria*. This is a different device, metonymy, in which Blanca stands as a figurehead, leading and spurring the whole of the city, and her physical interventions and willingness to die for the city in which she was born reinforce this association.

Blanca is also placed in the position of token in the struggle for the city. Acciolino regards her as the main spoil of war:

Si el que vence,
No logra conseguir con la victoria
El reposo feliz de los placeres,
¿De qué le sirve el triunfo? (II,viii)

Subsequently Acciolino also places Blanca in the position of ransom for the besieged city:

Resuelve en este instante ser mi esposa,
O entrego de la guerra á los estragos
Esta odiosa ciudad. (III,v)

This multifaceted association of Blanca with the city allows Gálvez to convey a sense of the importance of civic unity, associating the heroine with the people, and the physical threat to her virtue to represent a threat to civil society. If any wider political significance can be drawn from this human tragedy, it is the value of civic unity in the face of aggression and the spread of Empire. Acciolino has taken advantage of the civil strife and discord in Bazano to besiege the city, and it is the threat to Blanca that finally unites the people to reject the colonising ambitions of the Holy Roman Emperor whose ambition Acciolino is fulfilling:

Mi amada Blanca
Cumple con su deber; lidia animosa,
Infundiendo á las tropas su constancia.
A ímitarla volemós, compañeros;
Este es el día de salvar la patria. (I,ii)

Conclusions

Blanca de Rossi provides further evidence of Galvez's awareness of the possibilities offered by new literary and dramatic trends for the exploration of tragedy. In this work, Gálvez examines the seemingly irreconcilable concepts of female heroism and virtue. Through her exploitation of certain features of Gothic fiction and melodrama within the framework of a classicising tragedy, Gálvez depicts Blanca's efforts to preserve her threatened chastity in an active and dignified fashion. By stretching but not breaking tragic constants, Gálvez not only created a work with strong visual appeal, but one in which the energy of new literary forms could be harnessed to the gravitas and resonance of tragedy, suggesting ways in which the portrayal of familiar tragic themes, such as sexual and political tyranny, might be made more immediate and apposite.

¹ María Rosa Gálvez de Cabrera, *Blanca de Rossi. Tragedia en cinco actos*, in *Obras poéticas*, II, pp.131-234. See Criado y Domínguez, *Literatas españolas*, p.102; Cejador y Frauca, *Historia*, p.312, and Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, p.353, for details of the manuscript copy of the play.

² Daniel Whitaker compares Gálvez's treatment of the theme of rape in *Blanca de Rossi*, *Florinda* and *Amnón*, see Whitaker, 'Clarissa's Sisters', pp.240-248.

³ 'la inclinación a las armas, el valor, la intrepidez, la buena fe, el sufrimiento y el preferir la muerte a la infamia, virtudes que harán siempre mucha falta a la nación que las perdiere', Ignacio de Luzán, *Memorias literarias de París*, Madrid, 1751, (pp.303-304) quoted in Guillermo Carnero, *Estudios sobre teatro español del siglo XVIII*, Zaragoza, 1997, p.141. 'Discurso académico pronunciado por D. Gaspar Melchor de Jove-Llanos en su recepción a la Real Academia de la Historia [sobre la necesidad de unir al estudio de la legislación el de nuestra historia]', in Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, *Obras en prosa*, José Caso González (ed.), Madrid, 1969, pp.71-102.

⁴ Marita Petzoldt McClymonds, 'Bianca de' Rossi as Play, Ballet, Opera: Contours of "Modern" Historical Tragedy in the 1790s', *Comparative Drama*, 31 (1997), pp.158-177, lists a number of the most significant eighteenth-century European tragedies based on Medieval subject matter.

⁵ Benito J. Feijóo, *Defensa de la Mujer. Discurso XVI del Teatro Crítico*, Victoria Sau (ed.), Barcelona, 1997, p.32.

⁶ Ezzelino, (b. April 25 1194--d. Oct 1 1259, Soncino, Lombardy), Italian noble and soldier who was *podestà* (feudal mayor) of Verona (1226-30, 1232-59), Vicenza (1236-59), and Padua (1237-56). A skilled commander and successful intriguer, he expanded and consolidated his power over almost all north-east Italy by aiding the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II and the pro-imperial Ghibellines in their struggle against the papist party, the Guelfs. His legendary cruelty is dealt with in Dante's *Inferno*. See 'Ezzelino', Britannica CD, Version 99 © 1994-1999. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. See Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, pp.164-165, for speculations on the historical sources of Gálvez's tragedy.

⁷ Petzoldt McClymonds, 'Bianca de' Rossi', provides a fascinating account of literary representations of the Bianca narrative during the 1790s in Italy and translates a piece of contemporary criticism in which Bianca's death is described as 'a unique example in the annals of virtue', (p.159).

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.164-167. Pierantonio Meneghelli, *Bianca de' Rossi. Teatro Moderno*, Venice, 1798, XXII.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.164

¹⁰ *Bianca de' Rossi ballo tragico*. Guisepe Trafieri designed the set, Guisepe Foppa wrote the libretto and Angela Tarchi composed the music. Of these, only Trafieri's scenario is extant and Petzoldt McClymonds' summary allows an insight into the visual appearance and action in this work. *Ibid.*, pp.168-169.

¹¹ The tragedy was criticised on this precise point: 'After word of Bianca's death disperses, everyone expects the punishment of Ezzelino. Here is where the tragedy fails, in not having observed the principle that with a man so wicked, either one does not stage the story or one concludes with some strong vendetta.' *Ibid.*, p.166.

¹² Plot Summary: Act I is set in the main square in Bazano, a city under siege from Acciolino, Leopoldo and Germanic troops allied to Frederick, the Holy Roman Emperor. Despite the optimism of Alberto, a senator, Genaro, Blanca's father and Bautista, her husband, the city is on the verge of defeat. In scene viii, after a brief non-speaking appearance in scene iii, Blanca enters in full armour and in the midst of a sword-fight with Leopoldo. A blow dislodges her helmet and visor and Acciolino immediately recognises the woman he loves and who rejected him. He spares her life, but threatens to kill the citizens of Bazano. Alberto's announcement of the heroic death of Bautista, assuages Acciolino's bloodlust and he immediately asks Blanca to marry him. Her refusal prompts a soliloquy in which he determines to seduce her by forceful means if necessary. In Act II, in her private room, Blanca grieves over her dead husband and confesses to Felicia, her maid, that she is gravely concerned for her own personal safety and honour. However Genaro tells her that Bautista is alive and well and hiding in the family Pantheon. Husband and wife are reunited and subsequently joined by the nobles of Bazano, who begin to plan how to overthrow the tyrant. Acrimonious discussions between Acciolino and Genaro fail to establish how to bring peace to Bazano. When alone, the full extent of Acciolino's vengeful, despotic and lustful intent becomes apparent. In Act III, the nobles of Bazano come before Acciolino in the state room in Genaro's palace which he has made his own and he offers to guarantee peace in exchange for Blanca's hand in marriage. However her refusal to accept this exchange, a decision staunchly supported by her father and the nobles, triggers Acciolino's anger and he orders his guards to slay the men. Blanca intervenes physically and Leopoldo dissuades Acciolino from this bloody course of action, but his frustrated plans merely galvanise his lustful desires and bring ever closer the prospect of Blanca's rape. Act IV is set in Blanca's room. Acciolino enters unexpectedly and attempts to persuade her to consent to his offer of marriage, before approaching her with the obvious intention of forcing himself upon her. Blanca draws a dagger and threatens to kill herself, but is quickly overpowered by him, at which point Bautista enters brandishing a sword. Acciolino's guards enter and apprehend Bautista, enabling Acciolino to take hold of Blanca and issue an ultimatum: Blanca will be killed unless Bautista surrenders her to him. Bautista reluctantly agrees and is led away. Blanca prostrates herself before Acciolino offering to exchange her life for that of her husband, but it is too late and the guards re-enter to announce his death whereupon Blanca faints. On recovering consciousness, and apparently in deep trauma, she resolves to descend to the Pantheon, which provides the setting for Act V. At the opening, the nobles resolve to continue the plan to overthrow Acciolino and prepare to ambush him. Blanca arrives and approaches Bautista's tomb slowly and purposefully. Upon reaching it, she embraces the stone lid which is propped open with a metal bar. At the sound of Acciolino's arrival, she allows the stone lid to fall on her body and, in the ensuing confusion, Acciolino attempts to flee. However, in the closing moments, Acciolino appears to witness Bautista's ghost and, overcome with remorse, he stabs himself with Blanca's dagger.

¹³ These interventions are themselves an echo of the scene in *Ali-Bek* in which Amalia places herself bodily between her father and her husband. See Chapter Three above.

¹⁴ In addition to Meneghelli's tragedy and Trafieri's *ballo tragico*, is Vittorio Trento's opera *Bianca de 'Rossi*, Venice, 1797, performed at the Teatro de San Benedetto in Venice in the same year. Mattia Botturini wrote the libretto. Petzoldt McClymonds' summary offers an insight into the visual appearance and action in this work. *Ibid.*, pp.169-175.

¹⁵ On the Gothic in Europe and Spain, see Nigel Glendinning, 'Lo gótico, lo funeral y lo macabro en la cultura española y europea del siglo XVII', *Anales de literatura española*, 10, 1994, pp. 101-115, and, Guillermo Carnero, 'La Holandesa de Gaspar Zavala y Zamora y la literatura Gótica del XVIII español', in *Estudios*, pp.135-162.

¹⁶ The French playwright, poet and novelist François Thomas Marie de Baculard d'Arnaud popularised a dramatic vision of the Gothic in the 1770s in France, although none of these works is known to have been performed in Spain. His dramas enjoyed renewed popularity in France in the 1790s and this might account for the new wave of translations of several of his most significant dramas in Spain in the 1790s: *Eufemia o el triunfo de la Religión*, Córdoba, Madrid, 1775, [Pedro Gómez Prieto or Juan Navarro trans.] see Lafarga (ed.), *Teatro*, p.308; *Los amantes desgraciados o el Conde de Cominge*, Manuel Bellosartes (trans.), Madrid, 1791, see Lafarga (ed.), *Teatro europeo*, p.298.

¹⁷ Gaspar Zavala y Zamora, *El amor constante, o la holandesa*, [Madrid], [1790], was performed in 1787, 1788, 1793, 1797, 1800 and 1805. See Carnero, 'La Holandesa', and Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, p.623; Manuel José Quintana, *El duque de Viseo*, Madrid, 1802, performed in 1801, 1803, 1804. See Dérozier, *Quintana*, and Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, p.701.

¹⁸ *Julia y Romeo*, Cruz, 9-13 December 1803, see Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, pp.512, 750, who record that Dionisio Solís translated this work from the adaptation of Shakespeare by Jean-François Ducis or Louis Sebastien Mercier or Neuchatel.

¹⁹ The following plays were performed in Madrid: *Celina o el mudo incognito*, 1803, 1804, 1807 and 1808, see Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, p.657; *Hombre de las tres caras o el proscrito de Venezia*, 1802, 1807 and 1808, see Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, p.740; *Las Minas de Polonia*, 1805 and 1807, see Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, p.780; *El molino de Keben y aventuras de Tekeli*, 1805 and 1808, see Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, p.781; *La mujer de dos maridos*, 1804, 1805 and 1807, see Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, p.785.

²⁰ In the context of Blanca's overarching characteristic of virtue, her name assumes an obvious symbolic resonance of purity.

²¹ It was sometimes contended that Pallas was 'a beautiful daughter of Triton and associate of Athena', who was 'accidentally killed by the goddess'. Out of 'grief for her friend, Athena took the name Pallas and placed it before her own.' See J.E. Zimmerman, *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, New York, 1964, p.189. See also Paul Harvey, *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, Oxford, 1984, p.303.

²² Harvey, *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, p.55. Sandro Boticelli's panel painting, 'Pallas and the Centaur' (c.1485, Florence: Uffizi), while not representing a known myth, has been interpreted by modern scholarship as an allegorical illustration of the subjugation of male lust by female chastity, an appropriate symbol for Blanca's struggle here. See *The Dictionary of Art*, London, 1996, IV, pp.493-504 (p.501).

²³ Aristotle, *Poetics*, p.66.

²⁴ Some scholars have interpreted this heightened rhetoric as an outward manifestation of a loss of reason, even of madness. See Whitaker, 'Clarissa's sisters', and Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, p.185.

²⁵ At the end of his catalogue of virtuous heroic women Feijóo noted: 'En las mujeres que se mataron a sí mismas, no se propone esta resolución, como ejemplo de virtud, sino como exceso vicioso de la fortaleza, que es lo que basta para el intento'. The characterisation of Blanca suggests that Gálvez's understanding of the act of suicide is at variance with that of Feijóo. See Sau, ed. cit., p.35.

²⁶ The enfeebled patriarch is not restricted to Gálvez's tragic oeuvre. In both *La familia a la moda* and *El egoísta* Gálvez portrays the threat to the stability of the family occasioned by the

male head of the household.

²⁷ See Gálvez, *La familia a la moda*, Doménech (ed.). For a brief discussion of the debate on marriage and women in eighteenth-century Spain, see Philip Deacon in Leandro Fernández de Moratín, *El sí de las niñas*, London, 1995, pp.xii-xx.

CHAPTER EIGHT

AMNÓN

Amnón, printed in volume three of the *Obras poéticas*, is not known to have been performed.¹ Although contemporary critical reaction consisted of a sole cursory remark by Quintana, the play has recently been the subject of a detailed, scholarly analysis.² The tragedy was based on a Biblical narrative which had stimulated creative writings for centuries and which enjoyed renewed popularity during the eighteenth century in Europe.³ However, the earlier dramatic treatments of the subject matter by Tirso de Molina and Calderón de la Barca must be regarded as the most direct source of inspiration for Gálvez. As she remodelled their versions, she changed the dynamic of the narrative, making Amnón's tragedy central, and recasting Tamar as virtuous rather than vengeful. However, the use of language and rhetoric in *Amnón* signals Gálvez's conscious debt to the earlier works, and this tragedy offers evidence of her skill in engaging with dramatic tradition.

Historical Sources

As in *Saúl*, Old Testament Scripture is the earliest source for the narrative of *Amnón*.⁴ II Samuel is concerned with various aspects of David's reign after the death of King Saul. Domestic problems, particularly those involving his children, are recounted in II Samuel 9-20 and concluded in I Kings 1-2. The framework of Gálvez's plot follows the events described in II Samuel 13, which concentrate on Amnon's seduction and subsequent rape of his half-sister Tamar, an action for which her brother Absalom exacts revenge by having Amnon killed at a feast.⁵ Perhaps reflecting the focus of the Biblical source on the domestic rather than the political sphere, Gálvez's play centres on David's family, damaged from within by conflicting loyalties and rivalries.

Spanish Literary Sources

The Biblical account is blunt and sober. However, Gálvez's dramatisation is one of several Spanish works which gave more animated, ultimately more tragic expression to the story, thereby contributing to a literary tradition whose origins and growth stem from early embellishments of Scripture written during the first century AD.⁶ Prior to the first

theatrical adaptations in Spain, this compelling Biblical story of incest and fratricide had been readily absorbed into the *romancero*. The narrative was further impressed on the Spanish mentality through the sermons of preachers who seized upon the tale, exploiting the ambiguities of its moral message.⁷

However, the most significant precursors to Gálvez's tragedy in Spain were Tirso de Molina's *La venganza de Tamar*, first printed in 1634 and Calderón de la Barca's *Los cabellos de Absalón*, the second act of which was copied almost entirely verbatim from the third act of Tirso's play.⁸ Although *La venganza de Tamar* is not known to have been staged during Gálvez's lifetime, recent research has confirmed that *Los cabellos de Absalón* was revived periodically for the Madrid theatres until 1764.⁹ Nevertheless, both plays were reprinted as *sueeltas* in the eighteenth century, testifying to their ongoing interest for the reading public.¹⁰ There is evidence to suggest that Gálvez knew Golden-Age drama and that *Amnón* might be read as a creative engagement with Tirso's and Calderón's plays, and through them with an earlier dramatic tradition.¹¹

The nature and extent of the influence of Golden-Age drama on the Spanish stage in Gálvez's time continues to prompt much scholarly debate.¹² Following Luzán's criticism of the stylistic excesses of the works of Calderón, Lope de Vega and others, the critique of seventeenth-century plays was central to the debate on theatre in the eighteenth century.¹³ It has been proved that there was a marked decline in popularity of Golden-Age drama with eighteenth-century Spanish theatre audiences.¹⁴ However, after 1750, growing critical concern about the number of plays translated from foreign, usually French, originals was in part responsible for a renewal of interest in Spain's dramatic inheritance and a shift in intellectual attitudes towards the utility of seventeenth-century drama in the rejuvenation of Spanish theatre. Theorists and playwrights recognised that the themes and situations of certain Golden-Age plays could be refined for the contemporary stage. This inspired the concept of the theatrical *refundición*, which involved adapting and reshaping the raw material of selected Golden-Age dramas in the light of new aesthetic, moral and political imperatives.¹⁵ This was, in effect, a reform from within, a radical ideological realignment of theatre.¹⁶

By the late eighteenth-century, *refundiciones* were well-established in dramatic practice. However, the relationship between *Amnón*, *La venganza de Tamar* and *Los cabellos de Absalón* cannot be understood in terms of the art of the *refundición*. Gálvez's tragedy is a more subtle engagement with Tirso's and Calderón's plays, which

reveals her determination to recuperate and exploit the power of Golden-Age drama to enrich and enliven tragedy on a classical model. In rethinking the moral dilemmas at the heart of this narrative for a new sensibility, Gálvez clarifies some of the ethical uncertainties of the Golden-Age dramas but leaves others tantalisingly unresolved.

The Biblical Narrative as Tragedy

The establishment of the framework for the plot is the most obvious indicator of Gálvez's creative interaction with the earlier works, and particularly with Tirso's drama. The progress of the action in *La venganza de Tamar* begins with the onset of Amón's desire for and rape of Tamar, and ends with his death. *Los cabellos de Absalón* extends the narrative beyond the murder of Amón to include the death of Absalón. Gálvez's tragedy starts and finishes at the same points in the Biblical narrative as Tirso's drama. This must be regarded as a deliberate choice, and one which reflects Gálvez's recognition of the powerful tragic trajectory established in *La venganza de Tamar*. However, this important parallel, which testifies to Gálvez's self-conscious engagement with Tirso's work, also serves to highlight the distinctiveness of her approach to the tragic protagonist, and to the wider significance of the narrative.

The title of Tirso's play belies its dramatic focus on the fall from grace and subsequent redemption of Amón. It is a dark and tragic tale in which the author's contemplation of the psychology of evil and its various human manifestations, serves as a foil for an examination of the central conflict between justice and mercy. At the outset, the play stresses the deep motivations underpinning Amón's impulse to rape Tamar, his half sister. Later, the wider effects of the violation become apparent. Gradually Tamar sheds the passive role of victim as she seeks to avenge the violent crime committed against her. Through this shift, the author directs the sympathy of the audience away from Tamar towards Amón, thereby questioning the nature and extent of his original crime and her desire for vengeance. Tirso draws the spectator into a complex moral debate, the final irony of which is that Tamar's revenge is not the 'reward of suffering virtue, but a triumph of malice and hatred', an action which expiates Amón's crime and redeems him.¹⁷ In this sense, in the very title of the play, Tirso leads the audience to the central question addressed in the play: can human law reconcile the chasm between temporal and Divine justice and mercy?

Calderón's drama condenses details of the dilemma facing Amón and dedicates

the final act to portraying events which occur after his death. Thus, despite the substantial textual overlap between his play and that of Tirso, Calderón's additions and alterations to the narrative create a work which reflects his thematic interests. Absalón's ambition, rather than Amón's impulse to incest is the focus of the dramatic action.¹⁸ Consequently, the play more closely reflects the spirit of the Biblical narrative by depicting a chain of events which begins with Amón's incestuous rape of Tamar and continues with Absalón's murder of his half brother and challenge of his father's kingship, an act of ambitious treachery which leads to his own bizarre death.¹⁹ In his version of events, Calderón hints more strongly than Tirso that David's former adultery and complicity in the murder of Uriah has given rise to the aberrant behaviour, suffering and deaths of his children. In this respect, his play engages with religious polemic, depicting a complete cycle of temptation, sin and retribution.

The more compact scale and the more unified action of Tirso's drama must have appealed to Gálvez, since it provided the opportunity for the development of a tragedy on a classical model, focusing on the demise of Amnón. However, in the very title of her tragedy, Gálvez signals the extent to which her conception of the significance of the narrative differs from that of Tirso. For her, Amnón's reversal of fortune stems from his own error, and his suffering and remorse lend his death tragic resonance. Thus his downfall does not depend on a vengeful Tamar, and his elevation is not contingent on her parallel demise. This is the most fundamental of the ways in which Gálvez rethinks the characters and recasts their relationships in *Amnón*.

Amnón

Unlike Tirso and Calderón, who mitigate his criminal action and exonerate him from much of the blame for its consequences, Gálvez attributes to Amnón primary responsibility both for the rape itself, and for the events which follow. In *La venganza de Tamar* the role of fate is emphasised. Amón falls in love with his sister unaware of her identity, after hearing her sing in the garden of David's seraglio into which he has trespassed. In *Los cabellos de Absalón* Calderón highlights the encouragement given Amón by his advisor Jonadab, who urges him to gratify his sexual desires without compunction and, subsequently, the impact of the incestuous rape is diminished when placed in the context of other family crimes: David's adultery, Thamar's complicity in murder, Absalón's killing of his brother and attempted assassination of his father.

By contrast, at the opening of Gálvez's tragedy, Amnón is fully aware of the identity of the object of his lustful desire, describing his passion as a raging fire. He explains to Jonadab that he has harboured intense feelings for his sister since their shared childhood (I,iii) and in this Gálvez exposes Amnón's inability to replace adolescent passions with the sanguine reason of adulthood. Later he manipulates his father's affections, persuading David to permit him to enjoy Thamar's company. When he proves unable to moderate his physical desires, he presents himself as the victim of his own torment and delirium (II,v), but even at this point, Gálvez demonstrates his awareness of the moral choice which faces him:

¡Dios eterno!
 La virtud, que sostiene mi flaqueza,
 Como una luz sombría que ilumina
 El seno del sepulcro, brilla incierta
 En mi angustiado pecho en este instante,
 Para que el fondo del abismo vea. (II,v)

Amnón chooses sexual gratification, which he knows to be unnatural, unlawful and immoral. Thus, unlike Tirso and Calderón, in her tragedy, Gálvez is unequivocal in emphasising Amnón's transgression and the moment at which he steps into error acquires added significance because not only does he suffer a reversal of fortune, but Thamar, Absalón, and David are also drawn into conflict as a direct consequence of his incestuous action. Gálvez shows that Amnón's rape of Thamar provokes a series of further errors of judgement, and his demise is placed at the centre of a wider collapse in the dynamic of the family.

Linked to Amnón's prior consciousness of his fundamental error is the profound sense of guilt which he experiences afterwards. This is conveyed in dramatic terms through his changed speech and behaviour patterns. He fails to recognise Absalón and then proceeds to baffle his brother and Achitofel with phrases which appear to them as a sign of derangement but which convey with great clarity his overwhelming sense of guilt and the recognition of the enormity of his crime: 'El peso enorme / del delito me agobia' (III,iii), and his recognition of the suffering he caused his sister: '¿Acaso sus favores / Arrebaté?... y su llanto...ella lloraba' (III,iii), indicates for the first time that he is aware of the wider implications of his action on the rest of his family: the sorrow and bitter disappointment of his loving father, 'no redoblen / El llanto de tu padre tus delitos: / Basta que yo con mi maldad destroce / su corazon piadoso' (III,iii) and the rejection and

betrayal of his brother. He feels guilt, shame, remorse, but above all fear for the future, 'los horrores de mi destino' (III,iii) which shows him aware of his impending downfall:

¡Ah! quando el alba
Estos lugares con su luz colore,
David me habrá perdido para siempre,
Para siempre.... (III,iii)

Amnón's tragic status derives from the clarity of his awareness of his error, but also from the nature of his crime. Whereas Tirso and Calderón place no special emphasis on the incestuous nature of the rape, in Gálvez's enlightenment tragedy, with its emphasis on the dynamic of the family and on law, incest is the worst of crimes, whose victim is not simply Tamar, but the whole structure of the tribe, and whose consequences are not only the breakdown of self, but also the corrosion of family unity.²⁰ The magnitude of this crime, as Amnón himself recognises, must lead to his death:

Amor, yo te abomino:
De tu infame placer detesto el goce;
El momento maldigo del deleyte;
Y huyendo de mí mismo y de los hombres,
Errante, despechado enfurecido,
El objeto de escándalo y horrores
Seré del universo, hasta que un rayo
Hunda en la nada mi exêcrable nombre. (III,iii)

Tamar

It is in the characterisation of Tamar that Gálvez's tragedy differs most markedly from the earlier works. Tirso and Calderón create a character whose essential goodness is compromised from the start of the action by her worldliness. In their dramas, Tamar enjoys freedom of movement and, it is inferred, the possibility of a measure of sexual freedom. Her participation in the game of charades, in which she acts a role as Amón's lover, is foolish, as it gives false hope to Amón. More importantly though, Tamar's knowledge of the art of seduction raises questions about her innocence which later colour the depiction of her demise and Amón's redemption. After being raped, she rages and clamours for vengeance, before finally presiding over the dead body of her brother in an attitude of brutal, cold triumph. In Calderón's play, which extends the action further, Tamar then conspires with Absalón in his attempt to usurp David as King and at the end of the play retires from the world in disgrace.

By contrast, Gálvez's Thamar is virtuous at the start of the play, protected by her cloistered surroundings both physically and emotionally. Her trusting nature makes her vulnerable to the sexual advances of her brother and it is a cruel irony that Amnón's entrapment of his sister derives from her obedience in carrying out David's orders to lift Amnón's spirits and to discover the source of his depression (II,ii). Immediately after being raped, Thamar expresses a vehement desire for revenge, 'Venganza, sí, venganza. / Yo la invoco' (III,v). However, it is clear that her plea is for justice within the law, not personal vengeance, and this emerges strongly in her audiences with David in Act V scenes iii and v: 'No os imploro, / Sino como monarca justiciero' (V,iii). Gálvez's profound rewriting of Thamar's motivation, from a furious desire for revenge to an impassioned but reasoned plea for justice, is crucial to an understanding of her transformation of a seventeenth-century view of Thamar to one more in tune with enlightenment ideals of female virtue.

These rhetorical exchanges between Thamar and David ultimately serve to reinforce the innate goodness, selflessness and sense of duty which Gálvez makes central to her character. David's tearful pleas and Thamar's loyalty to family eventually lead her not only to abandon her demand for Amnón's punishment, but also to forgive him (V,v). This virtuous choice invests her character with a dignity which is absent in the earlier works. For Tirso and Calderón, Tamar's revenge serves to demonstrate the failure of temporal justice since vindication does not redeem her and she is shown to be further corrupted by her act of personal retribution. By contrast, Gálvez accords Thamar exemplary status and juxtaposes her reasoned behaviour with the irrational impulses of her father and brothers.

Absalón

Amnón's unnatural behaviour prompts further perversions of rational action, the gravest of which is the murder of Amnón by his ambitious brother. Amnón's criminal action leads to and legitimises that of Absalón, who justifies his self-serving fratricide by invoking the code of honour. Gálvez portrays the rape as the origin of a profound rupture in what had been a close, albeit tense, fraternal relationship:

Amnon, ántes que yo, nació en mi daño,
Y esta casualidad, feliz al hombre
Destinado a reynar, secretamente

For Tirso and Calderón, Absalón's innate ambition, combined with Tamar's bloody revenge, mitigates Amón's responsibility for the consequences of his action. However, Gálvez emphasises that the incestuous rape is the catalyst for the mobilisation of Absalón's previously suppressed ambition. Thus, Amón's incestuous action will precipitate a further grave crime against the natural order of the family, that of fratricide.

David

In all three plays, the aftermath of the incestuous rape sees David torn between the desire as a father to forgive Amón and his duty as a King to administer temporal justice. In the works by Tirso and Calderón, David chooses to forgive his son primarily because he believes he must repeat the act of mercy shown to him by God after his own murder of Uriah. By contrast, Gálvez makes no direct reference to David's past, and her character faces a much starker choice between punishment and clemency. His dilemma mirrors that of many tragic patriarchs but his decision is not that of a Brutus figure who sends his sons to die in order to uphold the civic law and the integrity of the republic.²¹ In fact he does exactly the opposite, placing family above the law, in this case both civic and natural, and urging Thamar to do the same. Furthermore, his invocations of divine justice, so important in the earlier works, have a hollow ring in *Amón* and Gálvez hints that this appeal is not a recognition of the ultimate superiority of God over man, but an abnegation of civic duty, a sign of his own lack of moral stature.

Patriarchy and Morality

In the context of the characterisation and significance of David, the scene of his tearful entreaty to Thamar to forgive Amón is striking. It is interesting in structural terms, as an example of how the author draws on the gestures and devices of the repertoire of sentimental drama to heighten the emotional appeal of classicising tragedy.²² On a deeper level though, its representation of patriarchy is disturbing. At first sight, David appears fragile and emotional and Thamar Stoic and stern, an apparent reversal of expected gender roles. However, this enfeebled patriarch succeeds in prostrating Thamar, ironically invoking the need for family loyalty: '¿Y contra quién la invocas? ¡Oh hija mía! / Contra tu misma sangre' (V,iii). Gálvez shows that Thamar has right and reason on her

side, but by the end of the play she has been persuaded to accept not only that justice will not be done, but that she must also forgive her brother's crime in order to maintain the stability of the family and civic society, as David reminds her:

Amnón nació para regir el cetro
De Judá, y hasta ahora sus virtudes
Gracia encontraron ante Dios eterno:
Lo aman las tribus, y gozosas cuentan
El bien que de su mano recibieron,
Y el castigo cruel de su delito
Contra mí subleva los Hebreos. (V,iii)

Thus the ramifications of Thamar's non-vengeance in Gálvez's tragedy are disquieting. Although her sacrifice undoubtedly testifies to and indeed reaffirms her inherent virtue, it nevertheless remains true that, at the end of the play, Thamar has lost everything and, despite the death of Amnón, the patriarchal order is dominant. Furthermore, Amnón's dying words are a bizarre and sinister twist of the truth, almost a revindication of his criminal action in which he casts himself as the virtuous victim:

¡Tú aquí odiosa muger! ¡Ah! tu presencia
Emponzoña mis últimos momentos....
Por tí he perdido la virtud.... Aparta...
Padre, por mi perdon clamad al cielo....
Arrepentido.... víctima infelice....
De amor, de odio, y de venganza muero. (V,v)

In redefining the conflicts between her main characters, Gálvez explores key topics of enlightenment debate in Spain: familial duty, natural justice, virtue, and personal morality. For Tirso and Calderón, the Biblical story is a vehicle for the exploration of ostensibly religious truths. In their dramas, the essential superiority of Divine justice and mercy is reasserted. Gálvez reworks their treatments of the Biblical narrative, creating her tragedy in accordance with the aesthetic, moral and political preoccupations of her generation, and as such *Amnón* conveys a less overtly religious, more humanist message. As she explores a series of conflicts between the forces of law, duty, and virtue, and those of instinct, 'unnatural' love and dishonour, Gálvez engages with morality based not on seventeenth-century religious dogma, but on eighteenth-century concepts of reason which gave primacy to human virtue and not revealed truths.

However, her characterisation and some of the unresolved conflicts of the action

suggest that for Gálvez the system of human morality and justice is open to interrogation. Ultimately, rather like Tirso, Gálvez does not present an exemplary resolution, despite the virtuous elevation of Tamar. Perhaps one of the most striking and unexpected resonances of Golden-Age drama in Gálvez's tragedy is precisely this openness and absence of a clear moral didacticism.

Imagery and The Chorus

In the same way that Gálvez's moral and social vision engages with and renews that of Tirso and Calderón, she drew much inspiration from their imaginative conception of the Biblical story and from their linguistic conceits, and transposed these into the idiom of classicizing tragedy. Gálvez's use of floral and botanical imagery recalls passages in which Tirso and Calderón harness the ironic, tragic and pathetic significance of the language of flowers and trees.²³ At the opening of *Amnón*, the chorus of Israelite maidens hold branches of palm and laurel, traditional horticultural symbols of justice and victory respectively. Soon afterwards, Jonadab compares the tormented Amnón to a palm tree which has become bent into the dust and withered by the hot desert wind (I,ii). It is an image of faded glory which ironically prefigures Amnón's demise and Absalón's vengeful murder of his brother.

Later, Amnón compares Tamar to a cedar, a tree usually associated with strength and beauty and, less frequently, with unbending pride (I,iii). The symbolism of the comparison points to key aspects of her character: the beauty, which impels Amnón to rape, the pride and determination which drives her quest for justice, and the underlying strength of character, which enables her to forgive. Gálvez also uses non-specific floral imagery in an allusion to Tamar's loss of virginity. Describing the preparations to celebrate her father's victory, Tamar exclaims with enthusiastic innocence:

Seguidme, amigas; festejad mi gozo;
Y sembrando de flores el camino
Que debe hollar su planta, nuestras voces
Celebren su valor y su heroismo (I,i)

The image of trampled flowers, a familiar allusion to rape, is here used with specific ironic intent.

Poetic references to light, and particularly imagery of the sun, in *Amnón* are

reminiscent of metaphors used in *Los cabellos de Absalón*. In Calderón's drama, Tamar compares Absalón to a new sun, thereby referring to his vaunting ambition. It is therefore appropriate, after her brother's failure to replace David on the throne, that Tamar seeks the protection and safety of darkness. Conversely, in Gálvez's tragedy, Tamar is seen as the source rather than the beneficiary of solar light. Amnón compares her to 'la rosada aurora' (I,iii), explaining how the brilliance of her beauty dazzled him. Subsequently, during the period when he struggles to reconcile the implications of the lustful desire he feels for his sister, Amnón links the comparison between Tamar's sun-like brilliance with the burning fire of his passion, in an attempt to mitigate responsibility for his incestuous feelings.

Gálvez's incorporation of a chorus into her tragedy represents a further point of comparison and contrast between the three works. There are parallels between the function of the spoken chorus in *Amnón* and that of the musical elements in *Los cabellos de Absalón* and *La venganza de Tamar*, despite obvious differences between their structural formation.²⁴ In Calderón's drama, music accompanies Amnón's disclosure to Tamar of his desire for her. The words of the song appear to urge him to articulate his 'love', using phrases which foreshadow Tamar's revenge and his death. The pastoral and folk tunes incorporated throughout Tirso's drama, and by default appearing in the second act of that of Calderón, add local colour, contrasting the rustic pastimes and simple pleasures of the lower classes with the brutal passions of the main protagonists. In this way, the peasants act as a foil, 'a type of common humanity beside the heroic figures of legend.'²⁵ Thus, in both dramas, although musical accompaniment does not bear the outward form of Greek chorus, it functions as such, providing lyrical relief of the tragic tension and bridging the gap between stage and public. The musicians are both a representation on-stage of the spectators and a mouthpiece by which the dramatist draws the attention of the audience to subtleties of plot and theme.²⁶

Ironically then, it may be through her engagement with Golden-Age drama that Gálvez was inspired to incorporate the device of the Greek chorus into *Amnón*. At the opening of the play, the chorus of Israelite maidens establishes a jubilant tone which later contrasts with Amnón's melancholy mood. In a similar way throughout the tragedy, Gálvez continues to make the words of the chorus parallel the changes in emotional intensity. Their words bring the first four acts to a close, reiterating through reprise, the significance of events which have just occurred and subtly alluding to those which will

take place in the next sequence. Furthermore, by indicating in the stage directions that the chorus remains present on stage at the end of each act and the beginning of the next, Gálvez provides continuity in the development of the argument, ensuring that the unity of action is preserved. More importantly though, the physical presence of the chorus at these emotionally heightened junctures in the play reinforces the unique role of the chorus which mediates between that of omniscient interpreter of events and symbolic on-stage presence of the on-looking audience.

Conclusions

If Gálvez's *Amnón* can be regarded as a reworking of *La venganza de Tamar* or *Los cabellos de Absalón*, then it is on a very subtle, nuanced model. Gálvez transforms the Golden-Age works in complex ways, not simply to discipline and purify them, but also to establish a clear tragic trajectory. Her debt to Tirso and Calderón emerges in the structural and linguistic fabric of the tragedy, but her transformations and recreations are significant and are most apparent in characterisation.

Amnón's demise, which Gálvez places at the centre of the dramatic interest, is charted in accordance with the terms of classicising tragedy. However, in contrast with *Blanca de Rossi* and *Florinda*, in which the wider civic and national implications of individual crimes are stressed, Amnón's incestuous rape and its consequences are worked out in an intense domestic setting. This focus on the family intensifies the significance of Amnón's crime, not simply as a transgression of a code of honour, but of a fundamental moral and natural law.

Perhaps because of the unspeakable nature of the crime, this tragedy, which in other respects appears to express the ideological preoccupations of its time, ends on an unresolved, ambiguous note. Through their engagement with this powerful Biblical narrative, Tirso and Calderón raised important questions about the relationship between human morality and Divine justice. In her turn, Gálvez's creative interaction with these earlier treatments affirms the values of enlightenment morality, but also interrogates the values of patriarchy.

¹ María Rosa Gálvez de Cabrera, *Amnón. Tragedia original en cinco actos*, in *Obras poéticas*, III, pp.3-99.

² Daniel Whitaker has discussed the Aristotelian features of the tragedy, while hinting that Gálvez may have deployed some of the devices associated with sentimental drama, and most notably the rhetoric of tears. See Whitaker, 'Darkness in the Age of Light'.

³ On English and French eighteenth-century plays based on the Scriptural narrative, see Coleman, *The Bible in English Drama*; Herr, *Les Tragédies bibliques en France*; Roston, *Biblical Drama in England*. Original spellings of the names of the Biblical personalities mentioned in the various historical and literary texts discussed in this chapter are retained. Unless otherwise stated, all anglicised spellings correspond to the *New English Bible*, Oxford, 1970.

⁴ The Bible was translated into the Castilian vernacular by Casiodoro de Reina, printed in 1569 and reprinted in 1622. This edition was known colloquially as the *Bear Bible*. The Castilian translation of 2 Samuel 13 is quoted in Tirso de Molina, *La venganza de Tamar*, A.K.G. Paterson (ed.), Cambridge, 1969, pp.147-149. All further references to Tirso's play correspond to this edition.

⁵ Plot summary: The play is set in the countryside within sight of the walled city of Jerusalem and in the wake of King David's victory over the Ammonites. Act I opens with Jonadab and Joab speculating on the melancholy mood of Amnón, David's first born son and heir. Later, when Amnón and Jonadab, his confidant, meet, Amnón explains the passionate love he feels for Tamar, his sister, 'hermana' in Gálvez's tragedy. Jonadab advises Amnón to seek his sister's company in order to diffuse his passion and thus, when Amnón meets David, he requests that Tamar be permitted to cheer him. In Act II, David is unsuccessful in his attempt to discover the source of Amnón's evident malaise and asks Tamar to try to elicit the information. Tamar deduces that Amnón is in love, but does not discover with whom. As night falls, she urges Joab to disguise the extent of Amnón's anguish from David and the act closes as Tamar resolves to return to her brother to uncover the truth. At the start of Act III, it is clear that the rape of Tamar has occurred. Amnón appears more deeply troubled than before and Absalón, his ambitious younger brother, is unable to make sense of much of their extended conversation. Tamar informs Absalón of the crime committed against her and asks him to avenge her loss of honour. Act IV opens in the middle of the festivities to celebrate the victory of the Israelites over the Ammonites. David has learned of Amnón's criminal action, but he determines to disguise this knowledge from Absalón, who also dissimulates and urges David to allow Amnón to attend a victory feast in honour of their father. David succeeds in extracting a tearful confession from Amnón and reassures him that the crime will be forgiven by God if a sacrifice is made. The act closes with Amnón's agreement to join the banquet. Act V is largely given over to Tamar's pleas to David that Amnón be punished for his action. However, David succeeds in persuading Tamar to abandon her calls for a just punishment and to agree to forgive her brother. The final act is swiftly concluded when Amnón stumbles on stage to announce that Absalón has dealt him a fatal blow before fleeing the kingdom. The tragedy ends with Amnón's bitter words of regret and death.

⁶ The *Antiquitates Judaicae* (*The Antiquities of the Jews*), completed by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus in AD 93, was an important historico-literary predecessor to certain adaptations of the Tamar and Amnon episode in Spain. Josephus' more flexible rendering of Scripture is thought to have influenced in spirit, if not substantially in content, the work of later writers See J.C.J. Metford for a discussion of the impact and influence of a 1616 edition

of Josephus' *Antiquities* on Tirso's *La venganza de Tamar* in 'Tirso de Molina's Old Testament Plays', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 27 (1950), pp.149-163 (pp.162-163). See also Paterson, ed.cit., p.13, for a discussion of the various treatments of the Tamar narrative in Spanish literature.

⁷ Paterson, *ibid.*, notes, '[preachers] used the story as an admonishment to women against the perils of intimacy; or they would relate the family tragedy to the cumulative punishment that David suffered for the murder of Uriah and seduction of Bathsheba.'

⁸For an extensive analysis of the difficulties associated with the sources and date of Tirso's drama, see Alan K.G. Paterson, 'The Textual History of Tirso's *La venganza de Tamar*', *Modern Language Review*, 63 (1968), pp.381-391. Five volumes of Calderón's plays were printed, without the author's consent, the first four in Madrid, the last in Barcelona, between 1636 and 1677. After Calderón's death Juan de Vera Tassis y Villarroel prepared the dramatist's plays for publication. *Los cabellos de Absalón* was printed in the eighth volume in Madrid in 1684 by Francisco Sanz. The play has appeared in two modern editions: Pedro Calderón de la Barca, *Los cabellos de Absalón*, Gwynne Edwards (ed.), Oxford, 1973 and *Los cabellos de Absalón*, Evangelina Rodríguez Cuadros (ed.), Madrid, 1989. The relationship between the two plays has prompted much critical debate concerning the aesthetic quality of each work and the artistic integrity of their respective authors. See Paterson, 'The Textual History of Tirso's *La venganza de Tamar*', and Albert E. Sloman, *The Dramatic Craftsmanship of Calderón. His Use of Earlier Plays*, Oxford, 1958, pp.94-127, for opposing views.

⁹ Calderón's play was performed on the Madrid stage in 1710, 1712, 1719, 1722, 1728, 1735 and 1764, see Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, p.646.

¹⁰ The *suelta* corresponding to Tirso's play, held in the Biblioteca Nacional, is thought to date from between 1701 and 1730, the year during which the printer, Leefdael, was operating in Sevilla. See Paterson, 'The Textual History of Tirso's *La venganza de Tamar*' and Everett W. Hesse, 'The Publication of Calderón's Plays in the Seventeenth Century', *Philological Quarterly*, 27 (1948), pp.37-51.

¹¹ In an eloquent and spirited defence of *Las esclavas amazonas*, the 1805 performance of which had received a hostile review in the *Memorial literario*, Gálvez provided an insight into the creation of her comedy and suggested that in order to please firstly the actors and secondly the public: 'yo me vi en la precisión para no alarmar a los primeros, de ponerle a mi comedia traducida del francés; y para complacer, o "placer" al segundo, de imitar las bellas escenas del *Desdén*, aunque en otras costumbres, y la inimitable versificación de nuestros poetas antiguos'. *Varietades* IV.24 (1805), pp.359-61, (p.360).

¹² Following on from the important studies of René Andioc, scholars continue to question the nature and extent of the influence of Golden-Age drama. In 'El teatro de Calderón como arma ideológica en el origen del romanticismo conservador español', in *Estudios*, pp.215-250, Guillermo Carnero presents and later summarises key arguments advanced by some of the major detractors and supporters of Golden-Age drama, in order to examine the nature and development of theatrical polemics in the later period and demonstrate the way in which an essentially literary debate was appropriated by ideological theorists. He shows how the French Revolution galvanised the beliefs of each camp, polarising existing opinion and pushing the literary debate further into the political sphere. He argues that by the first decade of the nineteenth century, liberal neo-classicism and the literature it inspired, was associated with social and moral change, and literature of the Golden Age, with the conservative values of the Ancien Régime.

- ¹³ See José Checa Beltrán, 'Los clásicos en la preceptiva dramática del siglo XVIII', *Cuadernos de teatro clásico*, 5 (1990), pp.13-31.
- ¹⁴ See Andioc, *Teatro*, pp.13-121.
- ¹⁵ See Francisco Aguilar Piñal, 'Las refundiciones en el siglo XVIII', *Cuadernos de teatro clásico*, 5 (1990), pp.33-41.
- ¹⁶ See Emilio Palacios Fernández, 'El teatro barroco español en una carta de Bernardo de Iriarte al Conde de Aranda (1767)', *Cuadernos de teatro clásico*, 5 (1990), pp.43-64.
- ¹⁷ See Paterson in Tirso, *La venganza de Tamar*, ed.cit.
- ¹⁸ 'The title of Calderón's play suggests that its unity is to be sought in the person of Absalón. He supplants Amón as protagonist.' Sloman, *Dramatic Craftsmanship of Calderón*, p.111.
- ¹⁹ Tirso alluded to Absalom's ambition, thereby 'transferring the audience's sympathy from avenger to avenged', but neither developed nor resolved this issue in his drama. In this sense, according to some critics, 'Tirso's play invited recasting' and thus Calderón's play can be regarded as a 'sequel' to Tirso's narrative. *Ibid.*, p.100.
- ²⁰ See Everett W. Hesse, 'The Incest Motif in Tirso's "La venganza de Tamar"', *Hispania*, 47 (1964), pp.268-76, for a provocative discussion of incest as a metaphor for power lust in Tirso's play. See also Otto Rank's important survey of incest as a motif in world literature, *Das Inzest-Motiv in Dichtung und Sage*, Leipzig and Vienna, 1926.
- ²¹ Voltaire's *Brutus*, although not known to have been performed on the Spanish stage, was translated: *Bruto. Tragedia de Mr. de Voltaire*, B. García (trans.), Amsterdam, 1758, see Lafarga (ed.), *Teatro*, p.211. The play was also translated by J. Viera y Clavijo, but was not known to have been printed, see Lafarga (ed.) *Teatro europeo*, p.222. Jovellanos referred to the figure of Guzmán el bueno as 'segundo Bruto', see Andioc, *Teatro*, p.389.
- ²² Daniel Whitaker has argued that in allowing David to cry, 'Gálvez gently amplifies the audience's compassion for David and at the same time demonstrates her own thorough grasp of the Enlightened theater of her day', see Whitaker, 'Darkness in the Age of Light', pp.446-447, 451. However, I would argue that Gálvez did not intend the audience to feel compassion for David in his sorrow, but rather to identify him both as a failing father and enfeebled patriarch. Moreover, the incorporation of a tearful scene in this tragedy might be better understood in the light of Gálvez's wider experiments with the devices and preoccupations of new literary modes and dramatic genres throughout her tragic oeuvre.
- ²³ In *La venganza de Tamar* (III, 758-909), the prophetess known as Laureta, and in Calderón's drama as Teuca, arrives with a basket of mixed flowers, each with a symbolic association. She proceeds to distribute to Amón, Adonías, Salamón and Absalón a different flower, each of which is suggestive of personality traits, past behaviour and future fame or ignominy. Later the peasants adorn the princes' pavilions with branches of trees and bunches of flowers which have similar symbolic meanings (III, 910-935).
- ²⁴ For observations on the form and function of the Greek chorus, see F.L. Lucas, 'The Ancient Chorus and its Modern Counterparts', in *Tragedy*, London, 1946, pp.59-72.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.69.
- ²⁶ The metaphorical dimension of the shepherd's song in *La venganza de Tamar* (III, 558-559), and in *Los cabellos de Absalón* (II, xi), has been identified by A.K.G. Paterson. He observes, 'The shepherds sing of their work, and in their song there is a note of urgency; the moment has come when the year's vigilance will be rewarded with the wool shorn from their

sheep.' Apart from adding a note of pastoral charm, this song suggests 'a correspondence between the shearing of the flock and the death of Amón'. He further develops this argument to draw a more profound comparison between Amón and the image of the slain Lamb in Tirso's play. See Paterson, ed.cit., p.23.

CHAPTER NINE

ZINDA

Zinda, the penultimate work printed in the *Obras poéticas*, although never performed, has recently enjoyed substantial scholarly attention.¹ The play has both appeared in a modern edition and been the focus of a detailed analysis.² It is principally viewed as an important early feminist contribution to the literature of anti-slavery in Spain and this may account for much of its appeal with modern literary critics and readers.³ The inclusion of the work in volume three of the *Obras poéticas* suggests that Gálvez intended this *drama trágico* to be understood as tragedy.⁴ However, in the context of Gálvez's other tragic writings, *Zinda* is somewhat unusual, since in this play, disaster is threatened, but ultimately averted and the action does not end in misfortune or death. Moreover, Gálvez makes more explicit use of the emotive repertoire of new literary genres in this play than in others, and this has led many scholars to regard it as a *comedia lacrimosa*.⁵ Examining the work as Gálvez intended, as tragedy, opens up fresh possibilities for interpretation.

Historical Sources and Literary Antecedents

The character of Zinda appears to have been modelled on Nzinga, Queen of Ndongo and later of the newly created Matamba in modern day Angola.⁶ Gálvez may have learned of the historical figure through French language histories and travel narratives of Africa, although she departs in significant ways from the historical account.⁷ In *Zinda*, the Portuguese, whom Nzinga fought for many years, are presented as a benevolent and enlightened colonial presence, while the Dutch are embodied in the character of Vinter, a tyrannical looter of the kingdom's resources.⁸ This opposition is a telling aspect of the way Gálvez engaged with the narrative of Nzinga in the creation of this work.⁹

Aside from specific historical sources which may have informed the composition of this play, a number of classicising tragedies based on colonial and specifically Spanish-American subject matter had appeared prior to *Zinda*, and there were certainly dramatic precedents for the portrayal of exotic queens on the Spanish and European stages.¹⁰ Recent scholarship has shown that these works in part served as a vindication of the colonial attitude which lay at the heart of the Christian civilising mission.¹¹ As such these

tragedies tended to reassure and reaffirm confidence in Spain's own system of government at a time when Britain's loss of its American colonies spread fear of the possibility of Spain's loss of territories in central America. Thus in choosing to base her play in an overseas colony outside Spain's sphere of influence, Gálvez mined the seam of interest in colonial tragedies while avoiding any overt political parallels or controversies.

Tragedy 'con éxito feliz'

The greatest obstacle to the treatment of *Zinda* as tragedy might seem to lie in its resolution: Zinda's death, and those of her husband and child, are prevented by the unexpected arrival of Pereyra in the final moments of the action. Thus the play ends happily, a denouement generally considered admissible by theorists, though not recommendable for good tragedy. Aristotle had suggested that 'tragedy at its best should be complex, not simple, and it should also present a *mimesis* of things that arouse fear and pity'.¹² Despite the practice of his own day, Aristotle went on to argue:

So it is clear that one should not show virtuous men passing from good to bad fortune, since this does not arouse fear or pity, but only a sense of outrage. Nor should one show bad men passing from bad to good fortune, as this is less tragic than anything, since it has none of the necessary requirements; it neither satisfies our human feeling nor arouses pity and fear. Nor should one show a quite wicked man passing from good to bad fortune; it is true that such an arrangement would satisfy our human feeling, but it would not arouse pity or fear, since the one is felt for someone who comes to grief without deserving it, and the other for someone like us (pity that is, for the man who does not deserve his fate, and fear for someone like us); so this event will not arouse pity or fear. So we have left the man between these. He is one who is not pre-eminent in moral virtue, who passes to bad fortune not through vice or wickedness, but because of some piece of ignorance, and who is of high repute and great good fortune, like Oedipus and Thyestes and the splendid men of such families.¹³

Luzán recognised that Aristotle's three classes of dramatic protagonists (buenos y virtuosos', 'malos y viciosos', 'indiferentes que no declinan del todo al vicio ni a la virtud, no siendo ni por extremo buenos ni por extremo malos') and two possibilities of reversal in fortune, resulted in six 'constituciones de fábulas' of which Aristotle had declared only one suitable for tragedy.¹⁴ Luzán pursued Aristotle's argument to its logical conclusion, appearing to admit the possibility of a tragedy with a happy ending, while accepting that such a resolution was more appropriate in comedy:

Quedan sólo los indiferentes que bajen del estado feliz al infeliz o, al contrario, suban del infeliz al feliz; y como este último caso produzca sólo alegría y gusto, será más propio de la comedia que de la tragedia.¹⁵

However, in other parts of *La poética*, Luzán appeared less disapproving of tragedy with a happy denouement.¹⁶ Furthermore, he gave some thought to the mechanics of plot proper to comedies and tragedies ‘con éxito feliz’. Taking his cue from Aristotle he observed:

parece que el enredo y la solución sólo tengan lugar en las tragedias de éxito feliz o en las comedias, y no en las de éxito infeliz. [...] Porque como el enredo consiste, según hemos dicho, en los obstáculos y peligros del héroe, o sea del primer papel, y la solución consiste en superar estos obstáculos y peligros, sucediendo en las tragedias de éxito infeliz todo lo contrario, esto es, que lo que había de ser el enredo no contenga peligros ni obstáculos, y lo que había de ser solución sea origen de desdichas y desgracias, las cuales no sólo cesan, sino que antes bien se aumentan llegando a acabar con la vida del héroe o a lo menos con su felicidad, es evidente que en las tragedias de éxito infeliz no puede haber enredo ni solución.¹⁷

Luzán proceeded to discuss the dramatic function of these dangers and obstacles, concluding that they were vital in arousing and maintaining the interest and attention, and, by implication, the pity (‘lástima’, p.472) and fear (‘terror’, p.472), of the spectators, which might sustain a drama as tragedy until the final and unexpected happy resolution (p.487).¹⁸

Zinda is constructed around a series of dangers, threats and obstacles. At the outset of the play, Zélido has been kidnapped, by the start of Act II, Zinda has been captured, and by Act III, Nelzir is also taken prisoner. Furthermore, Nelzir’s attempt to deceive Vinter in order to secure the release of his family is unsuccessful, and Vinter’s ongoing threat to force Ángela to marry him becomes ever more real. The sense of trial and danger is persistent, and is exacerbated by the imminent prospect of renewed conflict and racial disharmony.

Through the depiction of these dangers, threats and obstacles, Gálvez aims to provoke the tragic effect as defined by Aristotle.¹⁹ However, it is in the resolution of the action that Gálvez appeared to challenge accepted precept and advice most directly, by employing the ‘fábula doble’, or ‘double arrangement of the action’ in which the more virtuous characters are rewarded with good fortune and the less virtuous characters are punished.²⁰ Aristotle viewed this as a very much inferior model, although he accepted

that the double arrangement was more popular with audiences in his time.²¹

Thus, although tragedy ‘con éxito feliz’ was not specifically praised, it was neither excluded in theory nor unknown in practice and according to ancient and modern criteria, *Zinda* may be viewed as tragedy on such a model. Moreover, in addition to the tragic effect, it is possible to identify three key elements common to all classicising tragedy in this work: the status and nobility of the protagonist, tragic error, and reversal of fortune. As Queen of the Congo, Zinda has the requisite elevation of title and stature, and this is highlighted at the outset of the play when Pereyra refers to her as ‘gloriosa Soberana’ (I,i). More significantly she has nobility of character, which derives from her conversion to enlightened customs, practices and ways of government (I.ii).

Furthermore, Gálvez accords Zinda the complexity of the tragic protagonist. By contrast with the virtuous Ángela, her trials are not those of the persecuted innocent, and Gálvez is deliberate in signalling her tragic error. Pereyra urges Zinda not to react instinctively and to avoid bloody conflict with Vinter, proposing a more subtle strategy to secure the release of Zélido (I,iii). Yet Zinda remains guided by vengeance:

Primero llegará de mi venganza
el golpe asolador; deja a mi brío
el esplendor del triunfo... (I,iii)

However, Gálvez shows that this is not a blind, instinctive vengeance, but one which in its way is reasoned, even justified. When Vinter indicates his wish to parley, Zinda agrees, motivated by the values of ‘paz’, ‘humanidad’ and ‘tolerancia’ inculcated in her by Pereyra (I,vi). She tempers her vengeful desires with an admiration of and respect for ‘la virtud de Pereyra’ and it is only when provoked by the unacceptable and unjust terms of Vinter’s ultimatum that she finally goes into battle. Zinda’s subsequent rapid defeat is ascribed by Vasco to her imprudent attack on the fort (II,i), an error of military tactics which points to the inherent error of the strategy of conflict.

In *Zinda*, as in *Safo* and *Ali-Bek*, this error forms part of a tragic trajectory initiated prior to the start of the action: Zélido has been captured, Pereyra’s son has been assassinated and the indigenous population has risen up against the colonial presence. Zinda’s decision to go into battle furthers the momentum of the reversal of fortune, since her rash tactics result in her capture and she remains incarcerated throughout the rest of the action. Once captured, she faces a choice: the surrender of both her son and the

resources of her kingdom, or heroic family suicide. This is a recognisable tragic dilemma, in which Zinda's Stoicism and self-sacrifice inspire her husband (III,v). Where he had preferred duplicity and escape, she demonstrates courage and selflessness for the wider benefit of the kingdom.

Although present in this work, these elements of tragedy are somewhat diffuse in comparison with Gálvez's other works. Zinda's error is shown to be mitigated and to a certain extent explained by Vinter's behaviour. He is an external force of evil who is the agent of misfortune for all the characters both prior to and during the action. Zinda's refusal to compromise or bargain with Vinter, which leads to the disastrous battle, is thus seen to be a logical, rational and even virtuous act. Furthermore, just as Vinter mediates Zinda's tragic error, so Pereyra intervenes to reverse Zinda's tragic demise. This unexpected turn of events not only dilutes the tragic *dénouement* but transfers agency away from Zinda in the resolution of the conflicts of the work. Ultimately the important parts accorded to Vinter and Pereyra in the unfolding action serve to temper the force and centrality of Zinda who is confined and restricted from the start of Act II.

Tragedy and the Devices of *Comedia Lacrimosa*

Though *Zinda* may be understood as tragedy, it is important to recognise that Gálvez drew on the resources of other genres in the creation of this work, which are evident in the construction of character, in the establishment of mood and in the incorporation of certain gestures. The clearest debt is to the *comedia lacrimosa*.²² The play opens with a sequence of rhetorical speeches in which Alcaypa vows to seek revenge on the Portuguese and urges his fellow Congolese to join him. His epithets are full of blood and destruction and his tone is declamatory. By contrast with this high rhetoric, a more natural conversational rhythm of language is established in scene iii in which Zinda informs Pereyra that his son has been murdered. Although the metre is unchanged, the incorporation of exclamation, interrogation and shorter, more broken phrases into the dialogue in this scene creates a close, intimate atmosphere which is reminiscent of much sentimental comedy.²³ Furthermore, while recounting the details of Vinter's treachery, Zinda is moved to tears, which, although as she insists are the tears of fury, are an outward manifestation of sensibility nonetheless:

Tus lamentos arrancan de mis ojos
lágrimas de furor. Soy desdichada,
Pereyra, pero el llanto de la queja
no derramó jamás una africana (I,iii)

In addition to tears, there are further examples of the gestural vocabulary of *comedia lacrimosa*. Zinda and Nelzir's embrace (I,v) finds an echo not only when Zinda embraces Ángela, an action laden with maternal pathos (II,ii), but at the end of the play when father and daughter are reunited (III,vii). However, the scenes in which the emotional tone of family drama is most self-consciously evoked are those between Zinda and Zélido. It might be argued that the child's lack of voice is a concession to the decorum of the tragic stage, since children rarely feature in classicising tragedy. However, the presence of the five-year old boy is a device much more familiar in sentimental comedy, 'para crear escenas de gran patetismo o simplemente para dar un toque de ternura a la descripción de las relaciones familiares en el interior de un hogar burgués'.²⁴

At the start of Act III, Zinda, in introspective mood, speaks to her sleeping child and confesses her fears for his future and that of the kingdom:

Feliz infancia, en cuya edad se ignoran
los males de la vida y los peligros.
¡Cómo el dulce reposo de tu estado
envidia mi dolor, hijo querido!
Hijo de mi desgracia, tú del sueño
gozas el blando halago, y yo suspiro,
tiemblo y me afano al contemplar tu suerte. (III,i)

Gálvez uses the pathos and the melancholy of the family scene to underline the status of Zinda as Queen, and Zélido the boy heir. Thus beyond his token role as the object of maternal love and the channel of audience compassion, Zélido represents the kingdom of the Congo and his capture and eventual release are intertwined with the fortunes of the Congolese.²⁵

It is in respect of characterisation that certain tensions arising from the mixture of the modes of tragedy and sentimental comedy in *Zinda* can be perceived. Gálvez characterises her heroine Zinda as both warrior queen and sensitive mother. Throughout most of the action, these roles coexist, and indeed converge, as to act as a queen is also to save her son. Throughout Act I, Zinda is pre-eminently figurehead and leader,

although the tearful scene with Pereyra is suggestive of a sensibility which is emphasised in Act II, and which by Act III has come to dominate. However, by the final act, the accentuation of the maternal in Zinda offers a new perspective on the tragic dilemma which faces her and the choice she eventually makes. As a protagonist of a tragedy, her decision is familiar, comprehensible and admirable. However, the conventions of sentimental comedy make the killing of a child an horrific and repulsive prospect, even within the impossible circumstances which Vinter creates. This is a moment at which tragedy and sentimental comedy seem to pull in opposite directions.

Some of these same tensions are also visible in the character of Ángela, although rather in reverse. She is at first, the 'infelice hija', who after the death of her brother is 'desamparada' and vulnerable (I,iii). Like many heroines of sentimental comedy, Ángela is innocent and virtuous, and about to be forced into a marriage ('Fatal y triste lazo', II,i), to which she is nevertheless prepared to submit:

Cual víctima adornada, que previene
al sacrificio el inocente cuello
así yo de estas galas mal vestida
me preparo también a ser el precio
del común alborozo ... (II,i)

However, this is not a sacrifice to filial duty, but to the wider good of the community and as such a more obvious tragic self-sacrifice. As the action unfolds, Angela acquires an increasingly active role, first as intermediary, facilitating the reunion of Zinda and Zélido (II,iv), later assisting the progress of the counter-plot to overthrow Vinter, (II,iii), and finally intervening to prevent the death of Zinda, Nelzir and Zélido (III, v). In balancing the passive, innocent victim with the active, principled, confidante, and in according her traits of Stoic self-sacrifice, Gálvez succeeds in creating a character who is a fusion of both dramatic modes.

The complexity of the female characters is offset by the one-dimensional nature of the male characters in this work and particularly that of the characters of Pereyra and Vinter, who come to embody virtue and vice respectively. It might be argued that it is difficult to develop and sustain fully rounded characters in a relatively short three-act play.²⁶ Nevertheless it remains surprising that Vinter and Pereyra, who play such important roles in the exposition and resolution of the action, should be accorded so little

light and shade. Vinter is cast in the familiar role of the tyrant, yet he is stripped of any deep-seated motivation beyond greed. Even his lust for Ángela is unconvincing and undeveloped. We learn of Vinter's intentions to compel Ángela to marry him principally through the reported speech of others, and Gálvez does not allow his character a soliloquy in which to meditate on his desires. This suggests that for Gálvez his character has two functions: a mechanical one, as the instigator of the initial reversal of fortune in the Congo and of many of the subsequent misfortunes which beset the other characters, and a symbolic one, as the embodiment of unenlightened and brutal European colonialism, where Vinter is associated with slavery and looting as Nelzir observes:

¿qué? ¿yo podría
fundar la esclavitud en este imperio
por saciar tu avaricia? ¿Yo del oro
las minas descubrir a un europeo
infame y codicioso, que arrojado
de su propio país con vilipendio,
quiere, a costa de todos mis vasallos,
elevar su fortuna? (II,vii)

Conversely, Pereyra, is posited as the enlightened colonialist bringing values of civilisation, reason and order to what was once a brutal and savage society, as Zinda recognises:

Pereyra me ha enseñado a ser piadosa;
cuando llegó su nave a estas comarcas
por la primera vez, en nuestro suelo
reinaban las costumbres sanguinarias
de la ferocidad pero vosotros
al mirar sus virtudes, la tirana
fiereza depusisteis, y yo misma
imité la clemencia que enseñaba. (I,ii)

At the start of the action Pereyra is subjected to a rather incredible catalogue of trials: he has been thrown overboard and managed to swim ashore, he has been rescued from the threat of death by fire, he has learnt of the assassination of his son and the menace to his daughter, and yet his speech and behaviour patterns remain honourable and dignified and betray little of the psychological impact of these events. He retains his capacity for reason, measure and forgiveness, and, at the end of the play, advocates a just and appropriate punishment for Vinter, 'Un bajel está pronto; en él hoy mismo / partirás de

estas costas, y en Lisboa / sufrirás el rigor de tu destino' (III,vii). He might be regarded as a fusion of two idealised types: the brave, strong colonial adventurer and the wise and just paragon of enlightened male virtue.

Pereyra is absent from much of the action. He disappears mid-way through Act I, and does not reappear until the last scene of the play. His final entry, accompanied by the cries of the Portuguese, although foreshadowed within the inherent logic of the drama, nonetheless appears abrupt and even miraculous. In a sudden reversal, Vasco abandons Vinter, who is quickly surrounded and overpowered, Ángela is freed from Vinter's grasp, and Zinda is restored as Queen and assumes a regal tone as she urges her people, 'Vasallos, respetemos las virtudes / de este héroe portugués' (III,vii). In the manner of this final scene Pereyra assumes the role of *Deus ex machina*, quickly resolving the conflict and ensuring the restoration of good order.

Perhaps the most interesting, albeit sublimated, aspect of Pereyra's character is his relationship with Zinda. Early in the action they share an intimate, emotional scene which colours an understanding of the extent of the bonds of trust and respect which unite them. Zinda's maternal feelings towards Pereyra's daughter accentuate the sense of the kinship between the two characters and her high praise of his virtues at the end of the drama merely echoes the sentiments she expresses throughout. Zinda's constant admiration for Pereyra contrasts with the more practical relationship with her husband, in which her role as queen sets the tone and in which he defers to her superior judgement.

Themes

This relationship between Pereyra and Zinda is perhaps best understood in the light of the thematic interest in this play: the relationship between colonial powers and the colonised subjects, and more broadly between Enlightenment values and civilisations and those said to be barbaric and violent. In this play, as Franklin Lewis has observed, oppression is denounced and slavery condemned, and this is most apparent at the end of the play when Zinda demands the end of the slave trade in exchange for the continuation of the Portuguese colony.²⁷ It is more difficult to accept though, that, as both Franklin Lewis and Fernando Doménech have asserted, that *Zinda* can be read as 'An early example of Spanish discontent with the "colonisation" of nations and peoples'.²⁸

Firstly, it is clear that there is no hint in the drama that the colony could or should revert to the control of its indigenous population. Zinda's nostalgia at the beginning of

the action is not for a pre-colonial past, but for 'el tiempo / de concordia feliz y de alianza' (I,vi). Indeed, prior to meeting with Vinter, she hopes that 'su embajada / puede volver la paz a nuestro imperio' (I,vi). It is also important to remember that once Vinter is overthrown, Pereyra abandons all hopes of establishing an 'alliance' between the Congo and Portugal, until persuaded by Zinda to ratify the treaty. Gálvez therefore makes Zinda complicit in the continuation of the colonial power relationship and even the fact that Vinter is sent to Lisbon to be tried emphasises that justice, like power, resides not in the colony, but in the courts of Europe.

It is not simply through these aspects of the dialogue and action that one senses an ambivalence towards the colonial subject, since the characterisation of Zinda in relation to that of Vinter and Pereyra points to a familiar colonial attitude. Although impressive as a model of female heroism, ultimately the character of Zinda does not possess the full resonance of tragic protagonist, because she is denied agency for much of the action, and she is neither responsible for the reversal of fortune which has beset her and the colony, nor for the resolution in which her own death and those of her husband and child, are averted. It is perhaps ironic that Zinda's first act of free will after release is to sign the alliance which will guarantee the continued colonial presence and the further undermining of her own power and status.

Conclusions

More than any other of Gálvez's tragic works, this play is poised between tragedy and a new literary genre, in this case sentimental comedy. This in itself makes an important contribution to an understanding of the author's desire to innovate and experiment in tragedy. However, it is tempting to connect some of the ambiguities of form in *Zinda* with the fundamental uncertainties of theme. As in *Ali-Bek*, Gálvez portrays an exotic country and brings European and African civilisations into close contact. There are obvious parallels between the construction of the decentred role of Ali-Bek and the position of Zinda in this work, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in the writing of this play, Gálvez was guided not so much by radical social vision, as some modern scholars have contended, as by an enlightened conservative intellectualism in her understanding of the relationship between European civilisation and its colonial dependents.

¹ María Rosa Gálvez de Cabrera, *Zinda. Drama trágico en tres actos*, in *Obras poéticas*, III, pp.100-168.

² Doménech, ed.cit., and Franklin Lewis, 'Breaking the Chains'. All further references to the text are from the edition by Doménech.

³ Franklin Lewis situates Gálvez's play in the context of eighteenth-century European feminist anti-slavery literature and speculates on the contemporary impact of *Zinda* in the light of the successful slave revolution in Haiti in 1798. See Franklin Lewis, 'Breaking the Chains', pp.263-266. There is a growing body of scholarship dedicated to the analysis of European female-authored texts concerned with colonial issues. Anne K. Mellor, 'The Female Poet and the Poetess: Two Traditions of British Women's Poetry, 1780-1830', *Studies in Romanticism*, 36 (1997), pp.261-276 has demonstrated that whereas male abolitionists argued against slavery on the grounds that it opposed 'natural law', women writers, 'tended to condemn slavery because it violated the domestic affection.' It 'separated mothers from their children, husbands from their wives, and subjected black women to sexual abuse from their white masters' (p.267). These specific condemnations often formed part of a more broad-ranging critique of the conduct of the entire imperial project, based on three factors: that native peoples were created in the image of God and were therefore entitled to liberty; that European exploitation of the rich natural resources of foreign lands defied reason; female empathy with the suffering of slaves (p.268).

⁴ In her request to Carlos IV Gálvez wrote, 'expone: que ha compuesto tres tomos de poesías, entre ellas dos de tragedias originales'. See above Chapter 2 note 1.

⁵ See Franklin Lewis, 'Breaking the Chains of Slavery', p.265; Doménech, ed.cit., p.33; Doménech, *Autoras*, p.497. Daniel Whitaker views *Zinda* as a tragedy which 'lacks a traditional tragic denouement' and ultimately as a '*tragedia de tesis*' or 'propaganda play', see Whitaker, 'An Enlightened Premiere', p.26.

⁶ See Joseph C. Miller, 'Nzinga of Matamba in a New Perspective', *Journal of African History*, 13 (1975), pp.201-216; John K. Thornton, 'Legitimacy and Political Power: Queen Njinga, 1624-1663', *Journal of African History*, 32 (1991), pp.125-140.

⁷ Antonio Cavazzi da Montecuccolo, *Istorica descrizione de' tre regni: Congo, Matamba et Angola*, Bologna, 1687; Jean Baptiste Labat, *Rélation Historique de l'Etopie occidentale*, Paris, 1732; Jean-Luis Castilhon, *Zingha, reine d'Angola, Histoire africaine*, Laurent Quillerie (ed.), Bourges, 1993, [Paris, 1769]. For a discussion of possible historical sources of the play see Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, pp.167-169.

⁸ Plot Summary: The play is set in the Congo, ruled by Queen Zinda, now a colony of Portugal. At the start of Act I, Pereyra, returning Commander of the Portuguese fort of Santo Tomás has survived an attempt to drown him, but has been captured by Congolese natives who intend to kill him in order to avenge the false imprisonment of Zinda's five-year old son and heir, Zélido. Zinda prevents the murder, but informs Pereyra that in his absence, the Dutchman, Vinter, whom he protected and to whom he granted asylum in the fort, has duped the Portuguese guards, killed Pereyra's son, imprisoned her own son and is preparing to force Ángela, Pereyra's daughter, to marry him. Zinda determines to overthrow Vinter, and Pereyra's calls for a peaceful solution are to no avail. Having met with Vinter and refused to accept his bribes, Act I closes with Zinda's declaration of war. At the start of Act II the battle is over and Zinda, defeated and imprisoned in the fort. Vinter and his men are triumphant, but Ángela's spirits contrast with the prevailing mood as she realises her nuptial hour is

approaching. Vinter places Zinda in Ángela's care and the two women begin to plan their escape. Nelzir, Zinda's husband meets with Vinter and, defying Zinda's insistence that they refuse to co-operate, agrees to surrender the Congo's natural resources in exchange for the release of his wife and son. At the start of Act III he is reunited with his family. Zinda is furious at her husband's perceived treachery, but while Nelzir explains that he deliberately misled Vinter as to the location of the mines, his ruse is discovered. Vinter returns to the fort in time to prevent the departure of the family and threatens to kill all three. Ángela intercedes and Vinter agrees to spare their lives but vows to send Zélido to Portugal as a slave. Zinda and Nelzir threaten to kill their son and commit suicide, but this extreme solution is avoided by the arrival of Pereyra, who has regained the support of the Portuguese guards. Vinter is overpowered, but despite calls for his death, Pereyra insists he be sent to Lisbon to face punishment. The play ends with the prospect of the imminent ratification of the treaty of alliance and trade between Congo and Portugal on condition, placed by Zinda, that the trafficking of slaves be ended.

⁹ Ironically it is now recognised that Nzinga promoted and profited from the slave trade in order to maintain her power. See Thornton, 'Legitimacy and Political Power', p.136. Grinstein, *Dramaturgas* has argued that aspects of Nzinga's life, as documented in the various known histories, would have been considered morally offensive and that Gálvez purged the narrative, but in doing so missed the opportunity to create 'una tragedia absolutamente original', which would have transformed the character of Zinda into 'el paradigma del movimiento feminista', see pp.168-169, (p.168).

¹⁰ See, for example, Manuel de Sumalde, *La Alcira*, n.p., n.d., see Lafarga (ed.), *Teatro*, pp.205-206; Pablo de Olavide, *Tragedia. La Zayda. En cinco actos. Traducida del francés al español*, Barcelona, n.d., performed at the Príncipe 1771, 1790, 1792, 1794 and at the Cruz, 1791, see Lafarga (ed.), *Teatro europeo*, p.233 and Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, p.882.

¹¹ Antonio Mendoza Fillola, 'El compromiso colonial y el despotismo en la tragedia neoclásica', in *Coloquio*, pp.267-287; Paco Tovar, 'La tragedia neoclásica de tema americano: *Atahualpa*, de Cristóbal Cortés', in *Teatro español*, Sala Valldaura (ed.), pp.751-782.

¹² Aristotle, *Poetics*, p.66.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Luzán, *La poética*, p.471.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.472.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.433, 443, 448, 470.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.486.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.487.

¹⁹ 'Tragedy is a *mimesis* not only of a complete action, but also of things arousing pity and fear, emotions most likely to be stirred when things happen unexpectedly'. Aristotle, *Poetics*, p.63.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.67, and Luzán, *La poética*, p.470.

²¹ 'Second comes the sort of arrangement that some people say is the best: this is the one that has a double arrangement of the action like the *Odyssey*, and ends with opposite fortunes for

the good and bad people. It is thought to be the best because of the weakness of the audiences; for the poets follow the lead of the spectators and make plays to their specifications. But this is not the pleasure proper to tragedy, but rather belongs to comedy.' (Aristotle, *Poetics*, p.67).

²² See García Garrosa, *La retórica de las lágrimas*, for an important analysis of the development of the *comedia lacrimosa* in Spain. See especially Chapter VII, 'Recursos dramáticos' and Chapter VIII, 'El lenguaje y el tono', for a discussion of the dramatic devices proper to this genre, (pp.219-242). See also David T. Gies, 'Cienfuegos y las lagrimas de virtud', in *Coloquio*, pp.213-225, and Cañas Murillo, *Comedia sentimental*, pp.43-61.

²³ The verse form adopted is *romance heroico*. The assonance is a-a in Act I, e-o in Act II, i-o in Act III.

²⁴ See García Garrosa, *La retórica de las lágrimas*, p.221. I am very grateful to Dr. García Garrosa for supplying a list of contemporary sentimental comedies which feature children: Luciano Francisco Comella, *Drama en dos actos: El dichoso arrepentimiento*, n.p., n.d., 'Ana, niña de diez años'; Luciano Francisco Comella, *La familia indigente*, [Salamanca], n.d., 'Juanito, niño' (a baby); Gaspar Zavala y Zamora, *Las víctimas del amor, Ana y Sindham*, [Madrid, 1797], 'Pamela, niña de diez años'; Vicente Rodríguez de Arellano, *A padre malo buen hijo*, n.p., n.d., 'Un niño'; Antonio Valladares de Sotomayor, *El fabricante de paños, o el comerciante inglés*, n.p., n.d., 'Isabela, de edad de ocho años' and 'Enrique, de seis, hijos de Wilson'; Dionisio Solís, *Misanropía y arrepentimiento. Drama en tres actos, arreglado a nuestro teatro*, Madrid, 1800, 'Dos niños, hijos del Barón'; *idem.*, *La misanropía desvanecida. Drama en un acto, escrito en alemán por Augusto Kotzebue, en continuación al drama intitulada La Misanropía y arrepentimiento del mismo autor*, Barcelona, n.d., 'Felix y Amelia, hijos del Barón y Eulalia de seis y siete años'. Dr. García Garrosa observes that, with the exception of the baby, all these children 'hablan o tienen un papel importantísimo en la trama o en el desenlace.'

²⁵ Franklin Lewis has recognised the role of Zélido as 'symbol of the future of the black race' and develops the argument that since he has no voice, Zinda must speak for him using the language of power, that is, the language of the European colonisers. See Franklin Lewis, 'Breaking the Chains', p.270.

²⁶ Act 1 comprises 452 lines, Act 2 comprises 448 lines and Act 3 comprises 418 lines.

²⁷ Franklin Lewis, 'Breaking the Chains', p.266.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 271. 'Es un alegato razonado contra una de las peores lacras de la civilización europea, una defensa a ultranza de los derechos humanos sin restricciones y una contribución al problema más importante de la política internacional de aquellos años', Doménech, ed.cit., p.32.

CHAPTER TEN

LA DELIRANTE

La delirante, the last work in volume III of the *Obras poéticas*, engaged with the historical conflict and rivalry of Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart, a narrative which had proved popular with playwrights and audiences in Spain during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹ Gálvez's attitude to the character of Elizabeth and her unprecedented creation of the character of Leonor, based on Mary's secret daughter, as described in some historical accounts, demonstrated not only her capacity for imaginative engagement with a well-known episode in history, but also her talent for the dramatisation of tragic conflict. As before, Gálvez created *La delirante* on a classical model of tragedy, but its complex plot, gestural and scenic vocabulary and tone owe much to the repertoire of other dramatic genres. Yet it is the characterisation of Isabel and Leonor, whose parallel trajectories sustain the tension and the interest throughout the action, which remains the most striking aspect of the tragedy.

Elizabeth and Mary in Spanish and European Drama

The intrigues of the Elizabethan court proved fertile ground for Spanish playwrights of the seventeenth century and the story of Mary was invariably used to cast Elizabeth in a negative light.² Antonio Coello's, *El conde de Sex* of 1633, which focuses on the *amours* between Elizabeth and Essex, had no role for Mary and this enabled the author to treat the English Queen in a surprisingly sympathetic manner.³ However two later works re-established the more familiar opposition between the saintly Catholic Mary and the tyrannical Protestant Elizabeth. It has been demonstrated that Juan Bautista Diamante's *La reina Maria Estuarda*, of 1660, exerted a powerful influence on an early eighteenth-century treatment of the narrative, *Lo que va de cetro a cetro, y crueldad en Inglaterra*, first performed in Madrid in 1712.⁴ Although *La reina María Estuarda* is not known to have been performed in the eighteenth century, *Lo que va de cetro a cetro* and *El conde de Sex* were frequently staged in Madrid throughout the period, presenting two different faces of the English queen which together may have influenced Gálvez's nuanced approach to the characterisation of Elizabeth.⁵

Gálvez may also have been aware of the fascination which the historical confrontation of Elizabeth and Mary exerted over European dramatists throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁶ However, the appearance of Gálvez's play might best be understood as part of an intensification of interest in the narrative both within and beyond Spain at the turn of the century. The four-act tragedy *La estuarda* by María Martínez Abello is thought to be contemporaneous with *La delirante*.⁷ In a plot summary (*argumento*) which appeared at the end of the printed play, Martínez Abello identified Mary as a compelling tragic heroine, but recognised that in order to properly explore her tragedy, Elizabeth must also be powerfully drawn:

Este es un breve compendio de la trágica historia de la más hermosa y desgraciada reina, [...] he procurado pintar el carácter de las dos soberanas con los más vivos colores que me ha sido posible. Apenas se encontrará asunto tan lastimoso para formar un drama trágico como éste.⁸

Martínez Abello's tragedy, like *Lo que va de cetro a cetro*, was fundamentally Catholic in inspiration and maintained the very stark opposition between the demonised Elizabeth and the martyred Mary. By contrast, Friedrich Schiller's five-act tragedy, *Maria Stuart* completed in 1799, premièred in Weimar on June 14 1800 and subsequently printed in 1801, offered both a more secular version of the tale, and a more complex vision of the relationship between the two queens.⁹ The work is still regarded as the most significant and powerful of all classicising treatments of the Mary Stuart narrative.¹⁰ Schiller's emphasis on Mary's guilt enhanced her tragic status, but may also account in part for the fact that the play was neither performed in Madrid nor translated into Spanish in Gálvez's lifetime.¹¹ It is thus not generally believed to have directly influenced the composition of *La delirante*.¹²

In addition to dramatic versions of the story, Gálvez may also have known of historical accounts and memoirs. Schiller is thought to have derived many of the facts on which he based his tragedy from William Robertson's *History of Scotland* of 1759.¹³ This work was translated into French and thus may well have provided Gálvez with some material on which to construct the plot. However, there are indications that her principal source was the *Mémoires* of Michel de Castelnau, in the revised and augmented edition by J. Le Laboureur first published in 1731.¹⁴ These *Mémoires* made mention of a daughter, born to Mary in January or February 1568, who was taken to France in

disguise and who became a nun in the convent of Notre-Dame de Soussons.¹⁵ It is this daughter on whom Gálvez appears to have modelled her character of Leonor, indeed there is an explicit reference to Leonor's convent upbringing in *La delirante*: 'permitiera que volviese / A la antigua Abadía en que tuvieron / Placer y paz sus inocentes años' (II,i). However, there is no historical or literary precedent for the dramatic confrontation between Isabel and Leonor which Gálvez portrays in her tragedy. The exclusion of Mary and the incorporation of her daughter must therefore be regarded as the single most important aspect of Gálvez's dramatic engagement with the narrative.¹⁶ This innovation allows Gálvez to approach the familiar subject matter from a fresh perspective, and to explore some of the powerful themes which are central to her other tragedies.

Leonor and La Estuarda

In the unprecedented creation of the character of Leonor, Gálvez both exploits the tensions and conflicts which made the Tudor-Stuart confrontation such rich material for tragedy, and avoids the well-known progress and denouement of the relationship between Elizabeth and Mary. On one level, this may be viewed as part of Gálvez's constant search for new dramatic situations and perspectives on familiar subject matter in tragedy. The ill-defined nature of the historical figure of Mary's daughter afforded Gálvez greater freedom of invention. The confrontation between Isabel and Leonor is entirely of Gálvez's making, and as such, the resolution of *La delirante* cannot be foreseen with any certainty at the beginning of the action. This allows for greater suspense and dramatic tension than could be invested in the Elizabeth and Mary narrative, whose outcomes were so well-known.

As a dramatic device, the invention of Leonor also allows Gálvez to circumvent the expectations of her public. In Spanish drama and culture, Elizabeth and Mary had acquired fixed and oppositional characteristics and roles.¹⁷ While Gálvez exploits historical enmities in her tragedy, she does not emphasise Protestant-Catholic hostilities, and indeed the absence of any doctrinal overtones in this play is a prominent feature. Gálvez, like Schiller and unlike Martínez Abello, made scant reference to religious debate, and viewed the clash between Tudor and Stuart in human, and specifically emotional terms. The unexpected reconciliation between Isabel and Leonor at the end of *La delirante* allows Gálvez to transform a narrative of bitter enmity into one of forgiveness and humility. Such a resolution, impossible in tragedies which focused on the

dramatic conflict between Elizabeth and Mary, here affords both figures complexity and redemption.

However, Gálvez ensures that Mary remains a powerful presence in the tragedy, and a political or psychological point of reference for all the characters. She first appears as a symbol of political resistance, manipulated by Arlington to cast Essex in the light of traitor to Isabel, (I, iv) and she remains a potentially threatening political force, whose name can reanimate old hostilities and grievances:

Los amigos
De su madre Estuarda ya juraron
Coronar á Leonor (IV,i)

Furthermore, Mary's presence is not merely a political threat to Isabel, but also a powerful spur to her developing conscience and sense of guilt. Mary features equally vividly in the memories and hallucinations of Leonor, particularly in Act II, scene iii, when the vision of her headless mother on the royal throne causes her to faint.¹⁸ Remembrance of the unjust execution of her mother fuels Leonor's desire for vengeance, (II,iii and vi). More significantly though, when Leonor comes to understand the dire consequences of revenge (IV,iv), it is on remembering her parents' exemplary deaths, and particularly that of her mother, that she is persuaded to seek reconciliation.

Reminders of the confrontation of Mary and Elizabeth can also be found within the plot structures of the tragedy: the concealment of Leonor and her clandestine existence is itself an echo of the last period of the life of her mother. More importantly, the triangular relationship of Leonor, Essex and Isabel consciously echoes the past relationship of Mary, Norfolk and Isabel. Gálvez shows the English queen to be fully aware of this parallel between past and present: '¿Por qué al eco fatal de vuestros nombres / Essex furioso contra mí conspira?' (I,iii). The virtuous deaths which Leonor envisages for herself and Essex towards the end of the play are a subtle allusion to the pattern of her parents' death (IV,v). In the final scene, Leonor consciously evokes the example of her parents, whose virtue and heroism were not compromised by death, and who were able to forgive Isabel (V,viii).

Leonor: 'La delirante'

Despite these repeated patterns, however, Gálvez's Leonor cannot be regarded purely as a second Mary, and nor does Isabel precisely fit the mould of the tyrannical antagonist.

Indeed, the complexity of Gálvez's characterisation of both women is one of the major achievements of this tragedy. Leonor is not a simple substitute for Mary as tragic heroine. Her trajectory is dependent on the progress of Isabel, and the two characters can best be understood not in opposition, as has often been asserted, but intertwined in a parallel progress and fate.¹⁹

Leonor's first appearance on stage seems designed to signal her troubled state of mind (II,ii). Gálvez's choice of words and imagery in this scene is a conscious echo of the vocabulary used by Shakespeare to indicate Ophelia's derangement in *Hamlet*.²⁰ However this allusion must be understood as a powerful theatrical shorthand to indicate mental turmoil, rather than as a symbol of a profound parallel between Leonor and Shakespeare's character. Ophelia's journey is from reason to madness and suicide, whereas Leonor's trajectory might be said to be the reverse. Leonor moves from loss of reason and status through anger and retribution to reason and reconciliation before her murder.

In her first appearance, Leonor's speech is punctuated with exclamations, questions and pauses, laced with repetitions and broken phrases, as she questions her own identity:

Sí, repite
Ese nombre: mi amante, mi consuelo,
Todo mas ¿quién soy yo? (II,ii)

Yet even amongst these recognisable signs of mental anguish, Leonor is aware of her own 'confusa razón', a hint that hers is not an irreversible condition. In the following scene, as Leonor confronts Essex, there is a perceptible change in the quality of her language. The melancholy composure of her dialogue with her lover indicates not delirium, but rhetorical recrimination of his behaviour. When Essex asks '¿Pudiera yo vivir si ella faltase?', Leonor responds, 'Leonor no existiría ... si primero / Hubiera muerto Essex' (II,iii). In this context, Leonor's conception of herself as someone already dead is not a sign of derangement, but deep trauma. In the light of her poetic explanation of her own fate and situation; forced into marriage, unjustly accused, presumed dead, given a new identity and hidden from view for three years, it comes to seem both coherent and poignant.

As Gálvez shows, anger and the desire for revenge are the forces which disturb Leonor at the start of the action. In her dialogue with Essex, these are clearly articulated:

SÍ, venganza,
 Grita desde la tumba; desde el seno
 Donde yace la invoca: á sus agravios
 Tu valor sacrifique sus perversos
 Perseguidores ... Di, ¿tienes presente
 lo que por tí sufrió? Deshonor, zelos,
 Envidia, Conde, abominable envidia
 ¿Te acuerdas bien de todo? (II,iii)

These are the driving forces for her actions and words in subsequent scenes, and especially in her confrontations with Isabel (II,vi; III,vii; IV,vi), although the nature of her vengeance is transformed in the course of the action. In the early scene with Essex, she is motivated primarily by a personal vendetta, inspired by the misfortunes which she has endured (II,iii). In the first confrontation with Isabel (II,vi), she becomes more concerned with an Old Testament vision of judgement, justice and vengeance:

tus zelos,
 Tu crimen, y esa mano enrojecida
 Te acusarán al tribunal tremendo
 De la inmortalidad ... eran mis padres ...
 Hay un Dios vengador. (II,vi)

In Act III, scene vii, the tone changes again, and her appeals for justice are made on behalf of all those who have suffered under Isabel's personal and political tyranny. This movement away from purely personal through family to wider social concerns can be seen as part of her rehabilitation and progress from self-obsession and self-destruction to self-sacrifice, and from the state of confused victim to the status of virtuous and reasoning agent. A key scene in this respect is Act IV, scene iv, in which Arlington divulges his plot to usurp Isabel and place Leonor on the throne. He wishes to exploit his wife's symbolic value as figurehead ('Por mi astucia y tu nombre'), but Leonor insists on the importance of her virtue, and when presented with the stark choice by Arlington, ('O Morir ó reynar al lado mio') reveals her preference for Stoic death over perfidious, criminal triumph:

Y ¿qué me hallo
 Entre el odioso crimen y la muerte?
 Y ¿qué mi corazón suspira en vano
 Por no existir?... perezca una y mil veces,
 Antes que la traycion pueda mancharlo (IV,v)

In the next scene, with her reason fully restored, she offers herself in exchange for the freedom of Essex (IV,vi), in an action which foreshadows her offer of self-sacrifice in Act V.

This abandonment of vengeance and refusal of treachery is a vital stage in the rehabilitation of Leonor. However, the final and most important transition is evident in her passionate defence of Isabel as queen and her forgiveness of the sovereign's past crimes:

la sangre humea
De mis padres ... sus sombras inocentes
Los sagrados ejemplos me recuerdan
De virtud y heroismo: ellos piadosos
Perdonan al morir la mano fiera
Que los hunde en la nada ... y yo pretendo
A un tiempo perdonarla y defenderla. (V,viii)

In emulating her parents' conduct, Leonor acquires authority and dignity, employing all the devices of rhetoric to persuade the obviously warring factions of a divided kingdom to unite and respect Isabel as monarch. Gálvez demonstrates that forgiveness marks the final stage in the transition from madwoman to stateswoman. Her brutal murder at the hands of Arlington is not the private distressed and isolated death of the deranged daughter. She dies in the act of reconciliatory embrace, and at the height of her virtue and heroism, forgiving Arlington as she dies 'contenta' (V,viii).

The clear association in this scene between reason, virtue and statesmanship is evidence of Gálvez's conception and depiction of the nature of madness in this drama. It is possible to see that beyond the obvious psychological dimension, madness is a powerful metaphor for tyranny, treachery and political disunity:

Y si traydor lo encuentro ... si descubro
Que mis favores paga con perfidias,
Derribará un verdugo la cabeza
Donde viven tan locas fantasías (I,iii)

By contrast reason symbolises loyalty, good government and political unity.

Isabel: 'La delirante'?

Isabel represents the other pole of the tragic structure in this drama, and her progress is inseparable from that of Leonor. Gálvez ensures that conscious parallels are drawn

between the characters. In a powerful soliloquy in which she contemplates her own guilt, Isabel's words seem to be a deliberate echo of those of Lady Macbeth:

¿tú me arrojas
Su sangre en mis vestidos? esta mancha
Jamás se borrará ... jamás... (III,iii)²¹

By comparing her queen to that other paradigm of female madness in Shakespeare, Gálvez establishes an allusive parallel between Isabel and Leonor.

However, the comparisons between the two women operate on a more profound level in the drama, since Isabel also moves from a kind of madness to a kind of reason. Gálvez portrays her transformation from cruel and capricious tyranny, paranoia and jealousy, to humility, justice and forgiveness. In her first words on stage, the queen's jealousy of Lord and Lady Pembroke's happiness fuels a soliloquy in which Gálvez shows that Isabel has been corrupted by the vengeance she exacted on Mary and Norfolk, and, as she believes, Leonor:

¡Oh sombra de Norfolk! ¿De qué me acusas?
Tú, á quien mi amor un tiempo preferia,
Me abandonaste ingrato; y me he vengado.
Tu cabeza cayó, y la mano misma,
Que supo castigar en tí su afrenta,
Aniquiló con furia vengativa
A Estuarda, y al fruto detestable
De este enlace, á Leonor: ya no respira. (I,iii)

The language of this speech already hints that her reason is clouded by both a sense of guilt and a continuing fragility which leads her constantly to the edge of tyranny, 'temblará Lóndres / Del terrible escarmiento de mis iras ...' (I,v).

It is precisely this mental fragility and this underlying sense of her own culpability that accounts for the very profound impact of her first encounter with Leonor. She wakes from a troubled night of visions, claiming to have been pursued by a malevolent spirit, and convinced that she must repent of her crimes (III,ii). She, like Leonor, stands 'outside' herself, unable to recognise in her present troubled persona her former grandeur and courage, '¿Soy la misma / Que hizo temblar la Europa? (III,iii).

On learning that Leonor is alive and secreted in the palace, Isabel's anguish, paranoia, and desire for vengeance are renewed and intensified (III,v). These passions

are part of the complexity of her character. Leonor describes her as 'de mármol' (II,vii) with 'un corazon de bronce' (III,vii), which might suggest an opposition to that of Leonor, whom Essex describes as 'viva al sentimiento' (II,iii). However, Gálvez shows Isabel to be dominated by grand passions and volatile emotions (III,iv), which reach their height when, incensed by Arlington's lies and deceit, she resolves to execute Leonor, 'De cólera estoy ciega: envidia, zelos / Ultrajes y rencor estan luchando / En mi pecho ... perezca, sí, perezca ...' (IV,vii).

However, at the height of her fantasy of vengeance, (V,i) she is visited by Pembroke, who explains the extent of Arlington's deceit, but also reminds her of her past tyranny and its consequences. The realisation of her own fallibility and error leads Isabel to begin a quest for understanding, a process by which she is eventually redeemed (V,ii, iii). The intervention of Essex marks an important step in this (V,vi). He makes an impassioned plea on behalf of Leonor, seeking to persuade Isabel of the greater glory which clemency and forgiveness bring. However, it is through admiration of Leonor's example of self-sacrifice that Isabel's redemption is complete. She is moved to tears and admits that Leonor has triumphed over her rage and desire for vengeance, and demonstrated the virtue of compassion and forgiveness (V,viii).

Thus Isabel, like Leonor, abandons vengeance in favour of justice based on forgiveness. However, while for Leonor, this transformation is achieved by gradually acquiring agency, Isabel must become more passive. She must relinquish her power to punish and execute, and allow herself to be instructed by wise counsel. More importantly, though, through the example of Leonor, the powerless daughter of her implacable rival, Isabel finally acquires the nobility of conduct which matches her status as sovereign.

The Double Centre of Tragic Interest

Gálvez's characterisation of Leonor and Isabel emphasises those shared aspects of their nature and parallel progress through the action, and brings into question the identity of 'La delirante'. Although this is usually understood to refer to Leonor, Gálvez's representation of the state of derangement in this tragedy is broad enough to encompass the states of mind and patterns of behaviour of both female characters. This ambiguity may be reflected in the title *La delirante*, conspicuous in Gálvez's tragic works which otherwise all adopt the proper name of the protagonist. Furthermore, if there is an

ambiguity about the identity of 'La delirante' there is also uncertainty about which of the two characters might properly be considered the tragic protagonist.

Isabel has many of the attributes of the tragic protagonist on a classicising model. Pride is signalled as the primary motivation for her vengeful killing of Norfolk and Mary prior to the start of the action (I, iv) and it is again the injury to her pride, which prompts her desire to avenge herself when Essex rejects her offer of marriage and when she discovers that Leonor is alive (II,v; III,iv). The reversal of fortune originates in her pride since she is credulous in the face of Arlington's manipulations and undermining of her power as sovereign. Gálvez ensures, though, that Isabel bears some responsibility for her apparent demise and reflects how she has alienated herself from wise counsellors and become prey to Arlington's flattery. In this she is shown to be in danger of compounding the original error of the killing of Mary and Norfolk, with a further crime. She experiences a moment of recognition, when she learns the extent of Arlington's deception (V,ii). Finally, her status is re-established through her humility and act of pardon, and her passage from bad fortune to good fortune is shown to be complete.

The character of Leonor cannot be as neatly mapped onto an Aristotelian model of tragedy. Her desire for personal revenge might be regarded as an error, but it is obviously mitigated by her desperate plight and is shown to be a consequence rather than a cause of her reversal of fortune prior to the start of the action. Nevertheless Leonor's situation, in which her life is threatened initially by Isabel and later by Arlington, as she struggles to regain her reason and dignity, provokes both fear and pity. Leonor does not remain a victim, but her death might at first sight appear difficult to reconcile with her marked transition from misfortune to fortune. Yet although abrupt and shocking, her death can be understood within the context of classicising tragedy, since not only is it occasioned by her own act of heroism, but it is clear that Leonor dies content.

The double centre of tragic interest allows certain unexpected parallels to be drawn between the all-powerful Isabel and the powerless Leonor. Both women are shown suffering, both are driven by a vengeance which unbalances their reason and which is finally overcome through forgiveness. Their rivalry sets them apart, but their parallel trajectories bring them together. In the context of Gálvez's tragic writing, this is a new experiment: instead of the decentred protagonist, as in *Ali-Bek*, and to a certain extent, *Zinda*, or Acciolino whose act of suicide and remorse shadows the virtuous and

heroic death of Blanca, in *La delirante* Gálvez presents two strong and interdependent centres of tragic interest.

Tragedy and New Dramatic Devices

The incorporation of two tragic protagonists in *La delirante* offers further evidence of Gálvez's innovative interpretation of the possibilities of traditional models of tragedy. However, the characterisation of Leonor and Isabel cannot be fully explained in terms of classical conventions and it owes much to Gálvez's experience of writing in other dramatic genres. The conflict between the two female characters derives some of its tension from themes and devices of plot more usually associated with high comedy and *comedia lacrimosa*. In this tragedy, the love interest does not revolve around a choice between civic duty and personal feeling, but on rivalry in love, a common feature of plot in high comedy. The topos of forced marriage, familiar in sentimental drama is also present here as a crucial factor in depicting Leonor's suffering and self-sacrifice prior to the start of the action. Perhaps most significantly, the final reconciliation between the two women is also reminiscent of the denouement in *comedia lacrimosa*. Much of the tension between the emotional reunion and Leonor's murder, which owes more to the conventions of a tragic plot, is indicative of twin poles in Gálvez's dramaturgy.

The recognisable framework of classicising tragedy is overlaid with a range of devices proper to newer genres.²² As in *Zinda*, the gestural vocabulary of sentimental comedy, and principally tears and fainting, is much employed at key moments in the action.²³ As in *Blanca de Rossi*, some of the colour of the Gothic in literature is also deployed here: Leonor's incarceration, visions of ghosts and the vocabulary of death and the tomb.²⁴ However, these features do not diminish the tragic tenor of this work and Gálvez contains her use of other registers and techniques within an overarching structure of tragedy. The elevation of language and rhetoric establishes the requisite gravitas and tone and the sophisticated use of imagery throughout also contributes to a sense of decorum proper to tragedy. There is a limited cast of characters, each of which is accorded a measure of depth and complexity. Far from stock types, these characters all contribute to the unfolding plot and to the psychological complexity of the play.

La delirante resolutely belongs to the tragic mode in that Gálvez uses the conflict of Leonor and Isabel to explore abstract philosophical themes such as vengeance and reconciliation and she consciously meditates not simply on private dilemmas but on the

affairs of governance and sovereignty. The personal distress of both Leonor and Isabel at the beginning of the tragedy reflects the disharmony of the kingdom. Their reconciliation and the return of their reason at the end also marks the return of unity to the political sphere. This tragedy has often been interpreted as a psychodrama of feminine subjectivity.²⁵ However one might read the message of forgiveness and unity as a politically powerful one.

Conclusions

La delirante is one of Gálvez's most affecting tragedies, deriving its potency not merely from the subject matter, but from Gálvez's particular and original handling of it. The dramatic creation of Leonor in itself sets this work apart from the extensive canon of Spanish and European literature which engaged with this compelling narrative. More significant is Gálvez's use of Leonor to recast the opposition between Tudor and Stuart. In exploring the historical figures from unexpected perspectives, she creates not one, but two tragic protagonists. In this double focus, Gálvez depicts both the powerful and the powerless, and represents both opposition and reconciliation. Her exploitation of the techniques of other genres helps to animate this confrontation and to heighten its emotional impact, but, as in all her tragic writing, the structure of the play is firmly rooted in an understanding of and respect for the conventions and decorum of tragedy. *La delirante* demonstrates more effectively, perhaps, than in any of her tragic works, how Gálvez's innovations expand the norms of classicising tragedy in order to produce profound and affecting drama for a new age.

¹ María Rosa Gálvez de Cabrera, *La delirante. Tragedia original en cinco actos*, in *Obras poéticas*, III, pp.169-263.

² In her comparative discussion of two dramatic versions of the narrative of Elizabeth and Mary, Ann Mackenzie refers to significant Spanish and European literary engagements with this historical subject matter. See Ann Mackenzie, 'The "Deadly Relationship" of Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots Dramatized for the Spanish Stage: Diamante's "La Reina María Estuarda" and Cañizares' [?] "Lo que va de cetro a cetro, y crueldad de Inglaterra"', *Dieciocho*, 9 (1986), pp. 201-218.

³ Antonio Coello, *El conde de Sex*, Donald E. Schmiedel (ed.), New York and Madrid, 1972.

⁴ Juan Bautista Diamante, *La reina María Estuarda*, Michael G. Paulson and Tamara Álvarez-Detrell (eds.), Madrid, 1989; José de Cañizares [?], *Lo que va de cetro a cetro, y crueldad en Inglaterra*, Barcelona, n.d. [1765?]. The play was reprinted in Valencia in 1795. See Mackenzie, 'The "Deadly Relationship" of Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots', pp.203, 217 n.15, for a discussion of the attribution of this play to Cañizares.

⁵ *Lo que va de cetro a cetro* was performed in Madrid on numerous occasions throughout the period and at least once a decade from 1712 until 1798. See Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, p.755. It was proscribed in 1799 as part of the plan of theatrical reform and reinstated in 1803. See McClelland, *Drama of Pathos*, p.230. *Dar la vida por su dama (el conde de Sex)* was also performed throughout the period, at least once a decade between 1708 and 1807. See Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, p.681. Montiano cited the work as an example of a Golden Age play which continued to enjoy popularity in the eighteenth century. See Montiano, *Discurso*, p.71. *El conde de Sex*, 'de un ingenio', also featured in the 'Lista de comedias escogidas y corregidas para los dos teatros de la corte por Don Bernardo Iriarte, oficial de la secretaria de estado de orden del presidente Conde de Aranda en 1767'. See Palacios Fernández, 'El teatro barroco español en una carta de Bernardo de Iriarte al Conde de Aranda', p.63.

⁶ Two notable examples are François Tronchin, *Marie Stuart, reine d'Ecosse*, Paris, 1734, and Vittorio Alfieri, *Maria Stuart in Tragedie*, Sienna, 1783-5. For a wide-ranging survey of Mary Stuart as a figure in world drama see Karl Kipka, *Maria Stuart im Drama der Weltliteratur*, Leipzig, 1907. It is also important to note that in his 'Defensa de la mujer' Feijóo had cited Elizabeth as an example of a good monarch, although he conceded that her behaviour towards Mary Stuart had been far from exemplary: 'Ni (dejando otras muchísimas y acercándonos a nuestros tiempos) se olvidará jamás *Isabel de Inglaterra*, mujer en cuya formación concurren con igual influjo las tres Gracias que las tres Furias, y cuya soberana conducta sería siempre la admiración de Europa, si sus vicios no fueran tan parciales de sus máximas, que se hicieron imprescindibles, y su imagen política se presentará siempre a la posteridad coloreada (manchada diré mejor) con la sangre de la inocente María Estuarda, reina de Escocia.' See Sau, ed.cit., pp.28.

⁷ María Martínez Abello, *La estuarda. Tragedia en cuatro actos*, Barcelona, n.d. See Doménech, *Autoras*, pp.855-856; Rodrigues Sánchez, *Dramaturgos*, p.360; Herrera Navarro, *Catálogo*, p.293; Serrano y Sanz, *Apuntes*, 270, p.40; Aguilar Piñal, *Bibliografía*, I, p.40. Julia Bordiga Grinstein discusses this tragedy in relation to those of Alfieri and Schiller, see Grinstein, *Dramturgas*, pp.249-252. The uncertainty surrounding the publication date of Martínez Abello's work makes it difficult to draw any conclusions about the mutual influence of *La estuarda* and *La delirante*.

⁸ Reproduced in Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, p.251.

⁹ Friedrich Schiller, *Maria Stuart*, William Witte (ed.), London, 1968. See also Christian Grawe, *Friedrich Schiller: Maria Stuart*, Stuttgart, 1992.

¹⁰ See especially George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*, London, 1963, pp.180-184.

¹¹ Grawe, *Friedrich Schiller*, cites the first Spanish translation of Schiller's tragedy as that of J. Yxart, *Dramas*, Barcelona, 1881 (p.150).

¹² Francisco Ruiz Ramón, *Historia del teatro español (desde sus orígenes hasta 1900)*, Madrid, 1979, observes of Gálvez's tragedy, 'También su tragedia, que lleva el tremendo título de *La delirante*, sobre la reina Isabel de Inglaterra podría relacionarse en algunos aspectos de construcción de acción y caracteres, con la *María Estuardo* de Schiller, salvando, claro está, las distancias', p.298. Schiller's tragedy appeared in an English translation before it was first printed in German, J.C.M., *Mary Stuart*, London, 1801. It first appeared in French in an edition of 1802 before the more celebrated translations of J.G. Hess, *Maria Stuart*, Paris, 1816, and Jean-Pierre LeBrun, *Maria Stuart*, Paris, 1820. See Grawe, *Friedrich Schiller*, p.150. See also Lafarga, *Teatro europeo*, pp.195-199, for a discussion of the small number of direct translations from English and German to Spanish during the period.

¹³ William Robertson, *The History of Scotland during the Reigns of Queen Mary and of King James VI till his Accession to the Crown of England*, London, 1759.

¹⁴ See J. Le Labreur, *Mémoires de Michel de Castelnau*, Paris, 1731.

¹⁵ See Grinstein, *Dramaturgas*, pp. 169-170 for a discussion of the relationship between this historical account and Gálvez's tragedy.

¹⁶ Plot Summary: The tragedy is set in London in a room in the royal palace. Prior to the start of the action Isabel, the Queen of England has ordered the execution of her former lover, Norfolk and his wife Mary Stuart. On discovering subsequently that the Count of Essex, her new favourite, was in love with Leonor, Norfolk and Mary's daughter, Isabel determined to intervene, ordering Leonor to marry Lord Arlington and sending Essex to Ireland to quell rebellion. From his new position of power within the court, Arlington attempted to usurp Isabel's power and place his new wife on the throne. When his plot was uncovered, he blamed Leonor and she was sentenced to death by the Queen. However, Lord and Lady Pembroke intervened to save Leonor's life and, unbeknown to anyone else, she has lived in their home under a false name ever since. At the opening of the play, Essex is returning victorious to England, but, prompted by Arlington, Isabel is suspicious of his loyalty and has ordered the homes of his supporters, including that of the Pembrokes to be searched. Leonor is removed and hidden in the royal palace to prevent her discovery in their household. Essex is brought before Isabel who informs him that he must not leave the palace without her permission. Act I closes in this atmosphere of intrigue and suspicion. At the start of Act II, Pembroke tells Essex that Leonor has become deranged. She appears shortly afterwards in a traumatised state, although she recognises Essex as her lover. In a highly emotionally charged scene, he attempts to convince her of the danger to her life before she faints. With Isabel approaching, Lady Pembroke quickly draws the curtains around the throne where Leonor lies unconscious to disguise her, but, during the ensuing dialogue between Essex and Isabel, Leonor regains consciousness and emerges from behind the curtain. Isabel is horrified and, believing she has seen a ghost, flees the stage to the sound of Leonor's vengeful cries. Arlington subsequently informs Essex that he knows his wife is alive and, in a closing soliloquy, he reveals his renewed ambition for power. In Act III, which takes place in the middle of the night, Isabel has woken, traumatised by ghostly visions. Arlington informs her

of Leonor's existence and Isabel demands that she be brought before her immediately. When the two women meet, Leonor reminds the queen of her acts of tyranny and in response Isabel brands Leonor a traitor and orders that she be imprisoned. In the soliloquy which opens Act IV, Arlington discloses his falsification of documents which will ensure that Parliament perceive Essex to be a traitor and reveals his desire to see Isabel overthrown in favour of Leonor. However, he is unable to persuade Leonor to participate in the conspiracy. Thus he delivers her an ultimatum: she must join him or die. Leonor attempts to warn the Queen of the danger which Arlington represents, but Isabel not only refuses to listen, but orders Arlington to arrange his wife's execution. Act V opens with an audience between Pembroke and Isabel in which she learns of the extent of Arlington's deceit and the decision of Parliament to hang Essex for treason. Isabel pronounces herself assured of the loyalty of Essex, but she refuses to grant his request for the release of Leonor. After Arlington storms the palace room with his supporters, two opposing factions line up. Leonor intervenes between the warring groups, urging loyalty to Isabel and offering her own life in exchange for peace. Isabel is moved to pardon Leonor, but in a sudden and desperate act of vengeance Arlington fatally stabs his wife.

¹⁷ See Mackenzie, 'The "Deadly Relationship" of Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots', p.202.

¹⁸ Daniel Whitaker explored this scene, and the wider relationship between Leonor and Mary, in 'Absent Mother, Mad Daughter', in which he applied the insights of psychoanalysis and feminist theories of subjectivity to explore what he described as the 'submerged mother-daughter plot' in the tragedy which pits Leonor not against Isabel, but against her mother, in a struggle to achieve her own identity.

¹⁹ For an interpretation of Isabel and Leonor as opposites, even as two halves of a divided subject, see Whitaker, 'La mujer ilustrada', p.1556, and Franklin Lewis, 'The Tearful Reunion of Divided Femininity', pp.210-11.

²⁰ See William Shakespeare, *The First Quarto of Hamlet*, Kathleen O. Irace (ed.), Cambridge, 1998, pp.81-82, 13.72-13.105. Both Elizabeth Franklin Lewis, 'The Tearful Reunion of Divided Femininity', pp.211-212, and Fernando Doménech, *Autoras*, p.491, have compared Gálvez's Leonor with Shakespeare's Ophelia. The play was translated into Spanish in three different versions, two of which were translated from the French adaptation of Jean-François Ducis and are not known to have been printed: Ramón de la Cruz, *Hamleto, rey de Dinamarca* of 1772; and A. de Saviñón, *Hamlet*. The third is Leandro Fernández de Moratín's translation from the English, *Hamlet. Tragedia de Guillermo Shakespeare. Traducida e ilustrada con la vida del autor y notas críticas por Inarco Celenio, P.A.*, Madrid, 1798. See Lafarga (ed.), *Teatro europeo*, pp.218, 402. Ramón de la Cruz's translated version was performed in the Príncipe 4-8 October and 16-17 December 1772. See Andioc and Coulon, pp.312, 734.

²¹ See Braunmuller, ed.cit., pp.218-219, 5.1.27-5.1.58. Jean-François Ducis' translation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was performed in the Caños del Peral 25-28 November and 8 December 1803, 25 January 1804. See Andioc and Coulon, *Cartelera*, pp. 508-509 and 759.

²² In this five-act tragedy the unity of place is rigorously upheld and the unity of time observed, as the stage directions indicate: 'La escena es en Londres en un salón de palacio [...] La acción empieza a las 8 de la noche, y acaba a la misma hora de la mañana siguiente'. Gálvez uses the customary *romance heroico* verse form: the assonance is i-a in Act One; e-o in Act Two; a-a in Act Three; a-o in Act Four; e-a in Act Five.

²³ Elizabeth Franklin Lewis links Leonor's and Isabel's tears to fundamental changes in their behaviour. See Franklin Lewis, 'The Tearful Reunion of Divided Femininity', p.212.

²⁴ See Whitaker, 'Absent Mother, Mad Daughter', p.170, for a reading of the word 'tumba' as a symbol of the connections between Leonor and her mother.

²⁵ See Franklin Lewis, 'The Tearful Reunion of Divided Femininity', and Whitaker, 'Absent Mother, Mad Daughter'.

CONCLUSION

The complexity and diversity of Gálvez's tragic oeuvre stands as a defiant counter-blast to prevailing contemporary prejudices concerning the limited abilities of women to write in the noblest dramatic genre. Of her extensive and varied literary output, Gálvez regarded her two volumes of tragic writing as the core of her achievement as an author. In her eight tragedies, Gálvez demonstrates an ability to animate classical dramatic conventions by recourse to the repertoire of new possibilities offered by the contemporary stage, drawing on an incisive talent for the invention and selection of tragic subject matter.

Gálvez's willingness to integrate some of the structures and devices of new genres must not be viewed as a superficial concession either to contemporary fashion for the spectacular and the diverting or to the taste for overtly emotional scenes. The evidence of the texts reveals that Gálvez deployed her knowledge of new theatrical idioms in very specific and subtle ways, rooting her innovations in a recognisably Aristotelian tragic framework, in order to preserve the genre as privileged and elevated. Thus, in *Blanca de Rossi*, Gálvez's inclusion of elements from the repertoire of the Gothic enhances rather than compromises the structure of the five-act tragedy, lending colour and tone to a powerful tragic narrative, while sustaining its decorum. Similarly, in *Zinda*, Gálvez exploits the strategies and effects of *comedia sentimental* to heighten the emotional impact of the conflicts and resolutions of the plot.

In *Saúl*, Gálvez's innovation consists in imbuing a novel and successful dramatic form, the *melólogo*, with tragic qualities and resonance. In both her choice of subject matter, and in her depiction of the demise of Saúl as that of a tragic protagonist, Gálvez accords this one-act, uni-personal work the depth and gravitas of tragedy on a classical model. Much of the concentration and potency achieved in this work is also present in *Safo*. In this more complex one-act play, Gálvez compresses the tragic action in order to intensify the focus on Safo's emotional turbulence and eventual suicide.

Perhaps Gálvez's most consistent area of experimentation is that of characterisation. By revising understanding of historical figures who would have been familiar to the reading and theatre-going public, Gálvez shows thoroughgoing and often daring innovation. In *Amnón*, she recasts the much maligned Biblical figure of Tamar as a virtuous character, and in doing so emphasises Amnón's role as a complex tragic

protagonist. Gálvez's reinterpretation and recreation of Florinda, the vilified figure of Spanish legend, is perhaps even more striking. Here, the process of recuperation and the elevation of Florinda to the status of tragic heroine, might be interpreted not simply as a powerful dramatic innovation, but also as a veiled critique of political corruption and of a patriarchal system. In *La delirante*, the revision of attitudes to Elizabeth I embodied in the figure of Isabel is a significant feature, but the essence of Gálvez's theatrical experiment lies in the creation of Leonor. Out of the merest fragments of historical evidence, Gálvez imagines an affecting character, and thereby reconfigures and revitalises the more familiar confrontation between Elizabeth and Mary.

Although her engagement with non-European subject matter has sometimes been interpreted as evidence of a political liberalism, even radicalism, in *Ali-Bek*, as in *Zinda*, Gálvez offers an ultimately rather conservative message. The undermined status of the protagonist in *Ali-Bek*, and the enlightened opposition to slavery in *Zinda* might be viewed in the wider context of a belief in the superiority of the values of European civilisation over the barbarity of non-European societies. Nonetheless, in other areas, Gálvez's tragedies question prevailing orthodoxy and bear witness to a highly critical intelligence. This is perhaps most evident in her secular attitude to the treatment of religious subject matter. Divine authority is overtly challenged in *Saúl*, where the act of suicide is not shown as a crime against God, but a self-assertive undertaking in defiance of a vengeful Deity. Indeed, one might see Gálvez's emphasis on suicide in four of her tragedies as part of a broad-based humanist view of the power of individuals to determine their destinies.

Gálvez's secular viewpoint also leads her to interrogate gender prejudices founded in religious dogma. For her Isabel is no longer the demonised Protestant tyrant of the Catholic imagination, and Florinda and Tamar are rescued from their fate as Eve-like temptresses and harbingers of universal misfortune. More generally, in her portrayal of the plight of women, and in her depiction of the conflicts between male and female characters, there is evidence of Gálvez's questioning of patriarchal systems and values. Even when victorious, her father-figures are often enfeebled or deficient, and, by contrast younger women characters are imbued with dynamism and virtue. By portraying patterns of female conduct as exemplary, and by stressing the importance of reconciliation, compassion and forgiveness, Gálvez explicitly subscribes to enlightened liberal ideals.

There is some evidence to suggest that Gálvez conceived her entire tragic project

as a challenge to a domain of the literary sphere which had traditionally been the preserve of male endeavour and of male values. In recasting Tamar and Florinda, the familiar antagonists of the Biblical and legendary narratives, as virtuous and heroic, and in shaping the characters of Ali-Bek and Rodrigo as suffering and even unheroic, there is an implicit critique of social systems which prescribed gender roles and rendered them natural and immutable. In this sense, Gálvez's writing of tragedy might be understood as an aspiration not only to expand the possibilities of the genre, but also to question the gendered assumptions on which it was founded. Taken together, her innovations and experiments with structure, character and subject matter might seem to undermine the association between tragedy and privileged male discourse.

Gálvez is no longer regarded as a marginal figure in the history of Spanish literature, but it is difficult to measure her impact and importance. Since only two of the eight works included in this tragic corpus were performed during her lifetime, much of Gálvez's vision had to remain in the mind's eye of the reader. Nevertheless, as Quintana appeared to hint in his review of the *Obras poéticas*, even on the printed page, the author's experimentation and innovation were apparent.

Although Gálvez and her work were, for the most part, forgotten during most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in recent times, when the notion of the canon has been modified, Gálvez has been recovered and reclaimed as a lost paradigm of proto-feminist literature. However, this thesis has argued that any understanding of Gálvez as a writer should proceed from her conscious engagement both with the inheritance of the Spanish tragic tradition and the potential of new literary genres. In the *Obras poéticas*, Gálvez offers not one, but a series of models of tragedy which testify not only to the dynamism and diversity of her dramatic vision and talent, but to the variety and flexibility of the genre itself. It is as tragedian that Gálvez intended to make her public impact, it is as tragedian that we must assess her legacy.

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