

The Originality of Antonio Enríquez Gómez in *Engañar para reinar*

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Except for a few random dates concerning presentations and publications and what can be inferred from the facts of the author's life, relatively little is known about the chronology of the plays of the *converso* dramatist, Antonio Enríquez Gómez (1600–1663).¹ Thus it is especially interesting to find in the closing verses of his *Engañar para reinar* the following statement: "Y aqui el Poeta dà fin / à su Comedia, notando / ser la primera que ha hecho."²

¹Critical materials on Enríquez Gómez have steadily multiplied in the past decade. The fundamental works on the author's life are I. S. Révah's "Un pamphlet contre l'Inquisition d'Antonio Enríquez Gómez: La seconde partie de la *Política angélica* (Rouen, 1647)," *Revue des Etudes Juives*, 131 (1962), 81–168, and Charles Amiel's edition of *El siglo pitagórico y vida de don Gregorio Guadaña* (Paris: Ediciones Hispanoamericanas, 1977).

²The first printing of this play seems to be that in *Doze comedias de las famosas que asta aora han salido de los meiores, y mas insignes poetas, 3ª parte* (Lisboa: Antonio Alvarez for Juan Leite Pereira, 1649). There are at least four manuscripts—three in the Biblioteca Nacional (Madrid) 17.011, 15.163 both attributed to Calderón) and 15.080; one in the Hispanic Society of America B2624. *Sueltas* are in most of the large *comedia* collections. Here I cite page and column from *suelta* CTAE 15,3 in the U. of North Carolina collection (Valencia: Viuda de Joseph de Orgá, 1762 [attributed to Calderón]).

One hesitates to accept this statement entirely at face value; it seems more reasonable to suppose that this play was rather the first that he thought worthy of being made public. As far as I know there is no record of its being performed, although there is no reason to suppose that it was not. But whether his earliest or not, *Engañar para reinar* is an exuberant work full of the *culte-ranismo* and *conceptismo* of the day, one not primarily concerned with the crafting of a well-constructed plot. The play has many excellent features, and that it was often attributed to Calderón attests to Enríquez Gómez's considerable dramatic talent. *Engañar para reinar* is doubly worthy of consideration for its topic and for many of the elements that come to be characteristic of his *comedia*:

1. a certain prosaic quality of verse that is at its worst in the lengthy and cliché-ridden *relaciones* emulating more accomplished poets, particularly Calderón, but lively and entertaining verse in the dialogue.³

2. along with the rhetorical fireworks, there is a fondness for the spectacular stage effect and a real compulsion for melodramatic situation.⁴

3. the general avoidance of elements that place the work in a Christian reference, to the point that even the conventional interjections and exclamations are de-Christianized. Whatever biblical elements there are almost always are from the Old Testament.

4. the message "between the lines" (not necessarily a feature of every play) so that, rather like an optical illusion, the play appears to be an orthodox presentation of society, but closely examined can also be understood as sharply critical of the Old Christian regime.⁵

³C. H. Rose discusses the shortcomings of his verse in her preface to an edition of *Fernán Méndez Pinto: comedia famosa en dos partes*, eds. Cohen, Rogers, and Rose (Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1974).

⁴N. D. Shergold in *A History of the Spanish Stage from Medieval Times until the End of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967) notes Enríquez Gómez's elaborate staging, pp. 372, 374-75.

⁵Almost all the articles written on Enríquez Gómez, and particularly on his exile works deal with the decipherment of his message. See: J. García Valdecasas'

5. an originality of characterization and situation that often produces dramatic figures of surprising complexity or whose motivations and actions are quite different from those of the usual seventeenth-century *comedia* roles.

The originality of Enríquez Gomez has not gone unnoticed: C. V. Aubrun several years ago wrote of "la vie mouvementée du dramaturge et . . . l'extraordinaire originalité. La nouveauté, au XVII^e siècle, de son apport réside moins peut-être dans la technique que dans les thèses politiques et morales"; and A. J. Cid echoed this sentiment with reference to Enríquez Gómez's poetry, "En los versos . . . cree encontrar, al menos, algo de lo que no va muy sobrada nuestra poesía áurea, es decir ideas que necesitan de otra exégesis que la puramente mitológica o gramatical."⁶ But although there has been a renewal of interest in the works of Antonio Enríquez Gómez, concerning the number of plays and other works of this author, very little has been offered to explain just what is the "extraordinaire originalité" of this dramatist.

It seems fitting that his earliest play begins at the apex of the Christian state, the king, but a plot outline of *Engañar para reinar* indicates how different is its monarch compared to the tragic or heroic, but always semidivine king of the majority of seventeenth-century *comedias*. The play is set in a Polish-Hungarian empire on the verge of civil war. The two leaders are King Iberio, supported by the commoners and by some few loyal nobles, and his illegitimate brother Ludovico, supported by the barons, chief among them Ricardo. During a hunt Iberio chances upon the mysterious Elena in an inaccessible part of the forest. He falls in love with her and resolves to marry her in spite of the fact that under the terms

Las "Academias morales" de Antonio Enríquez Gómez (Sevilla: Anales de la Universidad Hispalense, 1971), Timothy Oelman's *Marrano Poets of the Seventeenth Century* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson U. Press, 1982) and my article "The Tragedy of Don Pedro: Old and New-Christian Conflict in *El valiente Campuzano*," *BCom*, 35, 1 (1983), 97-109.

⁶C. V. Aubrun, "Thèse, amorces de travaux, idées à creuser," *Bulletin Hispanique* 59 (1957), 89. A. J. Cid, "Judaizantes y carreteros para un hombre de letras: A. Enríquez Gómez (1600-1663)" in *Homenaje a Julio Caro Baroja* (Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1978), 293. Aubrun credits this originality to the author's "afrancesamiento," an idea which Cid disputes (295, n. 43).

of his father's will he is to marry Princess Isbela of Poland. Almost at the same time he learns that Ludovico plans to murder him to gain the throne. He escapes to Elena's father's secluded estate while Ludovico and the court believe that he has drowned fording a river. Elena's father, Tebandro, turns out to be Iberio's uncle, who has been in hiding for years after a falling out with Iberio's father, the late king. Iberio marries Elena and for three years takes up the pastoral life of a shepherd. During this time Ludovico continually pressures Isbela to marry him, but she, steadfast to Iberio's memory, rebuffs him. When Iberio learns of Ricardo's death he comes out of hiding and reveals himself to Isbela, seeking her support. The price she exacts is his promise of marriage, which Iberio seems to give. With her help and that of other loyal forces Iberio returns to the throne. Upon his resumption of power he acknowledges Elena as queen, he pardons Ludovico and gives him half the kingdom plus Isbela's hand in marriage.

The ending is ostensibly a happy one with the king's actions bathed in the light of approval. But it is clear that the focus of the play is not on the usual love triangle of Iberio, Elena and Isbela, nor is it on the political struggle between a usurper and the rightful king; the overriding concern of the playwright is the conduct of a prince and his responsibility to his subjects.

Almost from his first lines we recognize Iberio's lack of feeling and responsibility. He makes only a perfunctory statement about resisting Ludovico's revolt, bowing almost immediately to his constable's suggestion that he flee to Italy to wait out the events. The unseemly flight is due to his aversion to marrying Isbela, which he felt even before meeting Elena, and fear for his own life. He confesses as much to Elena's father in his dilemma speech at the end of Act 1:

y sobre todo el estado
de mi vida, y el peligro
que llevo si este tirano [Ludovico]
sabe si vuelvo à mi Corte;
porque si estàn convocados
mis vassallos, soy perdido:
de Isbela el pecho bizarro
està loca en el quererme,
y si con ella no caso,

pierdo à Ungria, y sobre todo
 adoro à Elena; y hallo
 por mejor, dexar el Reyno
 à que le goce un bastardo
 como Ludovico, que es,
 como tù sabes, mi hermano,
 y vivir en estos montes
 hasta vèr estos tiranos,
 ò con nuevos successores,
 ò à la tierra tributarios. (11b–12a)

Iberio's justification of this tacit abdication is a strange mixture of pragmatism and self-indulgence. Pragmatic because Ludovico does seem to have at his command superior forces, although at no time is Iberio even remotely interested in challenging them. Indeed, fearing for his life, a very unkingly emotion, he seizes upon the rebellion as an excuse to flee from Isbela and the burdens of leadership to cavort in the woods with Elena.

It is clear, however, that Iberio will not be content to rusticate forever even if at this moment the *vida retirada* seems attractive. With some attempt at self-justification for his flight Iberio says that the shepherd's life will make him a better person — "que buen Rey nadie lo ha sido / si no ha tomado el cayado" (12a). The sentiment is noble even though the idea of a king playing at shepherd for three years in fear of his life runs contrary to the concept of kingly *gravitas*. But even in this statement Iberio includes a loophole, for implicit in it is the notion that at some time in the future, when he tires of his pastoral games, he will return to rule and, for all his humble labor, will be a better monarch.

While Iberio's dereliction of duty is unusual for the conventional *comedia* monarch, his conduct vis-à-vis Isbela is truly reprehensible, a fact that Enríquez Gómez emphasizes by creating in Isbela a superior woman who by birth and conduct well merits the title of queen. There is nothing in the play to justify Iberio's violent aversion to her ("Isbela, que aborrezco," 7b), or to excuse his cynical exploitation of her love once he tires of his charade and sees an opportunity to regain the throne. When all assume him dead, Isbela remains faithful to his memory and refuses repeated opportunities to become Ludovico's queen. Because of Ludovico's

unrelenting and unwanted attentions she resolves to take the veil, a decision causing him to plan to take her by force.

When Iberio announces his intention to come out of hiding both Tebandro, his father-in-law, and the constable are concerned about how he will gain Isbela's vital support now that he is married to Elena. Iberio, however, is not at all concerned—"Dexame à mì, / . . . el modo, y la traza, / que yo sè lo que me importa" (20b). In his secret meeting with Isbela that opens Act III Iberio takes advantage of her constant love with what must be a carefully prepared *traza*. First, to cloak himself in piety, in an almost blasphemous lie, he tells her that he has just returned from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Even worse is a series of equivocal statements that Isbela understands, as he well intends, as a promise to marry her and make her queen. Iberio tells her:

Quien tanto, Isbela, te ama,
còmo lo podrà negar?
.
Digo, Isbela, que te doy
palabra
Que serà tuyo el laurèl
.
Y que acudiendo à quien soy,
mi sangre
te darè, y en todo estado
sabràs
Que te ha estimado tu esposo,
y que tu amor he pagado. (23b-24a)

Blinded by her love Isbela hears what she wants to hear and helps him regain the kingdom. When she sees him enthroned she publicly claims her seat beside him: "Ya que en èl [the throne], señor te veo, / pues te tengo por mi amparo, / subo al dosèl, como esposa" (31b). But her attempt to take her place is suddenly stopped by Elena with the brusque words "està, señora, ocupado" (31b).⁷ Iberio's explanation to the dumbfounded Isbela is a marvel

⁷Elena's words also have a vengeful edge. They are a variant of her angry statement to Iberio after overhearing his promise to marry Isbela—"Iberio: Querida esposa del alma: *Elena*: Còmo del alma, señor, / si la teneis ocupada?" (24b). Enríquez Gómez delighted in dialogue in which a woman heaps withering scorn on her rival or her hapless boyfriend. See my "Notes on the Aggressive

of smugness and guile. He introduces Elena as his wife and admits he lied concerning his whereabouts, but he only half-acknowledges his deception about the promise of matrimony, speaking of it as "el engaño que te hice; / si puede llamarse engaño / Engañar para Reynar" (31b). The climax of Isbela's public humiliation is that Iberio forces her to give her hand to Ludovico, the man who was prevented from raping her only by the outbreak of hostilities. Iberio thereupon reveals the true meaning of his "promise" to Isbela: by "mi sangre te darè" he has tricked her, as the phrase can just as well apply to Ludovico.⁸ The crown he promised ("serà tuyo el laurèl") is the territory he ceded to Ludovico when he pardoned him. Iberio's statement, "y en todo estado / sabràs . . . / que te ha estimado tu esposo," is a despicable irony much beneath the dignity of a king, for neither her intended husband, Iberio, nor her husband-to-be, Ludovico, has esteemed her in any manner.

Isbela withstands this shocking turn of events with regal composure, her character manifestly noble in comparison with the king's lack of it. The final proof of her love for the unworthy Iberio is her acceptance of Ludovico, but not without her ironical reference to the last line of the king's promise ("sabrà . . . / que tu amor he pagado") as she says:

Mal has pagado mi amor;
 mas pues lo ordenan mis hados,
 porque veas si te quise,
 le doy la mano à tu hermano. (31b-32a)

Although it seems paradoxical to say so, another example of Iberio's deviousness is his remarkable benevolence towards Ludovico, whose crimes include attempted regicide, treason, malfeasance and conspiracy to commit rape. On all counts, a villain more deserving of execution could scarcely be found in Golden

Women in the *Comedia* of Antonio Enríquez Gómez," *Romance Notes*, 21, 2 (1980), 1-7 for other examples.

⁸The numerous statements in the play concerning *sangre* as a synonym for nobility, heritage, honor have a rather skeptical ring in view of the actions of the characters. Obviously Enríquez Gómez is criticizing the notion of *sangre limpia* so dear to Old Christians. All of his exile works take exception to the notion of honor solely as a function of birth. See, for example, "Transmigración XII, En un hidalgo" of *El siglo pitagórico* (277-284, Amiel's edition).

Age *comedia*. Yet, Iberio not only lets Ludovico live, but rewards him handsomely. True, Iberio's first inclination is to kill him, but he soon modifies his position in a speech to the constable, "mi intento es noble, que yo / no voy à matar mi hermano . . . que es mi sangre" (30b). These lines are an excellent example of Enríquez Gómez's subtlety in suggesting alternative interpretations. At first glance this statement appears quite positive — Iberio proclaims his noble intention of shrinking from taking the life of another even though legally it would be justifiable in view of the circumstances. However, the inclusion of the phrase "que es mi sange," which goes almost unnoticed, suggests that Iberio has also an ulterior motive for clemency, for it will be remembered that the phrase is a variant of the key statement in his deceiving speech to Isbela ("mi sangre te darè"). We see then that Iberio's decision to spare his brother's life is not made on the basis of morality but rather because he needs Ludovico alive as the means to rid himself of Isbela. Once he decides against the execution of Ludovico, giving half of the kingdom to him along with Isbela's hand is more expedient than magnanimous, as it would be better to try to content Ludovico in so far as possible in order to reduce the risk of further insurrection.⁹ And also, under the terms of his "promise" to Isbela, he must come up with some sort of crown for her.

Superficially the play gives the impression of happy resolution—the lovers are united, Tebandro is restored to his position, civil war is ended, and Ludovico is pardoned and reconciled with Iberio. But Enríquez Gómez builds in the possibility of quite a different interpretation in that everything Iberio has done has been to attain his purely personal objectives—his crown and Elena. To accomplish this end he has allowed the realm to suffer three years of Ludovico's misrule while he played at shepherd, he has publicly degraded Isbela, he has divided the kingdom, negating the efforts of his father to unite it, and finally he has revealed a

⁹It is true, however, that in his plays Enríquez Gómez is remarkably reluctant to shed his villain's blood. Other similar examples of unpunished treachery occur in *A lo que obligan los celos* and *Celos no ofenden al sol*. Perhaps the author's own experience as a persecuted minority led him to create a world in which there existed the spirit of forgiveness that he himself could not find. C. H. Rose notes this "wish fulfillment" in her interesting comments prefacing *Fernán Méndez Pinto* (47–63).

devious nature that is bound to undermine the faith of his subjects.

In effect, in this play, Enríquez Gómez considers the realities of the seventeenth-century state, in which the monarchs were often capricious, selfish, neglectful and deceitful. This view is quite different from the idealized monarch that the *comedia*, as the genre to propagandize the status quo, normally presented.¹⁰ Obviously in *Engañar para reinar* to trust in the ultimate authority for aid and support as did Isbela ("te tengo por mi amparo") was a chancy business unless the king's interest coincided. Nor does it seem to matter who holds power, for the thinking of Iberio "the hero" is not very different from that of Ludovico "the villain." Both stifle dissent with such statements as "este es mi gusto, ninguno / me replique" (12a), "no me repliques palabra, / que esto ha de ser" (15a), and "Yo sè lo que me importa" (20b). And, of course, neither Ludovico nor the king is necessarily truthful. The most obvious example is Iberio's deception of Isbela, but he is also suspiciously evasive with Elena (whom he professes to love) when she reproaches him for his attention to Isbela:

Rey . . . Yo, mi bien,
si el mundo se barajàra,
havia de querer à otra?
Elena Què, al fin, à Isbela no amas?
Rey Què es amar?
Elena Què no la quieres?
Rey Què es querer? Elena, bastan
tus porfias. (26a)

Elena naturally suspects that if Iberio can so unscrupulously delude Isbela he would do the same to her; she observes "que cabezas coronadas, / como solo de sî penden, / olvidan quando mas aman" (25b).¹¹

¹⁰José M. Díez Borque details the relationship between the *comedia* and the state in *Sociología de la comedia española del siglo XVII* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1976)—"La monarquía es la condición *sine qua non* de la existencia social, la apoyatura en la cual descansa la sociedad, por esto — como apunta [G.W.] Ribbans —, la posición del Rey es indiscutida e indiscutible en la comedia" (129).

¹¹The dramatist's negative opinion of the king is also discernible in the surprising boldness of a scene between him and the *gracioso*, Bato (Act I, 7–9). Bato ridicules his flowery speech and when Iberio embraces him for the news of

quality was not recognized as such by nineteenth-century critics, Amador de los Ríos, for example, writing that "los caballeros pintados por Enríquez Gómez no siempre son igualmente discretos y pundonorosos; no en todas ocasiones guardan con el mismo empeño, con la misma constancia los fueros de la hidalguía y se postran rendidos ante las aras del amor y de la belleza."¹³ Amador, shocked by this debility of character, never imagined that the less than perfect heroes are all the more original for their frailties, and that the cracks in their veneer of *hidalguía* are by design and not by defect.

Iberio fascinates us because his is not the usual story of conflict between love and duty, or the struggle between good and evil, but rather because it is an examination of what motivates a king. Imbued with the spirit of absolute monarchy, Iberio does not so much "postrarse rendido ante las aras del amor y de la belleza" as he does before the altar of his own will, assuming that whatever he wants to do at a particular moment is the most important matter in the world.¹⁴ For instance, his promise to Isbela is delivered in the name of "acudiendo a quien soy," which is to say, in the name of a king who by his extralegal position may act as he pleases without any need for justification. In spite of the play's exotic setting the choice of the monarch's name, Iberio, leaves little doubt but that Enríquez Gómez has in mind the lamentable state of the monarchy under Philip III and IV. The latter, particularly, whose reign began in 1621 was notable for his ineptitudes and debilities, and stood in sharp contrast to the Spanish kings of the preceding century. This obvious but potentially dangerous identification was possible only by the mastery of an oblique style of writing that carefully veiled criticism by presenting situations and characters in an equivocal manner.

Certainly Enríquez Gómez's originality has much to do with the fact that the *comedia* is circumscribed by the system of *hidalguía* (as Amador de los Ríos notes) from which Enríquez

¹³H. Amador de los Ríos, *Estudios históricos, políticos y literarios sobre los judíos de España* (Madrid: 1848), 555.

¹⁴The greatest autocrat of the century, Louis XIV, as a child practiced penmanship on this phrase "Homage is due to Kings, they act as they please," translation and quote by W. H. Lewis, *The Splendid Century: Life in the France of Louis XIV* (N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1953), 4.

Gómez was excluded by birth. As opposed to most Golden Age dramatists, Enríquez Gómez was all his life a merchant, the direct descendant of *marrano* tradesmen. Even though he may have associated with some of the leading lights of the Old Christian literary world, the rigid caste system based on *limpiezas* made his acceptance among the ranks of *hidalgos* such as Lope, Calderón or Quevedo very problematic.¹⁵ Thus Enríquez Gómez created protagonists as he viewed them from his bourgeois, *converso* (at times *marrano*) experience. With no vested interest in idealizing Old Christians and perhaps a real interest in exposing their hypocrisy and weaknesses, in a number of works, Enríquez Gómez created a gallery of *hidalgos* and their *damas* who do not hesitate to lie, cheat and murder, who confess to fear, who are bullies, and who, in effect, comport themselves exactly as most humans have done throughout history, regardless of status.¹⁶

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¹⁵One has only to recall the insults that Pérez de Montalbán endured on the suspicion of his heritage. Of Enríquez Gómez's there was no doubt: his grandfather died in prison, and his father and uncle were forced to flee Spain to become prominent in French *marrano* communities.

¹⁶In addition to *Engañar para reinar* I think particularly of unusual characters and situations in *El valiente Campuzano*, *El noble siempre es valiente*, *Fernán Méndez Pinto*, *La conquista de México*, *Contra el amor no hay engaños* and *De los hermanos amantes y piedad por fuerza*. But Enríquez Gómez wrote many other plays (the majority under the alias Fernando de Zárate) that have yet to be examined. Fortunately the importance of this unique writer is being gradually established by the efforts of a number of scholars who are interested in his prose and verse as well as his drama.