The interpolated story of Cardenio and Dorotea on the English stage

Raquel SERRANO GONZÁLEZ
Universidad de Oviedo, España

Abstract: Interpolated in the first part of *Don Quixote*, the episode narrating the interrelated love stories of Cardenio, Luscinda, Don Fernando and Dorotea has been the subject of various stage adaptations throughout the centuries. This paper provides an analysis of two rewritings of the story performed on British lands in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries: Thomas D'Urfey's *The Comical History of Don Quixote I* (1694) and *Double Falsehood* (1728), presumably adapted by Lewis Theobald from a Shakespeare / Fletcher collaboration. The analysis of the texts is aimed at determining how these playwrights harness the subversive potential of Cervantes's original.
Keywords: *Don Quixote, Thomas D'Urfey, The Comical History of Don Quixote, Lewis Theobald, Double Falsehood, Cardenio, Dorotea.*

Introduction

Since Shelton's translation in 1612, the character of Cardenio has provided a recurrent and fascinating literary source on British lands and turned into the object of a rich variety of dramatic adaptations. Much of the criticism written about the madman is focused on the disruptive gender identity that he incarnates, as he has been defined as coward [Madariaga, 1978, Hathaway, 1999, Percas de Ponseti, 1999], passive [Márquez-Villanueva, 2011, Hathaway, 1999], indecisive pBandera, 1995], timid [Márquez-Villanueva, 2011, Rodríguez-Luis, 1976, Hathaway, 1999, Fajardo, 2005], submissive [Feal, 1993, Hathaway, 1999], weak [Anderson, 1988] and effeminate [Vallejo-Nágera, 1950]. These critiques rest on and perpetuate gendered binaries that uphold the established power hierarchy, such as strong/weak, valiant/coward and active/passive.

Significantly, Dorotea, the other forsaken lover of the story, has also been recurrently analysed as enacting a counter-hegemonic identity. As Cardenio's counterpart, she has often been attributed "masculine" behavioural qualities. For instance, in his *Guía del Lector del* Quijote, Madariaga provides a description of both characters under the revealing headings "Dorotea or Cleverness" and "Cardenio or Cowardice," where, "in contrast to Cardenio's wild unpredictability and his self-defeating despair, she shines forth in loveliness and intelligent courage" [Fajardo, 1984:89]. Márquez Villanueva also acknowledges this shift in gender identities when he argues, "rightfully," according to Hathaway [1999:18], that "the roles are inverted, that it is Cardenio who acts like a

BDD-A26615 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.187 (2026-01-06 22:26:39 UTC)

thoughtless damsel and Dorotea who faces misfortune with manly attitude."[1] [Márquez-Villanueva, 2011:59]

This paper provides a comparative analysis of the Cardenio and Dorotea story in *Don Quixote* and two English stage adaptations of the episode: Thomas D'Urfey's *The Comical History of Don Quixote I*, premiered in 1694, and Lewis Theobald's *Double Falsehood*, first performed in 1727. Attention is paid to each playwright's management of the transgressive potential of Cervantes's original characters.

The story in *Don Quixote*

One of the greatest strengths of the original story lies in Cervantes's use of narrative perspectivism. The readers get to know Cardenio through the – often self-serving – retrospective narrations of different subjects, which they need to piece together. In his own narrative, Cardenio fashions himself, self-pityingly, as a betrayed lover, a helpless victim to Luscinda's cruelty and to a rigidly hierarchical society that requires from him blind submission to his social betters. Nevertheless, an analysis of the text reveals that the misfortune that Cardenio attributes to forces far beyond his control was prompted by his deflecting agency.

In love with Luscinda from a tender age, the madman relates how he decided to ask for her hand in marriage, only to later reveal that he only acted exhorted by the maiden's plea. When he gets home to entrust his father with the formal transaction, the suitor finds a letter from Duke Ricardo inviting him to become his elder son's companion. Without the slightest mention to his matrimony plans, he parts – apparently willingly – to his destination. It is only later that he acknowledges being deterred by cowardice and not personal conviction: "I didn't dare tell my father about the matter, because of both this obstacle and many others that discouraged me, although I didn't know exactly what they were" [Cervantes, 2003:234]. When he arrives at the aristocratic household, he befriends the second son of the Duke, Don Fernando, a libertine who has seduced a virgin through a false marriage oath.

Cardenio shares with the aristocrat his amorous feelings for Luscinda, on the grounds of "the great friendship he professed for me" [Cervantes, 2003:201]; he goes to such great lengths to extol her beloved's personal worth, that he instills in his friend a desire to contemplate her. A furtive glance the fair maiden lit by dim candlelight fuels Don Fernando's craving. The aristocrat's appraisal of Luscinda makes Cardenio "fearful and suspicious" [Cervantes, 2003:201], awakening in him "a strange jealousy" [Cervantes, 2003:201] to which he only admits in retrospect. Despite harbouring suspicious feelings, Cardenio entrusts Dorotea's seducer with his his own marriage transaction and parts on an errand. During his absence, Don Fernando claims Luscinda's hand for himself. The betrayed lover's reaction is histrionic. He addresses the traitor with "seven melodramatic vocatives" [McCallister, 2011:114], emphasising the impossibility of anticipating his treason: "Could I have foreseen this treachery? Could I even have imagined it? No, of course not" [Cervantes, 2003:235].

However, Cardenio's narrative makes clear that he chose to ignore signs of Don Fernando's betrayal. Luscinda also suffers from a "strange faltering" [Cervantes, 2003:235] and prompts him to a quick return in an unprecedented exhibition of tears, sighs and concerns. The lover parts, "with my soul loaded down with suspicions and imaginings, ...

[1] "Los papeles están invertidos, que es Cardenio quien actúa como una damisela atolondrada y Dorotea quien hace cara al infortunio en actitud viril".

BDD-A26615 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.187 (2026-01-06 22:26:39 UTC)

clear signs of the sad event and the misfortune reserved for me" [Cervantes, 2003:235]. Besides, journey on which he claimed to have embarked "most willingly" [Cervantes, 2003:235], he describes as an unwelcomed command from a superior: "I obeyed as a dutiful servant, although I could see that it would be at the cost of my well-being" [Cervantes, 2003:235]. His attempts at self-exoneration are unsuccessful, as Cardenio's narrative is fraught with references to his awareness of Don Fernando's eminent treason.

A letter written by Luscinda brings the news of the wedding to her beloved, who arrives at the household before the ceremony. In a fleeting encounter, the bride reveals her intention to kill herself with a dagger if she cannot avert the matrimony, to which he replies "I carry a sword to defend you or kill myself, if fortune proves adverse to us" [Cervantes, 2003:238]. Nevertheless, when Luscinda's "I will" sentences him to a life of torment, he does not dare step out of his hiding place, as his guilty conscience will keep reminding him: "Now that I've allowed my dear one to be stolen, I curse the thief, on whom I could have taken revenge if I'd had the courage to do so, as I have for complaining! In short, I behaved then like a fool and a coward; no wonder that I'm dying now ashamed, repentant and mad" [Cervantes, 2003:239-240]. Cardenio relates how he then fled from the house, still trying to convince the readers that, if seen, he was determined to vent his outrage on the traitors. Only when he is alone in the dark countryside, does he give free rein to his repressed emotions, blaming his misfortune on Luscinda's inconstancy and Don Fernando's status. The loss of his true love, which he dared not take agency to avoid, drives the character mad.

The happy ending is set into motion in the next chapter, thanks to Dorotea's narration of the wedding, where a letter was found in the bride's bosom stating that her lawful husband was Cardenio. During the encounter between both forsaken lovers, Dorotea also narrates the tale of her seduction and abandonment by a man of greater rank. Spurned by Don Fernando, she dons a farmer's outfit and flees to the sierra, where her mournful cries of sorrow are heard by Cardenio, the priest and the barber. The lad's actual identity is revealed in an erotic display of different parts of her female anatomy: her pale delicate feet, alabaster legs, snow-white hands and long golden hair, drive the spectators to the conclusion that the boy is a beautiful lady. The delicacy of her body conveys an image of susceptibility, which will soon be undermined by Dorotea's – deliberately self-exonerating – narration. She introduces herself as the daughter of wealthy yet untitled farmers, "simple folk, of pure blood unmixed with that of any ill-sounding races and, as it's often put, dyed-in-the-wool old Christians – but so rich that thanks to their wealth and generosity they're beginning to be regarded as hidalgos and even as nobles" [Cervantes, 2003:250'. This upward mobility in the social hierarchy undermines the ideology of nobility-as-birthright, underscoring the mutability and fluidity of identity.

Dorotea's interest in social advancement becomes clearer as her narrative progresses. She cannot hide a feeling of self-satisfaction for being courted by an aristocrat: "it gave me a very special thrill of happiness to be loved and esteemed by such an eminent gentleman" [Cervantes, 2003:252]. As observed by Garst-Santos [2011], this utterance is doubly transgressive, since it also gives voice to female sexual desire. Despite such subversive acknowledgement, Dorotea fashions herself as a model of feminine behaviour, virtuous and industrious, stressing "how little I deserved to fall from that happy state into my present misery" [Cervantes, 2003:251]. The image of childlike naiveté she tries to convey is undermined by her own discourse, which highlights her impressive bravery, initiative and intelligence. For instance, she recounts having pushed – and maybe killed – a

BDD-A26615 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.187 (2026-01-06 22:26:39 UTC)

man who tried to rape her over a precipice. However, the peasant succeeds in bringing her audience to sympathise with her "damsel in distress" cause.

Betrayed by her servants, she finds the lecherous Don Fernando in her lodgings; her honour is irrevocably compromised. Facing such inimical circumstances, Dorotea pronounces a judicious speech which persuades her opponent to perform a clandestine marriage. Aware that the aristocrat will take her virginity anyway, she makes the most of an extreme situation and becomes Don Fernando's religiously and legally sanctioned wife.

His hopes rekindled by Dorotea's testimony, Cardenio offers his support, stating his intention to "make use of the privilege to which every gentleman is entitled, and demand satisfaction for the wrong he has done you" (261). Significantly, he will not live up to this manly promise when he faces his opponent in a haphazard encounter at an inn. Unsurprisingly, Cardenio is the last one to act. The first character to intervene is Luscinda, who appeals to the traditional discourse of lineage to beg the nobleman's permission to join her legitimate husband. Dorotea also appropriates this ideology, forcing Don Fernando to demonstrate his personal worth by exhibiting, through his acts, the nobility inherent to his rank: "and in so doing you will be showing the generosity of your illustrious and noble breast, and the world will be able to see that reason has more power over you than passion" [Cervantes, 2003:343]. She is eloquent and direct in her accusations ("you laid siege to my unsuspecting heart; you importuned my integrity" [Cervantes, 2003:341]), in what would be traditionally perceived as transgression of female propriety.

As argued by Garst-Santos [2011], Dorotea fashions her identity in an intelligent combination of – often contradictory – traditional and emergent discourses. In a more subversive vein, she undermines the inherited ideology of nobility-as-birthright to argue in favour of a counter-discourse that defined nobility as good deeds: "true nobility consists in virtue, and if you forfeit that by denying me my just rights, I shall be let with better claims to nobility than you" [Cervantes, 2003:342]. Her speech succeeds, as Don Fernando, left without options, acknowledges his defeat: "You've won, lovely Dorotea, you've won: nobody could have the heart to deny such an assemblage of truths" [Cervantes, 2003:342]. The peasant's self- and other-fashioning is validated by her audience; the priest warns the aristocrat that "if he prized himself on being a gentleman and a Christian, he had *no alternative* but to keep the promise that he'd made her" [Cervantes, 2003:344]. Facing a lack of options, "Don Fernando's worthy heart, – nourished, after all, with illustrious blood –, related and give in to the truth, which he couldn't have denied *even if he'd wanted to* [Cervantes, 2003:344].[2]

The afore-quotation is self-subversive. Even though it seems to substantiate the essentialist construction of lineage and manhood, endorsed by other fragments in the text, it stresses that the traitor's reformation is not based on an upright sense of morality, but prompted by lack of alternatives. Rather than reform, Don Fernando surrenders. As regards Dorotea, she strategically deploys a variety of discourses to refashion her identity as the deserving wife of a high-ranked man; even though she has relinquished her virginity and even acknowledged sexual desire, she manages to safeguard her dignity in a culture that fetishises female chastity.

During the peasant's long speech, Cardenio remained hidden. It is only after Luscinda has been set free from Don Fernando's tight grip that he steps out, "determined as he was that if he saw any hostile movement he'd defend himself and attack as best he could anyone who attacked him, even if it cost him his life" [Cervantes, 2003:344]. Judging

[2] The emphasis in both quotation is the author's.

BDD-A26615 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.187 (2026-01-06 22:26:39 UTC)

by his past actions, this eloquent assertion lacks credibility. Inactive as he is, Cardenio does not embody dominant masculinity; nevertheless, he is cured from his effeminising madness and rewarded with a happy ending. He is not either punished for his deviance from the male norm or transformed and led to embrace hegemonic manhood. Therefore, his story does not provide a reinforcement of normative gender roles. Luscinda loves Cardenio as he is, not as he should be according to his culture's standards. She is the "prototype of the seventeenth-century obedient daughter, but also [the] prototype of the all time noble and strong woman, capable of redeeming the weak man through perseverance, loyalty, understanding and, above all, unconditional love."[3]

Thomas D'Urfey's adaptation

In *The Comical History of Don Quixote*, Dorothea dons a shepherd's clothes and leaves her father's household, searching for the treacherous man who deflowered her and, unfaithful to his marriage oath, plans to wed Luscinda. Driven to profound despair by the loss of his beloved, Cardenio falls "stark mad" [I.1.14] and takes refuge in the wild sierra. Dorothea is found by the curate, who explains that Don Fernando forged an abandonment letter from Luscinda to Cardenio and took her by force from the cloister where she had fled for protection.

Cardenio shows no trace of hesitation or wavering about asking for Luscinda's hand; in fact, he is already "her betroth'd love" [III.1.39]). He is equally innocent of reaffirming his self-worth by irresponsibly selling her charms to his libertine friend. He is, like Dorothea, the victim of Don Fernando's treasonous behaviour. In an address to the audience, the betrayed lady highlights the aristocrat's fickleness: "Oh, let all Virgins by my Fate take Warning, and never more believe that faithless Sex" [III.1.40]. In advising maidens to preserve their chastity, Dorothea reinforces the male chauvinist double sexual standard; however, she also defines men as fundamentally unfaithful, perpetuating a contradiction inherent to the Restoration dominant notion of manhood.

Whilst the hierarchical one-sex model constructed men as having greater will power, the emergent paradigm of complementary difference fashioned two distinct genders; by the new standards, sexual prowess was inherent to normative masculinity. Nevertheless, after the Glorious Revolution, masculinity began to be associated with other qualities such as gentlemanliness, propriety and even moderation. In this context,

> any too overt and extravagant expression of sexual profligacy, at least among the genteel, stands at odds with the strictures of self-restraint, moral conformity, politeness, and decency: the gentleman risks devolving into the libertine rake. Yet on the other hand, without some signs of assertive, successful (hetero)sexuality, the expression of masculinity remains incomplete: the gentleman might be taken for a fop, or worse. [Mackie, 2009:8-9]

These contradictory discourses were reconciled in the figure of the reformed rake, which is enacted by Don Fernando in D'Urfey's play.

Before the rake repents, Dorothea reveals the reason for her escape: "in this Disguise I was resolv'd to seek him, and either cause him to perform his Vows, or die in the pursuit of my Desire" [III.1.40]. Not only does she acknowledge, like her cervantine

[3] "Prototipo de la hija obediente del siglo XVII, pero también [el] prototipo de la mujer noble y fuerte de todos los tiempos, capaz de redimir al hombre débil mediante la constancia, la lealtad, la comprensión y, por encima de todo, el amor incondicional" [Percas de Ponseti 1999:204]. Author's translation.

BDD-A26615 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.187 (2026-01-06 22:26:39 UTC)

predecessor, feeling desire, but she also expresses her resolution to act in its pursuit. Nevertheless, as argued later, her final conformity to prescriptive femininity will effectively contain this subversion.

In *The Comical History of Don Quixote*, there is also an accidental encounter of the four lovers at an inn. Overheard by Dorothea, Luscinda eloquently reproaches Don Fernando's criminal actions, basing her censure on the inherited ideology of virtue as nobility:

> You are of noble Blood, and in your Veins should run a stream of Virtue, that should distribute Justice thro' your Soul; Cardenio was your Friend, my betroth'd Husband, and in severing us, you do not only fix a foul Stain upon your House's Honour, but violate the Laws of all Humanity. [III.1.41]

Don Fernando's actions are clearly motivated by his "male" drive to satisfy his sexual desire. First, he attempts to satisfy his lust within the pertinent socially and divinely sanctioned institution: marriage. Nevertheless, his proposal leaves no doubt about his carnal motivations: "And since I know the Scruple, which the Priests call honourable, affects you Women more than Love or Fortune; take there my hand, and be this hour my Wife; I vow it most religiously" [III.1.42]. Facing Luscinda's refusal, he just asks to have his craving quenched: "give me but the Reward that my Desire and Services deserv'd, and I'll be satisfied" [III.1.42]. Luscinda understands Don Fernando's sexual appetite as inherent to his maleness, but she censures his behaviour for not being subject to moral restrictions: "You will not force me, rash as you are, young and ungovernable; you dare not be so base?" [III.1.42]. Luscinda's eloquent reproaches succeed, and the rake eventually confesses that he has been "but a squeamish Whore-master" [III.1.43].

Upon the rake's repentance, Dorothea enters the scene, as if providentially sent to lead his moral reformation. Where Don Fernando expects loathing, he finds non-judgemental sympathy:

> Oh Heaven! My Hatred? What for a small Frailty, a slight Forgetfulness, which all young Men have naturally, when their Loves are absent? To remedy which, and to prevent such Danger, in this Disguise, thro' Groves and Plains I've sought you; left Parents, Kindred, Friends, and all the World, to follow my dear Lord. [III.1.44]

Through these words, Dorothea naturalises sexual inconstancy as inherent to masculinity. Furthermore, she contains the anxiety previously raised by her transgression of orthodox femininity: her escape and disguise only sought to restore hegemonic order. Once she finds Don Fernando, she is more than willing to provide the perfect embodiment of the period's ideal of femaleness, defining her worth as dependent on the traditionally fetishised attributes of beauty, chastity and obedience: "I am as fair as she, as young, as charming, form'd for the Pleasure of my dearest Lord; bless'd too with Virtue, Constancy, and Duty" [III.1.45]. Infuriated at her obstinacy, the aristocrat threatens to murder the lady. In her answer, Dorothea embodies the self-sacrifice at the core of the traditional ideal of femininity, subjecting her delicate body and soul to Don Fernando's authority: "Why then, no harmless Dove, or tender Infant, will ever die so patient" [III.1.46]. On hearing these words, the aristocrat's heart is miraculously softened; the rake is finally reformed. Don Fernando then decides to wed Dorothea and begs Luscinda's forgiveness, arguing that he was "inchanted, mad" [III.1.47]. The discourse of insanity is

BDD-A26615 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.187 (2026-01-06 22:26:39 UTC)

deployed to naturalise and validate hegemonic manhood, providing a category wherein to confine deviance.

As regards Cardenio, he is found by Don Quixote and Sancho wandering the vast sierra, "in ragged Clothes, and in a wild Posture" [IV.1.61]. The irate madman suddenly bursts into singing "Let the Dreadful Engines of Eternal Will." The insane Cardenio is driven by violent changes of mood, as he is invaded by a variety of intense emotions. The first verses of his chant convey unrepressed wrath: "Let the dreadful Engines of Eternal Will, / The Thunder roar, and crooked Lightening kill; / My Rage is hot as their, as fatal too, / And dares as horrid Execution do" [IV.1.61].

Cardenio's unbridled ire changes abruptly into bitter despair: "Or let the Frozen North its rancour show, / Within my Breast far greater Tempests grow; / Despair's more cold than all the Winds can blow" [IV.1.61]. A succinct recollection of Luscinda suffices to rekindle Cardenio's fiery passion. Amidst references to "Hell," flaming "Meteors" and "Blue Lightning" flashing [IV.1.61], the madman imagines the sky in flames and the entire world burning frantically; overpowered by lust, he has completely forsaken "manly" reason. Significantly, Roberson's analysis of the song reveals that this is the part where Cardenio "seems to be at his craziest" [2006, 143].

This intense experience of unrestrained frenzy is followed by bittersweet nostalgia, as the madman remembers a joyous past with his beloved. He envisions locus amoenus, full of "flow'ry Groves, / Where Zephyr's fragrant Winds did play" [IV.1.61], where "the Nightingale and Lark" (IV.1.62) sang and "all was sweet and gay" [IV.1.62]. Suddenly, his blazing rage is revived: "Glow, I glow, but 'tis with Hate; / Why must I burn for this Ingrate?" [IV.1.62]. Nevertheless, Cardenio manages to control his mounting emotions ("Cool, cool it then, and rail, / Since nothing will prevail" [IV.1.62]) recovers his lost reason. The ending of his performance of madness is, as Vélez Núñez [2003] pointed out, governed by logic, not unrestrained emotion. Hence, the threat that male dementia posed to normative masculinity is contained.

On his reappearance on stage, Cardenio is "new dress'd" [V.1.78] and his sense, "perfectly recovered" [V.1.78]. His madness is attributed to mere "Colds and ill Dyet" [V.1.78]; rest and medication have sufficed to restore the character to his original good judgement. The transitory nature of his dementia is conveniently underscored, and male rationality, naturalised. His new outfit signals Cardenio's eagerness to reenact his social identity and hence to conform to the status quo. He does not doubt to challenge Don Fernando to a duel, exhibiting the courage and initiative that are all-absent from his literary predecessor. His rival admits his guilt, which he attributes to unbridled sexual desire: "all the soft Bonds of our endearing Friendship were scorch'd and burnt, by her bright Eyes, to Ashes" (V.1.79). Their friendship bond is renegotiated through the objectified body of Luscinda, who is given back to her legitimate "possessor:" "Let this atone then for my rash Offence, that I surrender back this precious Jewel, bright and unsullied; and for my Sin in seeking to corrupt her, with Shame and Sorrow once more beg your Pardon" [IV.1.80].

Lewis Theobald's adaptation

Lewis Theobald's *Double Falsehood* is believed by many critics to be an adaptation of *Cardenio*, a lost play by Shakespeare and Fletcher. The audience does not get to know the story through retrospective narratives, but witnesses the events in chronological sequence. Theobald's play starts with a conversation between Duke Angelo and his elder son, Roderick, two characters with minor roles in Cervantes's original. Their conversation revolves around the Duke's concern for the censurable behaviour of his younger son,

BDD-A26615 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.187 (2026-01-06 22:26:39 UTC)

Henriquez (Don Fernando). The event that opens this stage adaptation is the libertine's plot to keep Julio (Cardenio) away from her beloved Lenora (Luscinda), under an invented pretext. Julio's departure prompts the farewell of the two lovers, were Colahan [2007] sees echoes of Cardenio's original timidity. This reminiscence is already established in a previous conversation, where Julio's father, Camillo, exhorts his son to part swiftly. Even though the young man decides to leave the very next day, we know, through his concerned asides, that Leonora's father is expecting Camillo's consent to their marriage, not having made the request to his parent himself. This occasions a reproach from Leonora that recalls Cardenio's cowardice, as she accuses Julio of not daring ask his own father for permission. This delay, he attributes to good judgement, not pusillanimity: "No Impediment / Shall bar my Wishes, but such grave Delays / As Reason presses patience with; which blunt not, / But rather whet our Loves. Be patient, Sweet" [I.2.39]. Leonora questions her beloved's constancy amid the splendours of Court, but the dispute ends in a confirmation of their mutual love.

The last scene of Act I stages part of the story related by Dorotea in the sierra. Renamed Violante, the farmer's daughter resists Henriquez's amorous attentions. Too well aware of the obstacle posed by the class divide, she voices distrust of her suitor:

> I have read Stories
> (I fear too true ones;) how young Lords like you,
> Have thus besung mean Windows, rhym'd their Suff'rings
> E'en to th'abuse of Things Divine, set up
> Plain Girls, like me, the Idols of their Worship,
> Then left them to bewail their easy Faith
> And stand the Worl"s Contempt. [I.3.43-44]

Henriquez stresses the arbitrariness of his higher social standing, defining Violante as morally superior:

> Hers is the self-same Stuff
> Whereof we dukes are Made; but Clay more pure;
> And take away my Title; which is acquir'd
> Not by my self, but thrown by Fortune on Me,
> Or by the Merit of some Ancestour
> Of singular Quality, She doth inherit
> Deserts t'outweigh me. [I.3.44].

The maiden exhibits a strong and decisive temperament in dismissing the Duke's son; she resolves to preserve her honour and marketability as a virgin and potential wife. Nevertheless, Henriquez does not surrender. No single part of the seduction scene narrated by Cervantes is staged in *Double Falsehood*. We do not have access to the female character's recollection of the events, to the inner turmoil undergone by an already dishonoured Dorotea who turns the inimical situation to her best advantage – within her limited possibilities. We learn of Violante's deflowering by a monologue pronounced by Henriquez, who rambles sorrowful on brutally forcing a maiden that would not yield despite his marriage oaths. Here lies a key difference with Don Fernando, who gives no sign of affliction or remorse. The libertine's guilt is soon turned into self-justification, as he unconvincingly tries to see signs of compliance on Violante's part: "Was it a Rape then? No. Her Shrieks, her Exclamations then had drove me from her. True, she did not

BDD-A26615 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.187 (2026-01-06 22:26:39 UTC)

consent; as true, she did resist; but still in Silence all.–'Twas but the Coyness of a modest Bride, not the Resentment of a ravish'd Maid" [II.2.46].

The difference between Dorotea and Violante in these scene is also worthy of attention; whilst the former is seduced, the latter is raped. Theobald's character has no role, not even minor, in the negotiation of the loss of her own chastity, nor can she be accused of the slightest complicity. Nevertheless, when Henriquez abandons her, she feels guilty, ashamed and disempowered. These emotions contrast with Dorotea's burning rage and momentary thirst of revenge. However, she also transgresses female orthodoxy, dressing up as a shepherd and leaving the parental household in search of her beloved.

Meanwhile, Henriquez initiates her scheme to win Leonora's hand. Unlike Don Fernando, he considers the lowness of his deeds, but his guilty conscience is once again overpowered by lust. His wooing of Leonora differs greatly from Cervantes's original, as we witness the reaction of both the maiden and his father Bernard to the aristocrat's request. A new subject is put forward that was a central concern in the Enlightenment: the struggle between love and filial duty. Unlike the silent Luscinda, Leonora provides well-reasoned arguments for her plea, but the patriarch remains unmoved, rendering her torn heart more visible: "Oh, can I e'er resolve to Live without / A Father's Blessing, or abandon *Julio*?" [II.4.51]. The maiden criticises the greed behind marriages that are not based on love, but convenience: "Int'rest, that rules the World, has made at last/ a Merchandize of Hearts" [II.4.51].

Bernand's mind is not changed by Camillo, who pays him a visit to grant his permission to their children's wedding. Until this moment, the audience has been kept unaware of Julio's facing his father before his sudden departure; the echoes of Cardenio's passivity begin to fade. This disassociation is strengthened shortly afterwards, when, summoned by Leonora's letter, Julio gives signs of remarkable courage and initiative. The lady attributes Henriquez's advances to his knowledge that Julio has lost interest in her, unable to believe that the libertine would dare infuriate such a brave rival: "*Henriquez* would not, durst not, thus infringe / The Law of Friendship; thus provoke a Man, / that bears a Sword, and wears his Flag of Youth, / As fresh as He" [III.2.57]. However, her beloved does arrive, willing to win her back whatever it takes. Leonora bars his first initiative, to "kill the Traytor" (III.2.57), as well as his proposal to elope together. It is only exhorted by the maiden that he hides during the wedding, not without first proclaiming his intention to display his manly courage: "if I not do / Manhood and Justice, Honour; let me be deem'd / a tame, pale, Coward" [III.2.58]. However, in a striking difference to Cardenio, he steps in and urges Henriquez to withdraw his claim on Leonora or face him in a duel. Despite his valiant intention to fight, he is taken by force by Henriquez's servants. Leonora faints, the note and hidden dagger are found and the marriage is unavoidably postponed.

Deprived of his love, Julio succumbs to madness. His insanity is not prompted by the tormented conscience of a youth who did not dare act "manly." In his case, melancholy is not an effeminising category wherein to confine deviance. Interestingly, this function of madness *is* present in the play. Regardless of his questionable morality, Bernard repeatedly labels his daughter's resistance as insanity: "I think, you're mad.–Perverse, and foolish, Wretch!" [III.2.59]. More significant is Henriquez's acknowledgement of his own irrationality: "No Shot of Reason can come near the Place / Where my Love's fortified" [III.2.59]. Similarly, the Master of the Flocks attributes to madness the unrestrained lust that occasions his iniquitous attempt to rape Violante: "I'm madder with this Talk. / There's Nothing you can say, can take my Edge off" [IV.1.72]. Certainly less unsettling,

BDD-A26615 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.187 (2026-01-06 22:26:39 UTC)

Julio's melancholy is the result of Henriquez's treason, as he lucidly acknowledges during one of his ravings:

> Hast thou a Mistress?
> Give her not out in Words; nor let thy Pride
> Be wanton to display her Charms to View;
> Love is contagious: and a Breath of Praise,
> Or a slight Glance, has kindled up its Flame,
> And turn'd a Friend a Traytor.–'Tis in Proof;
> And it has hurt my Brain. [IV.1.68]

Like D'Urfey's Cardenio's, Julio's dementia is not devoid of rationality, as underscored by a shepherd's observation that "there is some Moral in his Madness" [IV.1.68]. He admits to some guilt for credulously exposing Leonora to Henriquez's view, but, since he never exhibits Cardenio's insecurity, we can presume that his dependence on the aristocrat's opinion for self-validation is lesser. More evidence of lucidity in his grasp of reality comes from his recognition of Violante's true gender, which, ironically, is attributed by the other shepherds to his madness. Julio's words are only a revelation to the Master of the Flocks, who attempts to rape the lady in a titillating scene where Violante's female delicacy is underscored. As opposed to Dorotea, who pushes her aggressor, the disempowered Violante begs the rapist to kill her. She is only able to escape thanks to Roderick's convenient arrival. Unable to take on a masculine identity, she takes refuge in nature and conveys her heartfelt sorrow in a song entitled "Fond Echo," which is overheard by Julio, the curate and the barber.

Both in her chant and during her subsequent conversation, Violante refashions her own subjectivity anew, portraying herself as a woman, and more specifically, as a virgin. This change is reflected in the play's language. Even though Violante defines herself as "a lost Maid" [IV.2.75] in her verses, Julio and his companions assume the singer of the heartrending lament is male: "See, how his Soul strives in him! This sad Strain Has Search'd him to the Heart! [IV.2.75]. Shortly after, the madman's language becomes, as observed by Leigh [2012], gender-neutral, which underscores the fluidity and ambiguity of identity. "But yet I wonder, what new, sad, *Companion* / Grief has brought hither to out-bid my Sorrows. / Stand off, stand off, stand off–Friends, *it* appears" [IV.2.75].[4] Finally, after seeing the still cross-dressed lady and listening to more of her story, they accept her newly created subjectivity. Violante's self-fashioning as virtuous and chaste, despite having endured a rape, is conveyed in the following lines:

> You maidens that shall live
> To hear my mournful tale when I am ashes,
> Be wise; and to an oath no more give credit,
> To tears, to vows—false both—or anything
> A man shall promise, than to clouds that now
> Bear such a pleasing shape and now are nothing. [IV.2.76]

Her identification with the maidens conveyed by this statement contrasts sharply with the disassociation Violante felt when, on leaving the parental house, she uttered the following words: "Maids, adieu, / Whom I'll no more shame" [II.2.48]. Now, she is

[4] Author's emphasis.

BDD-A26615 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.187 (2026-01-06 22:26:39 UTC)

empowered to credibly perform a constructed identity and claim some power. This ability, she demonstrates in the denouement scene, when she performs a masculine identity which is no longer constraining. This scene opens at the Duke's house, where the aristocrat, Bernard and Camillo are reunited with Roderick, Leonora and Henriquez. This is the moment when the perverse actions of the lecherous aristocrat are publicly exposed. Roderick accuses his brother of wronging a page boy – played by the cross-dressed Violante –, whom he stole from his friends, promised "Preferment" [V.2.84] and abandoned. Griffiths [2012] and Leigh [2012] commented on the various sodomitic implications of the episode: "Henriquez is accused of all the injuries he has inflicted upon Violante, with the added disgrace that the crime was purportedly committed against a male child rather than an adult woman" [Leigh, 2012:192]. The abused lady successfully performs the masculine identity of a page so that the crimes committed against her are acknowledged and redressed. Once her aim has been reached, she returns in female clothes, accompanied by the disguised Julio. Violante addresses Henriquez to claim, not his love, but the restoration of her damaged reputation:

> My Lord, I come not to wound your Spirit.
> Your pure Affection dead, which first betray'd me.
> My claim dyed with it! Only let me not
> Shrink to the Grave with Infamy upon me:
> Protect my Virtue, tho' it hurt your Faith;
> And my last Breath shall speak Henriquez *noble*. [V.2.87]

Violante is moved by reasons opposite from Dorotea's, who addresses the following words to Don Fernando: "I shouldn't wish you to imagine that I have come here driven by my dishonour: it his only the deep sorrow of being forgotten by you that has brought me" [Cervantes, 2003:341]. Theobald's character assumes that the perpetrator of such brutal offences simply cannot love her. Her stance differs significantly from Dorothea's, who considers the aristocrat's deed as an unimportant male flaw of youth. Henriquez apparently repents, asks for Leonora's forgiveness and reveals his intention to embark on a pilgrimage to Julio's grave, as Camillo's son is taken for dead. At this moment, Julio drops his disguise, forgives the aristocrat and is happily reunited with his father and future wife. Duke Angelo redresses the wrongs committed by his son by authorising the unequal marriage between Henriquez and Violante.

Though initially disempowered and forced to take on an identity that almost led her to death, the wronged lady's performance of different subjectivities allows her to remain virtuous by her society's standards. Henriquez provides his own assessment of the character:

> She looks as beauteous, and as innocent,
> As when I wrong'd her.–Virtuous *Violante*!
> Too good for me! dare you still love a Man,
> So faithless as I am?–I know you love me. [V.2.87]

However, Violante gave remarkable proof of her ability to enact feigned identities, and the dissembling nature of appearances is a lesson she learnt too well.[5] Despite

[5] This is a subject reflected upon by Violante when she entrusts an unknown citizen with a letter for Julio and when she chooses a male companion to rely on in her escape. Violante's thoughts and experiences in this respect make it difficult to assume that she still trusts her aggressor.

BDD-A26615 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.187 (2026-01-06 22:26:39 UTC)

Henriquez's words, she resists classification as the virtuous, self-sacrificing heroine who only transgresses gender boundaries to restore hegemony.

Conclusion

In Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, the character of Dorotea is granted the chance to raise her voice and become an active subject in the negotiation of her own subjectivity. The analysis presented in this paper reveals that she subverts effectively the dominant notions of femininity and creates a sanctioned textual space for herself. D'Urfey's rewriting of the character serves the opposite ideological function. Dorothea becomes the embodiment of ideal femininity: sweet, passive and self-sacrificing, she drops her disguise and renounces any agency as soon as hegemony is restored. In *Double Falsehood*, Violante resists such clear-cut classification. Initially ruined and disempowered by a brutal rape, she manages to enact different subjectivities to save her reputation. Even though her identity as a virtuous heroine is defined by an oppressing discourse, her public humiliation and apparent distrust of Henriquez are signals of resistance.

Essentially inactive and incapable of exerting agency, Cervantes's Cardenio does not conform to hegemonic manhood. His recovery from madness – a fundamental signal of effeminacy – does not symbolise his being restored to normative masculinity. Don Fernando's marriage to Dorotea is not an indicator of his embracing prescriptive manhood either, but the only option that he is left with after the peasant's brilliant rhetorical intervention. Therefore, the whole episode cannot be interpreted as providing an instructive reinforcement of normative gender.

In D'Urfey's adaptation, these characters do enact and substantiate hegemonic masculinity. As a reformed rake, Don Fernando neutralises a contradiction inherent to the period's construction of manhood, possessing, simultaneously, sexual assertiveness and gentlemanly manners. Through the discourse of insanity, Cardenio produces and naturalises hegemonic gender difference: the ending of his song is governed by logic and the character is cured of his deviance. Julio is closer to D'Urfey's Cardenio, as he does not exhibit the cowardice and passivity of the original, and his fits of madness also have a rational component. However, even though Henriquez's declared repentance is not as self-subverting as Don Fernando's, his reformation is ambiguous. However, the character is neither morally reformed nor punished, but rewarded with a "price" he dubiously deserves.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Cristopher, L., 1988. "Cardenio's Tale in the Quijote: Cervantes's Psycho-drama", in Hispanófila, Vol. 32, No. 1, 21-33.

Anderson, Ellen and Amy Williamsen (eds.), 1999. *Ingeniosa Invención: Essays on Golden Age Spanish Literature for Geoffrey L. Stagg in Honor of his Eighty-fifth Birthday*, Delaware, Juan de la Cuesta. (Percas de Ponseti, 1999, 183-205).

Bandera, Cesáreo, 1975. *Mímesis Conflictiva: Ficción Literaria y Violencia en Cervantes y Calderón*, Madrid, Gredos.

Carnegie, David and Gary Taylor (eds.), 2012. *The Quest for Cardenio: Shakespeare, Fletcher, Cervantes, and the Lost Play*, Oxford, Oxford University Press. (Griffiths, 2012, 239-255).

Cervantes, Miguel de, (1605, 1615), 2003. *Don Quixote*, New York, Penguin.

Colahan, Clark, 2006. "Dos recreaciones inglesas del *Cardenio* cervantino", in Romero Muñoz, 227-247.

BDD-A26615 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.187 (2026-01-06 22:26:39 UTC)

D'Urfey, Thomas, 1729. *The Comical History of Don Quixote*, London, Printed for J. Darby, A. Bettesworth, and F. Clay.

El Saffar, Ruth A., and Diana de Armas Wilson (eds.), 1993. *Quixotic Desire: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Cervantes*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press. (Feal, 1993, 179-199).

Fajardo, Salvador J., 2005. "Narración e identidad: el caso de Cardenio", in Reichenberger, Reichenberger and Fernández-Morera, 139-156.

Feal, Carlos, 1993. "Against the Law: Mad Lovers in Don Quixote", in El Saffar and Wilson, 179-199.

Garst-Santos, Christine, 2001. "Dorotea's Displacement: Performing the Possible in Early Modern Spain", in *Cervantes: Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 109-133.

Griffiths, Huw, 2012. *The Friend in* Cardenio*,* Double Falsehood *and* Don Quixote, in Carnegie and Taylor, 239-255.

Hathaway, Robert L., 1999. "Cardenio's Twice-Told Tale", in *Cervantes: Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 4-26.

Leigh, Lori B., 2012. *The Dramaturgy of Female Gender in Early Modern English Theatre: An Investigation of the Theatrical Expression of Gender in Selected Jacobean Plays, Their Restoration/Early Eighteenth-Century Adaptations, and Their Original and Contemporary Staging*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Victoria University of Wellington.

Mackie, Erin, 2009. *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates: The Making of the Modern Gentleman in the Eighteenth Century*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Madariaga, Salvador, 1978. *Guía del lector del* Quijote. Madrid, Espasa Calpe.

Márquez-Villanueva, Francisco, 2011. *Personajes y temas del Quijote*, Barcelona, Ediciones Bellaterra.

McCallister, Timothy, 2011. "Intercalated Grace at Juan Palomeque's Inn", in *Cervantes: Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America*, Vol, 31 No.1, 109-133.

Percas de Ponseti, Helena, 1999. "Luscinda y Cardenio: Autenticidad psíquica frente a inverosimilitud novelísitca", in Anderson & Williamsen, 183-205.

Reichenberger, Eva, Kurt Reichenberger and Darío Fernández-Morera (eds.), 2005. *Cervantes y su mundo* Vol. II, Kassel, Edition Reichenberg. (Fajardo, 2005, 139-156).

Roberson, Matthew, A., 2006. *Of Priests, Fiends, Fops, and Fools: John Bowman's Song Performances on the London Stage*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Florida State University.

Rodríguez-Luis, Julio, 1976. "Los dos comienzos de la historia de Cardenio", in *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica*, vol. 25, 102-11.

Romero Muñoz, Carlos, (coord.), 2007. *Por sendas del* Quijote *innumerable*, Madrid, Visor. (Colahan, 2007, 227-247).

Theobald, Lewis, 1728. *Double Falsehood, or The Distressed Lovers*, London: printed by J. Watts.

Vallejo-Nágera, Antonio, 1950. *Literatura y psiquiatría*, Barcelona, Barna.

BDD-A26615 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.187 (2026-01-06 22:26:39 UTC)