



Fuenteovejuna

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Translated by G.J. Racz



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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

ROBERTO GONZÁLEZ ECHEVARRÍA

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INTRODUCTION *Roberto González Echevarría*

Cervantes memorably called Lope de Vega a “monster of nature,” marveling at his stupendous literary production and how he lorded over not just the theater but most literary activity in the Spain of the turn of the seventeenth century.¹ He was not exaggerating. Lope wrote hundreds of plays, perhaps seven hundred, many of them master-pieces, thousands of poems of all kinds, including lyric, epics, as well as novels, epistles, and polemics. He singlehandedly created the Spanish national theater, founding a school that lasted until the end of the seventeenth century and beyond. Lope’s work is on a par with the best European theater of the period; he is the peer of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Racine, Corneille, and Molière. He was a leading poet in the Petrarchan style who wrote first-rate love lyrics, epics, and satires, and religious poetry in a Spain teeming with major poets; he had a command of Spanish versification like no other poet until Rubén Darío came along in the late nineteenth century. He also led a protean life as a soldier in the ill-fated “Invincible Armada” of 1588, as an inexhaustible and scandalous lover whose affairs were the talk of Madrid, and finally as a priest who fathered a daughter with his mistress and served as a judge in the Office of the Holy Inquisition. Lope’s plays were so appreciated that his very name became synonymous with “good,” and being “de Lope,” “by Lope,” was a guarantee of high quality not just regarding

plays. Lope was a literary and erotic whirlwind and the most prolific writer in the Western tradition. His exuberance in both love and literature obviously issued from a single impulse, as was the case with Neruda, also prolific in love and literature; their lives can be charted by their works and their women. Cervantes, who was not esteemed by him, was Lope's relentless, yet admiring and clearly envious, critic.

Fuenteovejuna is one of Lope's masterpieces, a staple on the Spanish stage across Spain and Latin America, one of the plays included in curricula in the Spanish-speaking world. It is comparable in recognition to *Hamlet* and *King Lear* in the English-speaking world, and to *Andromaque*, *Polyeucte*, and *Le Misanthrope* in the French. Yet there is no record to show that *Fuenteovejuna* drew much attention when it was first performed in Madrid sometime between 1612 and 1614. The play's fame came later, when its rousing revolutionary conclusion, in which the whole outraged village assumes a collective identity and fights the Comendador's abuses, captivated the romantic imagination, particularly in Russia. Since then *Fuenteovejuna*, often shorn of its concluding scenes in which the Catholic Kings, Ferdinand and Isabella, give their approval to the uprising and take the village under their protection, has been staged by right-wing and left-wing regimes, the first for its celebration of nationalism, the latter for its call to communal solidarity and violent revolt. (Federico García Lorca included it in the repertoire of his traveling company, "La Barraca," during the Spanish Republic.) *Fuenteovejuna* does exhibit these virtues, but it is, like all of Lope's

production, a work of genius in its poetry, plot, and symbolic unity. In many ways it is the quintessential comedia.

Lope was born in Madrid in 1562, a year after Philip II moved the court there from Toledo; he was the son of an embroiderer, one of many working-class people who moved to the capital hoping to find fortune in the new seat of government. Lope received a good education from the Jesuits. It is said that he was a brilliant and precocious student, though some accounts of his childhood could be revisionist rewritings by fawning biographers, who were encouraged by Lope's own self-aggrandizing reports. Lope's plebeian background haunted him all his life, and as his fame as a playwright and poet grew, he tried to embellish his family's history and attribute to himself an aristocratic origin. This he did by claiming to be of Asturian roots, Asturias being the region of Spain where the Reconquest against the Moors began and, thus, presumably the purest source of Spanish nobility. He even alleged that one of his names, Carpio, linked him to the epic hero Bernardo del Carpio (his full name was Félix Lope de Vega y Carpio). This brought peals of laughter from Lope's enemies, of which he not surprisingly had quite a few. Lope went so far as to devise a family coat of arms displaying nineteen towers, which provoked his bitter rival, the great lyric poet Luis de Góngora, to exclaim: "For goodness sake, little Lope, / do erase those towers for me, / 'cause I know that they are made of air, / and you don't have breath for so much wind."

Lope's problems caused by his fondness for women were more serious, and they began early. At twenty-two he took up with Elena

de Osorio, his first great love, the daughter of two actors and married to another. After a nasty breakup, Lope circulated scandalous poetry about Elena's promiscuous lifestyle, even suggesting that her mother worked as her pimp. A suit for libel by the Osorio family (to complicate matters, Lope had been supplying plays to Elena's actor father) resulted in his being banished from Madrid for eight years. He settled in Valencia, where he married Isabel de Urbina, his first wife, after having passed through Lisbon, where he enlisted in the Armada and participated in its disastrous mission against England. In Valencia, a hotbed of theatrical activity, Lope honed his skills and began sending plays to Madrid, where they were performed to tremendous success and led to his pardon and return to the capital.² There his triumph was huge, bringing him fame, fortune—and more women and more enemies. Widowed, Lope was married to Juana de Guardo when he was about forty, but he also kept house for his mistress Micaela de Luján, who bore him children. All told, Lope had six legitimate children and at least ten illegitimate ones from the ten or so liaisons we know about. Even after having been ordained a priest, toward the end of his life, he had a passionate love affair with Marta de Nevaes, with whom he had a daughter, Antonia Clara. By this time Lope had also been named a judge for the Inquisition, and he flogged himself regularly to expiate his sins. He died in 1635, at the then ripe age of seventy-three, by which time his school of playwrights was thriving, and his brilliant successor, Pedro Calderón de la Barca, was already

established as the new star. Lope's exequies were a national event that lasted nine days.

Lope's personality, the source of his work and turbulent life, is dramatically bared in a sonnet he wrote about being in love; I believe it sums up his restless spirit. It is a poem that could have been written today. The sonnet's conceit is that it is an answer to the question of what it is like to be in love. A prose version of it goes like this: "To feel faint, daring, furious, surly, tender, generous, evasive, encouraged, mortal, like a corpse, alive, loyal, a traitor; a coward and also brave. To feel disoriented and ill at ease away from your beloved, to show your- self happy, sad, humble, proud, angry, courageous and in cowardly flight; to be satisfied, offended, and suspicious. To ignore impending disappointment, to drink poison as if a sweet potion, to forsake gain in favor of harm, to believe that heaven in a hell can fit, to give up life and soul for inevitable frustration, all of this is love; he who has tasted it knows it well."³ This churning clash of contradictions was the result of a powerful creative engine that generated around five thousand titles of plays, poems, and other works, and what amounts to an average of twelve hundred lines of verse a month. But Lope's most enduring creation was the *comedia*, or the Spanish national theater.

The Spanish *comedia*, which is what the theater Lope inaugurated is called, is not a comedy, as its name would suggest, though it does contain comedic elements. *Comedia* is the generic term for these three-act plays, with plots drawn from national history and lore, classical mythology, popular ballads, hagiography, biblical stories,

and other sundry sources. They are narrative in development, epic one might say, but highly poetic, lyrical in conception, and combine the tragic with the comic. All plays were written in rhyming verse, with many kinds of stanzas used. There are tragicomedies, such as Lope's own *El caballero de Olmedo*, but few are outright tragedies because the Christian context in which their plots develop does not allow fate to ultimately determine a protagonist's life, nor is there at the end of most of them a feeling of unrelieved despair. But the full range of human virtues, depravities, rage, anguish, and humor appears. There were various comedia subgenres, but they all adhered to Lope's formula of three acts, diverse versification, and a mixture of serious and comic elements, some with digressive secondary plots. Among the most popular were the cloak-and-dagger comedias, involving two or more couples on their way to marriage but entangled in lovers' conflicts that are always resolved in the end with the exchange of marriage vows. As a rule, anything happening before matrimony in Golden Age plays is the stuff of comedy, while all that occurs after marriage belongs to tragedy. This is true, above all, in the honor plays, which center on adultery and lead to the murder of the offending wife, particularly in Calderón, but also in Lope, as in his late play *El castigo sin venganza*.

Comedia characters were distributed among the following types: "galanes" (young men), "damas" (young ladies), "barbas" ("beards," signifying older men), and "graciosos" (funny men). Mature women—that is, mothers—rarely if ever appear in these plays. The graciosos played roles that went far beyond what in

English would be called “fools.” They are usually servants, rustics, rogues, soldiers, and other low-class types from the stock of classic, medieval, and Italian comedy traditions. The *graciosos* help move the action along by furthering their masters’ schemes, provide comic relief with their deeds and words (they are adept at making puns), and often tell the truth wittingly or not, where other characters are reluctant or unable to do so. A *comedia* performance was a protracted and elaborate show, as described by N. D. Shergold in his authoritative *A History of the Spanish Stage*:

A theatrical performance of the period generally began with a tune sung by the musicians of the company, followed by a *loa*, or prologue; an interlude was normally given between the first and second acts, and a short ballet between Acts II and III; “*jácaras*,” songs and dances were also included, and court plays generally ended with a “*fin de fiesta*,” or finale. The ballets, or “*bailes*,” included spoken, or sung, words, and this, the “*mojiganga*” and the “*entremés*” are really very similar in type, as is the “*sainete*,” another term used for these short playlets. (380–381)

These “playlets,” as Shergold calls them, were comical and involved a good deal of slapstick. Most of the great Spanish playwrights wrote *entremeses*, and some, like Luis Quiñones de Benavente, specialized in the genre. *Comedia* performances took place originally in primitive venues called “*corrales*,” which were very much like Elizabethan play-houses. They consisted essentially of a courtyard surrounded by the sides of houses, an open-air stage, a “*cazuela*,” or segregated section in the back for women spectators, and some benches or “*gradas*” where male spectators sat. The open area in front of the stage was reserved for standing men, called

“mosqueteros,” known for their vociferous rowdiness. The better seats, what we would today call boxes, were at the windows and balconies of the houses overlooking the yard. In his magnificent book on the Corral del Príncipe, John J. Allen calculates that in 1600 a playhouse could accommodate about a thousand spectators. These daylight shows were staged with crude props but relatively elaborate costumes. By the 1630s better theaters were built, some very lavish in palaces like the Buen Retiro, and stage design and properties improved spectacularly—the “court plays” mentioned by Shergold were staged there. Lope was gone by that time, and it was Calderón who profited from these improvements, which resulted in minor changes in the comedia format, none of them essential.

The synthesis that Lope achieved was composed of several elements of varying import. One was the traditional Spanish theater, which, unfolding from the Middle Ages, mingled with some renaissance classical sources and adopted elements from traveling Italian troupes performing above all, but not exclusively, *commedia dell'arte*. There was, in addition, what Bruce R. Burningham has rightly called the ‘jongleuresque’ tradition of mimes, traveling players, clowns, jugglers, troubadours, and singers that reach back to ancient Rome. Lope’s most immediate precursor was Lope de Rueda, whose itinerant company performed his *pasos*, or one-act plays, which were mostly comical. This Lope was also an actor and director. The Italian influence was great, and our Lope, as mentioned, trained in Valencia, a Mediterranean port where

currents and cross-currents from Italy abounded. But he also tapped Spanish balladry, with its historical plots, ready-made epic heroes, and easy-flowing narrative poetry. The ballads were also something his audience knew well and recognized, and Lope learned early to pander to his public, which was the source of his income and that of all involved in the theater. This led him to be contemptuous of those pedants who, having imbued themselves in classical theory, mostly renaissance commentaries of Aristotle's *Poetics*, chided him for his disregard of the three unities of place, time, and action, as well as to the loose fashion with which he adapted historical themes (this was the gist of Cervantes' criticism of him, particularly in the *Quijote*, I, 48). At the height of his fame, in 1609, Lope wrote a defense of his kind of theater in a hilarious poem that he contentiously (and contemptuously) called *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo*, 'Today's Art for Making Plays,' asserting that art is not eternal and unchanging, but must adapt to circumstances. In the *Arte* Lope boasted of giving his public what it wanted, and he outlined the various types of versification he used according to the situation. It is a victorious flaunting of his successful formula, addressed to his helpless detractors.

The core of the comedia is lyrical and obeys a Neo-Platonic aesthetic in which meaning is lodged in symbolic correspondences, and in which love is the central topic, within which clash honor, the law, and fealty to the king and religious doctrine. These correspondences include actions by the characters, poetic figures, and a core of ideas referring to major human drives like desire,

death, the will to power, and self-worth, and the vagaries of fate. A Lope play is essentially a dramatic poem whose ultimate meaning is lodged in a sought-after coalescence of beauty and truth. Each work includes the recitation of fairly long speeches in verse (the whole play is in verse), sometimes narrative and in ballad meter, but others in more elevated lyric poetry forms drawn from the renaissance reservoir of stanzas: sonnets, octaves, tercets, silvas, liras, and the like. These protracted poetic passages, during which today's audiences would probably grow restless, were an integral part of the performance, a display of poetic genius on the part of the playwright (who was called 'poeta' in the period), and of performing bravado by the actor. They were laden with tropes symbolically connected to the plot and themes of the play. Late in his career, unwittingly influenced by the Gongoristic trend to poetic intricacy and obscurity, Lope indulged in baroque versification (*El castigo sin venganza* is an example), while his disciple and outstanding playwright himself Calderón de la Barca regularly wrote in that style for his entire career.⁴ Poetic recitation was an integral part of the *comedia*, for all its theatricality.

In *Fuenteovejuna*, Lope has skillfully woven together local and national clashes, with one reflecting the other. The 1476 revolt in Fuenteovejuna and the 1474 battle for Ciudad Real, both parts of the larger conflict, are historically accurate events separated by two years. Fuenteovejuna is a village in the province of Córdoba, not known for its sheep, inasmuch as the original name, before it was deformed by usage, was 'Fuente Abejuna,' referring to bees, to

‘abejas,’ not to ‘ovejas.’⁵ At the peninsular level, there was a war of succession raging. It is in fact the conflict that led to Isabella’s accession to power in Castile in 1474, and simmered on thereafter for some time. At the death of Isabella’s brother Henry IV, derisively known as ‘the impotent one,’ a faction favored his daughter Joanna as the successor, but her legitimacy was questioned. She was maliciously known as ‘La Beltraneja’ because many believed that she had been sired by a nobleman named Beltrán de la Cueva. The bold Isabella and her followers prevailed. She had married Ferdinand of Aragon in 1469, and when she inherited the throne of Castile they united two of the three most powerful crowns of the peninsula, the third being Portugal. But war continued, as we learn in *Fuenteovejuna*, involving factions led by the military orders (the principal ones being Santiago, Alcántara, and Calatrava), which had acquired inordinate powers and lands as a result of the wars of Reconquest against the Moors, which had culminated in 1492 with the taking of Granada by Ferdinand and Isabella. The military orders were justifiably belligerent. Isabella had made it her mission to reduce their near autonomy and to put them under the control of her husband, all as part of her overarching plan to rein in the aristocracy and accumulate as much power as possible in the crown’s hands. This she and Ferdinand did achieve, forging an alliance with the common people against the nobility that is evident and celebrated in *Fuenteovejuna*. This is the overall political struggle in the play, which the erotic drama encapsulates.

The military orders, which continued to have enormous prestige in subsequent years, had amassed considerable territories as they won them from the Moors. These lands and their people were put in the trust of the orders as 'encomiendas' ('encomendar' means to entrust). The lords who were placed in command ruled over these territories and peoples, collecting revenues and enriching themselves in the process, though nominally they were under the rule of the crown. These local leaders were called, as a result, 'comendadores,' like the one in our play, who obeyed the 'maestros,' masters, also like the one in *Fuenteovejuna*. The comendadores' domination over territories like the village of Fuenteovejuna was contested by the crown as part of the generalized war. 'Commander' is not an altogether satisfactory translation of 'comendador,' for it connotes only military rank and not the kind of sociopolitical empowerment that these aristocrats enjoyed, and which could lead to the abuses the character in the play (and his historical model) perpetrated. Victory over the seditious forces, and the defeat and execution of the Comendador in *Fuenteovejuna*, are coeval events that restore order to the kingdom, to the village, and to the couple Frondoso and Laurencia. Lope drew the historical background from chronicles whose texts he followed closely as he versified their contents in some of the long speeches giving the setting of the action.

The concentric conflicts in *Fuenteovejuna* center on a quarrel between an Aristotelian concept of the universe as a constant clash of the four elements of which it is made up and which generates its

movement, and a Platonic one in which love brings about harmony at all levels by smoothing out potential conflicts and leading them to an ideal order. Early in the play Lope comically has the peasants debate the merits of each conception of the universe. The Platonic prevails, as William C. McCrary demonstrated in an influential article many years ago: '*Fuenteovejuna* is an epic piece etched into the texture of a Platonic configuration' (196). Order is restored by the Catholic Kings, but not without enduring a painful legal procedure. Leo Spitzer had proven in an equally influential piece that the harmonious thrust of the action, which results in the restoration of order, is at work even in moments of disorder, that is of collective rebellion, and that this harmony is reflected primarily in the play's musical sections. *Fuenteovejuna* displays its philosophical underpinnings self-reflexively, therefore ironically, by having them discussed on stage by illiterate peasants, whose very actions will comply with them. But the final resolution, by which order is restored under the authority of Ferdinand and Isabella, though not before subjecting the villagers to a brutal trial, also obeys a historical process that Lope is reenacting both for the sake of the play's form as well as for his celebration of Spain's national unity at a time when various catastrophes threaten it.

Ferdinand and Isabella make the citizens of Fuenteovejuna undergo a harsh trial for the murder of the Comendador before exonerating them and putting the town under their direct royal control because they ruled the discordant regions of the peninsula, and they sought to restrain their unruly aristocracy by instituting a

highly complex and pervasive judicial system. As I have argued in *Love and the Law in Cervantes*, Spain's was a litigious society during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and this is spectacularly reflected in its literature. This legalistic character was acquired during the reign of the Catholic Kings, hence the prevalence of the law in *Fuenteovejuna*, including the torture of the villagers and the important role played by the judge at the end. The new laws are enacted, presumably, to protect the common people from the aristocracy. This fact is celebrated in *Fuenteovejuna* when Esteban tells the Comendador: 'You're guilty, sir. I'll say no more/But rest assured the king and queen/Who rule Castile will issue forth/New orders for disorder's end' (vv. 1619–1622). For harmony to return, the law must be complied with, even at the cost of great suffering. The order restored falls within the larger divine one that Ferdinand and Isabella represent, highlighted in *Fuenteovejuna* by the Feast of the Assumption in Toledo attended by the villagers and the Catholic Kings. Toledo is the jewel of the Spanish nation, with its splendid cultural and political past. Lope is pandering to the prevailing ideology of late Hapsburg Spain, which extolled the glorious past when the nation had achieved unity and acquired its farflung empire, to mask a precipitous decadence highlighted by economic decline, wars of attrition in the Low Countries, corruption at court, and generalized demoralization. This is the reason for *Fuenteovejuna's* historical setting.

Manuel Durán proposed in 1963 that Lope's is an action theater, not one with brooding, 'deep' characters, because action,

particularly historical action, is what the Spanish public demanded. Action in the comedias, particularly collective action, as in *Fuenteovejuna*, compensated for the inertia of Spanish culture and politics, its stagnation and frustrations in international matters as well as at home. A theater free of academic rules, one that set its own guidelines and boasted of its own creativity, made up for the lack of freedom and spontaneity in Spanish society. With his comedia, Lope was providing Spain with an escape to a past full of motion, emotion, and commotion, to a time when the purest values and principles cherished by Spaniards and dishonestly put forth as their own by the authorities were being forged. All the tumult in the play was resolved by the feeling that, in the end, stability will be restored by a peaceful and nurturing fatherland. As Durán wrote: ‘The whirlwind of passions, the emotional chaos that the clash between sexual instinct and the principles of honor create in Lope’s theater, are always framed by a superior order that, in a way, assuages the harshest blows, introducing a calming element in the very midst of conflict, thereby making them more bearable and giving them social significance. The public can then more easily identify with heroes, who are never outlandish types, or monsters endowed with exceptional vision’ (9). That superior order, so evident in *Fuenteovejuna*, is constituted by the allegiance of religious faith and political power represented by the crown, allied with the common people.

The plot of *Fuenteovejuna* is swift, though not linear. The action shifts from the village to the war scene in Ciudad Real or Toledo

during the religious festival, with the good and evil characters clearly delineated and the action punctuated by intensely dramatic confrontations among them. The story is a counterpoint of events interrelated by the prevailing Platonic structure, as Spitzer and McCrary suggested. The peaceful life of Fuenteovejuna is disrupted by the Comendador's suddenly aroused passion for Laurencia and by the news of a war. Laurencia's suitor, Frondoso, defends her honor in stirring scenes like the one by the river, when the young woman, who has been doing the wash, is accosted by the Comendador, who has been out hunting. Frondoso stops the nobleman by appropriating his crossbow and pointing it at his master, who has to relent. The Comendador vows to avenge this humiliation. Meanwhile, Frondoso asks Laurencia to marry him, which she declines to do at first, and the villagers take stock of the threat that the Comendador and his lackeys represent for them. Laurencia and Frondoso, who has been in hiding fearing for his life, are finally betrothed. In the meantime the villagers are conscripted to help defend Ciudad Real, besieged by the secessionist troops, while their women arrange for a pilgrimage to Toledo to be present at the Feast of the Assumption, at which Ferdinand and Isabella themselves will appear.

The war is resolved in favor of Ferdinand and Isabella, while a riot breaks out in Fuenteovejuna against the Comendador, who has disrupted Frondoso and Laurencia's wedding with his insistence on possessing her (invoking a *droit de seigneur* no longer in force). Laurencia rallies the women, whom she organizes as a military unit,

and the men, whom she goads with the worst insults imaginable, calling them, among other things, effeminate. The Comendador is trapped, captured, and killed by the peasants, who parade his severed head on a pike. The Catholic Kings, informed of the situation in the village, send a judge to investigate the murder of the grandee, a grave offense that must be dealt with in accordance with Spanish law. After a thorough inquiry, which involves torturing villagers young and old to extract the names of the perpetrators, who always answer that the deed was done by 'Fuenteovejuna,' they are declared innocent by Ferdinand and Isabella, and the play ends in an apotheosis of collective good will.

It is true that Lope's theater is not known for its characters, although several in *Fuenteovejuna* stand out, even if their features are revealed through their actions rather than self-analysis.

The Comendador, for instance, is a Don Juan figure driven by lust and the arrogance of power to possess as many women as he possibly can. With him, Lope has anticipated a figure that would only appear fully developed in (his disciple) Tirso de Molina's play *El Burlador de Sevilla* (1630), the first appearance of Don Juan, who would have such an enduring life on the European theatrical and musical stage, becoming a permanent icon of Western culture. Like Don Juan a serial seducer, the only element missing from the Comendador for the Don Juan myth to completely emerge with him is the dinner invitation to the cemetery by a dead rival. But the Comendador is a large enough villain; I suspect that Lope loved his lusty villains. The Comendador's misbehavior, for instance, unveils a

generalized illicit sexual commerce involving married women (Lope knew), mentioned as typical of cities, in which the ruling honor code of Spanish society does not hold, in contrast to the village, where it does. This is a sweeping indictment. The Comendador is eros unleashed irrespective of any laws. But it is his intense and somewhat sophisticated sexual drive that makes the Comendador appealing. Laurencia's rejection of him is what makes her especially attractive to the Comendador, who is bored by easy women. I am also suspicious of his preference for married women, or women about to be married, as if their husbands or fiancés were involved in his desire. In a way, he wants to have intercourse with them, too. The Comendador's cowardice at the end rounds him out as a character. He is not a hollow villain, all of one piece, but a man.

It has been said that Lope's best characters are women, and Laurencia certainly is a good example. She is a willful, independentminded young peasant woman who does not buy into platitudes about love and plays hard-to-get both with Frondoso, who winds up marrying her, and with the Comendador, who tries unsuccessfully to rape her. Laurencia seems to be aware of the dangers of love, no matter what kind, for a woman. Her greatest moment, and the culmination of the play, comes when she rallies the town against the Comendador, organizing the women and rousing the men by questioning their masculinity. She calls them 'maricones,' the strongest Spanish word for homosexual then and now. It is a decidedly feminist moment in Lope, which may appear odd in a Spanish play to those with stereotypical notions about

Spain and its history. Cervantes' heroines are independent and violent in defense of their honor too, like Dorotea in the *Quijote*, who throws over a cliff a man who wants to rape her, and Marcela, who chooses to be free of love and defends herself effectively when accused of being responsible for the suicide of Grisóstomo, her very suitable suitor. Laurencia goes further and her tirade against the men in the village is one of the highest points of Spanish Golden Age drama.

Her suitor, Frondoso, is not a cardboard character either. His name means luxuriant, leafy vegetation, which suggests that he stands for nature, or for natural man—it is a name drawn from pastoral literature. Frondoso is a courageous peasant who embodies the virtues that Lope wants to see in the common Spaniard, and the common Spaniard wanted to see on stage as being his own reflection. His confrontation with and threat of death to the Comendador, who is technically his master, amount to high treason. Frondoso marries Laurencia in the teeth of the Comedador's advances, promoted by his lackeys, particularly his go-between, Flores, and takes a leading role in fighting and ultimately killing the Comendador. Frondoso and Laurencia make up an ideal peasant couple whose marriage signifies order and continuity within the forces of nature blessed by religion.

Mengo is the gracioso, and he does provide humor, but he is also brutally tortured, plays a role in the uprising, and holds steadfast when tormented by the judge. Lope's humor does not look down on the villagers; scenes like the one in which they are frightened by a

loose steer and such derive from medieval tradition and the *commedia dell'arte*.

Spanish comedias average about 3,000 lines, but *Fuenteovejuna* has only 2,453. The texts of the comedias suffered as much in transmission as Shakespeare's. The playwright sold his work to a producer (called 'autor') who distributed it to the players, who made changes to suit a particular performance. In order to publish the play later, these manuscripts often had to be bought back, with cuts and emendations permanently incorporated. They were really scripts. The result was often a poor text. Modern editors have had field days restoring plays to what they considered their 'original' state. *Fuenteovejuna's* plot flows well, without any glaring lacunae. The missing lines may have been of songs, or longer descriptions of battles than those in the extant text. The relative brevity of *Fuenteovejuna* does not diminish its quality and, as I have said, modern performances have without qualms written out the Catholic Kings, though certainly altering the overall meaning of Lope's work. The verse scheme of *Fuenteovejuna* is conventional, with short, *arte menor* lines in the *redondillas*, *romances*, and *letrillas*, and hendecasyllabic, *arte mayor* verses in the octaves, tercets, and the one sonnet. The rural setting of the action does not make Lope opt for popular or traditional verse any more or less than he would have in a 'comedia de palacio.' Laurencia declaims the sonnet as a soliloquy, which is how Lope normally used sonnets. It is a courtly love style poem expressing doubt and distress because of the predicament in which she finds herself, wanting to see her husband

Fronoso, who is in hiding, but afraid of giving him away if she does. Lope had no fear of compromising the verisimilitude of the play by having a peasant woman express herself in courtly idiom and in the rhyme and meter of the refined Petrarchan sonnet.

Fuenteovejuna's drama is not circumscribed to the Spanish historical situation that it reenacts or the one current with its production in which it means to intervene. The play has earned well its worldwide appeal. The Comendador's predatory drive is as much metaphysical as it is physical: he is keen to test the limits of morality and the boundaries of his own powers. How far one can go is not a trivial issue in any realm, as Nietzsche showed us. Though the Comendador is neither reflective nor determined enough to be a tragic hero, being stopped by his cowardice at the end, he is beset by very human anxieties and limited by very human weaknesses. He is not quite Tirso's Don Juan, who burns in hell, or Goethe's Faust, who is quite willing to, but he anticipates them with his anxieties and actions. Laurencia's fierce defense of her honor is a high example of virtue and valor in the face of interdictions based on gender and class. Her rejection first of Fronoso and later of the Comendador, and their struggles to possess her, are like the species' design for natural selection, in which the female chooses the strongest male. Of course, we no longer live in nature to such an elementary degree (if we ever did), but a play like *Fuenteovejuna* is intended to remind us of how close we sometimes come to regressing. The happy ending—for all except the slain Comendador—is optimistic, suggesting that we can reject violence, and do so in

an artistic way, because of both the retributions meted out to the guilty and the beauty of the play's plot and poetic script. Art defines and celebrates the human against the unrestrained forces of nature.

NOTES

1. 'I had other things to do [and left the theater for a while]; I forsook my pen and the comedias, and then came in that monster of nature, the great Lope de Vega, and ran away with the comic kingdom. He overwhelmed and put under his jurisdiction all the players; he filled the world with his own comedias, first-rate and well argued, and so many, that he has written more than ten thousand pages, and all (which is one of the best things one can ever say), he has seen staged or at least read, and if there are some who have tried to compete with the glory of his works, all of them together do not amount, in what they have written, to half of what he has all by himself.' Miguel de Cervantes, *Entremeses*, ed. Florencio Sevilla Arroyo and Antonio Rey Hazas (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1998), 12–13. By 'monster of nature' Cervantes refers to Lope's prolific production in everything; the word means something like 'freak.' 'Monster' became a baroque figure made up not only of exaggerated qualities, but a combination of binary oppositions (see González Echevarría, *Celestina's Brood*), which is also applicable to Lope, as evident in what follows.

2. Regarding Valencia's role in the development of the Spanish theater, see the introduction to Rennert, *Spanish Stage in the Time of Lope de Vega*.

3. Félix Lope de Vega Carpio, 'Soneto 126,' in *Obras escogidas*, ed. Federico Carlos Sáinz de Robles (Madrid: Aguilar, 1961), II, p. 60. Hayes, *Lope de Vega*, provides a verse translation of this poem (40).

4. See González Echevarría, *Celestina's Brood*, 66–80.

5. The original name of the town was Fons Melaria ('honey well,' in Latin), because of the bee hives that were near it, from which came Fuente Abejuna and, by deformation, Fuenteovejuna (Lope de Vega, *Peribáñez y el Comendador de Ocaña*, ed. Pedraza Jiménez, 276). In line 1761 of the play Laurencia puns on the false etymology to call the men 'sheep.'

Fuenteovejuna

CHARACTERS

FERNÁN GÓMEZ DE GUZMÁN

Commander of the
Order of Calatrava

FLORES

ORTUÑO

his retainers

RODRIGO TÉLLEZ GIRÓN

Master of the Order
of Calatrava

LAURENCIA

PASCUALA

JACINTA

FRONDOSO

villagers

MENGO
BARRILDO

ESTEBAN
ALONSO

village magistrates

CUADRADO
JUAN ROJO

village alderman
village councilman

QUEEN ISABEL OF CASTILE
KING FERDINAND OF ARAGON
DON MANRIQUE

a courtier

A JUDGE
LEONELO

a University of
Salamanca graduate

CIMBRANOS

a soldier

A BOY
ALDERMEN from Ciudad Real
SOLDIERS, VILLAGERS,
MUSICIANS

The action takes place in 1476.

ACT I

[A room in the mansion of Rodrigo Téllez Girón, Master of the Order of Calatrava]

(Enter the Commander, Fernán Gómez de Guzmán, with his retainers Flores and Ortuño.)

COMMANDER: The Master knows I mark my time
Awaiting him.

FLORES: Indeed, he does.

ORTUÑO: He's more mature, sir, than he was.

COMMANDER: Enough to be aware that I'm
Still Fernán Gómez de Guzmán?

5

FLORES: He's just a boy. Don't take this wrong.

COMMANDER: He has to have known all along

The title that's conferred upon
Me is Commander of the Ranks.

ORTUÑO: His counselors undoubtedly 10
Incline him toward discourtesy.

COMMANDER: This stance will win him little thanks,
For courtesy unlocks the gate
Behind which man's goodwill resides
As surely as offense betides 15
An enmity fomenting hate.

ORTUÑO: If only men so keen to slight
Knew how they were abhorred by all—
Not least by sycophants who fall
To kiss their feet and praise their might— 20
They'd much prefer to die before
Insulting anyone again.

FLORES: Mistreatment from unmannered men
Is harsh and something to deplore,
Yet while discourtesy between 25
Two equals is a foolish game,
When men aren't peers, it's not the same
But vile, tyrannical, and mean.
No sense to take offense, my lord.
He's still a boy and ignorant of 30
The need to win his vassals' love.

COMMANDER: The obligation that the sword
He girded on when first this Cross
Of Calatrava graced his chest
Bids courtesy be shown all, lest 35
Our noble Order suffer loss.

FLORES: We'll know soon if his heart's been set
Against your person or your cause.

ORTUÑO: Leave now if all this gives you pause.

COMMANDER: I'll take the stripling's measure yet. 40

(Enter the Master of Calatrava, Rodrigo Téllez Girón, with retinue.)

MASTER: Dear Fernán Gómez de Guzmán!
I've just been told that you were come
And rue this inattention from
My heart's own core.

COMMANDER: I looked upon
The matter ill, with wounded pride, 45
As I'd thought my affection for
You and my standing would ensure
More noble treatment by your side,
We two of Calatrava, you
The Master, I Commander, though 50
Your humble servant, well you know.

MASTER: I only was alerted to
Your presence here at this late hour,

Fernán, and join you now in fond
Embrace.

COMMANDER: You honor well our bond 55
As I've done all that's in my power—
Nay, risked my life—to ease affairs
For you, petitioning the pope
To disregard your youth.

MASTER: I hope
That, by this holy sign each wears 60
Upon his chest, as I repay
Your kindness with respect, you'll own
Such honor as my sire had known.

COMMANDER: I'm satisfied with what you say.

MASTER: What news have you about the war? 65

COMMANDER: Attend these words and soon you'll learn
How duty makes this your concern.

MASTER: It's this report I've waited for.

COMMANDER: Rodrigo Téllez Girón, this
Illustrious station you've attained 70
Derives from the profound esteem
Your sire claimed for your family name.
When he relinquished, eight years past,
The rank of Master to his son,
Commanders joined with kings to pledge 75
The cross should pass to one so young
While further confirmation came
From papal bulls that blessed soul
His Holiness Pope Pius wrote,
Which Paul did follow with his own. 80
Your uncle, Juan Pacheco, then
The Master of Santiago, was
Appointed your coadjutor
And, when he died, we placed our trust

In your ability to lead 85
Our Order at your tender age.
Upholding past allegiances
Is vital in the present case
To honor these progenitors,
So know your kin, since Henry's death, 90
Support Alfonso, Portugal's
Good king, who has inherited
Castile, your blood contend, because
His queen, they vow, was Henry's child.
Prince Ferdinand of Aragon 95
Disputes this claim, and through his wife
And Henry's sister, Isabel,
Asserts his title to the throne
Against your family's cause. In short,
They see no treachery imposed 100
By Juana's just succession here.
Your cousin keeps her under guard
Until the day when she will reign.
I come, then, with this counsel: charge
Your Knights of Calatrava in 105
Almagro here to mount their steeds
And capture Ciudad Real,

Which straddles the frontier between
Castile and Andalusia, thus
Strategically commanding both. 110
You'd hardly need a host of men
To have it fall to your control
As scarcely any gentry guard
The city, only citizens
Who'd still defend Queen Isabel 115
And follow Ferdinand as king.
How grand, Rodrigo, to avail
Yourself of such a siege and prove
Those wrong who think these shoulders far
Too slight to bear the cross you do! 120
Your gallant ancestors, the Counts
Of Urueña, beckon from
Their heights of fame in proud display
Of all the laurels they have won;
The Marquis of Villena, too, 125
And countless other captains bid
You join their noble company
Uplifted on renown's own wings!
Come, bare the whiteness of your sword
And stain its blade in fierce assaults 130

With blood red as our Order's sign
So that you may be rightly called
By all men Master of that Cross
You wear upon your chest! If white
It stays, that title stays unearned. 135

Yes, both the weapon at your side
And that dear cross must shine blood-red.
Thus you, magnificent Girón,
Shall be at last enshrined the first
Among your line and most extolled! 140

MASTER: Fernán Gómez, it's my intent
To side with blood in a dispute
Whose rightness seems beyond refute,
So rest assured of this event.

If Ciudad Real, then, must 145
Be leveled by my hands, I'll burn
Its walls with lightning speed and turn
The city into ash and dust.

The friend or stranger who insists
That with my uncle died my youth 150
Could not be farther from the truth:

The spirit of my years persists.
I'll bare this still-white blade and lead
My forces by its dazzling light
Till, like these crosses, it shines bright 155
With blood the reddened wounded bleed.
Do any soldiers now subsist
Among your village retinue?

COMMANDER: They're loyal servitors, though few,
But should you summon them to list 160
With you, they'll romp like lions, for
In Fuenteovejuna all
The townsfolk heed the humble call
Of agriculture, not of war,
And work the fields without a care. 165

MASTER: You've quarters near?

COMMANDER: It pleased the crown
To grant me land once in that town

So, mid these perils, I dwell there.

MASTER: I'll need a tally of our strength.

COMMANDER: No vassal there shall stay behind! 170

MASTER: This day you'll see me ride, and find
My couching lance atilt full length!

(Exit Commander and Master.)

[The town square in Fuenteovejuna]

(Enter the village women Pascuala and Laurencia.)

LAURENCIA: I'd hoped that he was gone for good!

PASCUALA: To tell the truth, I really thought
The news of his return here ought 175
To have perturbed you ... and still would!

LAURENCIA: I wish to God, I swear to you,

That we had seen the last of him!

PASCUALA: Laurencia, I've known girls as prim
 And tough as you—nay, more so—who, 180
 Beneath the guise of harsh facades,
 Have hearts as soft as cooking lard.

LAURENCIA: You couldn't find an oak as hard
 And dry as I am toward these clods!

PASCUALA: Go on, now! You don't mean to say 185
 You'd never drink to quench your thirst?

LAURENCIA: I do, though I won't be the first
 To have to protest in this way.
 Besides, what profit would I see
 To have Fernán think he's my beau? 190
 I couldn't marry him, now.

PASCUALA:

No.

LAURENCIA:

I can't abide his infamy!

So many girls were gullible

In trusting the Commander's plights

And now live days that rue those nights.

195

PASCUALA:

Still, it would be a miracle

If you don't wind up in his grasp.

LAURENCIA:

Pascuala, one full month's gone by

Since you first saw this scapegrace try

In vain to land me in his clasp.

200

His pander, Flores, and that knave,

Ortuño, came by with a hat,

A jerkin and a choker that

Their master had assumed I'd crave.

They started off regaling me

205

With vows his lovelorn heart declared,

Which left me all a little scared,
Though just as disinclined to see
Myself his latest vanquished maid.

PASCUALA: Where did they speak to you?

LAURENCIA: Down by 210
The brook six days ago, as I
Recall.

PASCUALA: Laurencia, I'm afraid
They'll end up getting what they wish.

LAURENCIA: From me?

PASCUALA: No, from the priest—yes, you!

LAURENCIA: The meat on this young chick's still too 215

Darn tough to grace his grace's dish.
I mean, good lord, Pascuala! Look:
You know how much I'd rather take
A slice of ham when I awake
And place it on the fire to cook; 220
Then eat it with a hunk of bread
I baked and kneaded by myself
With wine pinched off my mother's shelf
From jugs that tightly store her red;
And how much happier I'd be 225
At noon to watch beef frolicking
With heads of cabbage, rollicking
In frothy pots of harmony!
Or, when I come home peeved and tired,
To marry eggplant in full bloom 230
With bacon—there's no rasher groom!—
For just the pick-me-up required.
Then later, for some toothsome snacks
To hold me till our supper's served,
I'd pick grapes off my vines, preserved 235
By God alone from hail attacks.
For dinner, I would eat the lot
Of spicy peppered meat in oil,

And sparrows see the fields in bloom, 260
We hear the last of all their coos.
Interrogating us for proof
That we're true Spaniards, from each roof
They chirp accusingly: 'Jews? Jews?'
Yes, men are like that, too. As long 265
As they desire us, we're their soul,
Their heart, their everything, their whole
Life's being, and can do no wrong,
But once the fire of passion's spent,
They start to treat us worse than Jews 270
And what were once seductive coos
Now chastise us for our consent.

LAURENCIA: You can't trust any of their kind.

PASCUALA: Laurencia, sweetheart, I'm with you!

(Enter the villagers Mengo, Barrildo, and Frondoso.)

FRONDOSO: Barrildo, argue till you're blue, 275
You'll never change old Mengo's mind!

BARRILDO: Now, here's a person who could bring
An end to this discussion, men.

MENGO: Let's all be in agreement, then,
Before you ask her anything: 280
If she concurs that I'm correct,
You promise that you won't forget
To hand me over what we've bet?

BARRILDO: That's fine with me. I don't object,
But what do we net if you lose? 285

MENGO: My boxwood rebec, which I hold
More precious than a granary's gold,
If I may be allowed to choose.

BARRILDO: That's good enough.

FRONDOSO: Then, let's not wile.
God keep you, lovely ladies both. 290

LAURENCIA: Frondoso, 'ladies'? By my oath!

FRONDOSO: Just keeping with the latest style:
These days, a college boy goes by
'Professor,' 'one-eyed' means you're blind,
The cross-eyed 'squint,' lame are 'inclined,' 295
And now a spendthrift's a 'good guy.'
The dumbest person is called 'bright,'
The none-too-brave are 'placable';
No one has thick lips—lips are 'full'—
And beady eyes are 'piercing,' right? 300
The nitpicker is 'thorough,' while
The meddler is 'engaged.' In speech,
A windbag is 'well-spoken,' each
Annoying bore said to 'beguile.'
Thus, cowards are 'dispirited' 305
And blowhards 'full of fight.' With twits,

The useful catchword 'fellows' fits
While loons are 'uninhibited.'
The cheerless are alone 'discreet';
'Authority' falls to the bald. 310
If silliness is 'charm,' who called
'Well-grounded' someone with big feet?
A 'chest cold' means the pox in code;
The haughty now are 'self-possessed';
The shrewd are 'sly,' but here's the best: 315
The humpback 'shoulders quite a load'!
So maybe now you'll comprehend
Just how you're 'ladies,' and although
I've more examples, I'll forego
Reciting all of them on end. 320

LAURENCIA: Well, that may pass for courtesy,
Fronoso, with the city folk,
But I've heard other people cloak
Their thoughts in language that strikes me
As far more coarse in every phrase 325
They use and every cutting word.

FRONDOSO: Give us a taste of what you've heard.

LAURENCIA: It's just the opposite of praise:

You're 'tiresome' if you're serious
And 'brazen' if you look well heeled. 330

You're 'somber' if you're even-keeled
And 'spiteful' if you're virtuous.

Give counsel and you 'interfere';
You 'lavish' when you freely give.
Love justice and you're 'punitive,' 335

Show mercy and be 'inaustere.'
The steadfast now are 'dull as sin,'
Politeness is 'sheer flattery,'
Sweet charity, 'hypocrisy,'
And Christian faith 'the sure way in.' 340

'Dumb luck' is hard-won merit's name
While truth-telling is 'recklessness.'
Forbearance is deemed 'cowardice'
And misadventure now means 'blame.'
A decent woman's called a 'ponce,' 345
A proper, lovely girl a 'freak,'

A chaste ... But I've no need to speak
More. Let this serve as my response.

MENGO: The devil! That was quite a list!

BARRILDO: She's not a half-bad orator! 350

MENGO: I bet the priest who christened her
Laid on the salt, fist after fist!

LAURENCIA: What quarrel is it brings you here,
If I have heard you right, today?

FRONDOSO: Just listen, on your soul.

LAURENCIA: Tell, pray. 355

FRONDOSO: Laurencia, lend me but your ear.

LAURENCIA: I'll give it to you out and out,
A special present, not a loan.

FRONDOSO: I trust your judgment as my own.

LAURENCIA: So, what's this famous bet about?

360

FRONDOSO: Barrildo casts his lot with me.

LAURENCIA: And Mengo?

BARRILDO: He insists upon
Denying a phenomenon
That's clearly real.

MENGO: It cannot be;
Experience refutes its name. 365

LAURENCIA: Which is ... ?

BARRILDO: That love does not exist.

LAURENCIA: Love's vital and would sure be missed.

BARRILDO: Yes, vital; it's a silly claim.
This world has a most pressing need
For love, or life would fade away. 370

MENGO: Philosophy's not my forte
And now I wish that I could read,
But here goes: if the elements—
Earth, water, fire, and air—all live
In endless discord and then give 375
Our very bodies sustenance—

Their melancholy and, let's see,
Blood, choler ... phlegm—I've proved my point.

BARRILDO: This world is nowhere out of joint,
Dear Mengo; all is harmony 380
For harmony is love distilled
And love, pure concert from above.

MENGO: I don't dispute that natural love
Abides on earth, as God has willed.
Love does exist, but of the sort 385
That rules relations in advance—
Compulsory ties, not bonds of chance—
Among all beings these realms support.
And never once have I denied
That each man's humor finds some fit 390
With love that corresponds to it
To keep his being unified.
If someone tries to punch my face,
I block the impact with my arm
And when I'm facing bodily harm, 395

My feet run to a safer place.
My lids and lashes likewise move
To counter danger to my eye
And all from natural love, I vie.

PASCUALA: What point is it you seek to prove? 400

MENGO: I mean that we should be agreed
That only self-love rules the day.

PASCUALA: That's not true, Mengo, if I may,
For isn't there a vital need
A man experiences when 405
He loves a woman, or a brute
Its mate?

MENGO: Yes, but without dispute,
It's self-love and not true love, then.
Now, what is love?

PASCUALA: It's a desire
For beauty.

MENGO: And why does love pursue 410
Said beauty, in your humble view?

PASCUALA: For pleasure.

MENGO: Right! May I inquire,
Then, whether this enjoyment might
Serve love itself?

PASCUALA: I'm sure that's so.

MENGO: So, selfishness will make love go 415
And seek what causes it delight?

PASCUALA: Why, yes.

MENGO: Then, as I'm claiming, there
Can be no love but of the kind
That everybody seeks to find
By courting pleasure everywhere. 420

BARRILDO: I seem to have some memory of
A sermon I heard by and by
Regarding Plato, some Greek guy
Who taught humanity to love,
Although the love he felt was aimed 425
At virtue and his loved one's soul.

PASCUALA: This line of thought has, on the whole,
Both stumped great intellects and shamed
Top scholars in our 'cademies
Who fry their brains debating it. 430

LAURENCIA: She's right; don't fly into a snit
By arguing for such fallacies.
Go thank your stars for leaving you
Without love, Mengo, in this sphere.

MENGO: Don't you love?

LAURENCIA: Just my honor here.

435

FRONDOSO: I hope God makes you jealous, too.

BARRILDO: So, who's the winner?

PASCUALA: You can take
That question to the sacristan.
If he won't tell you, the priest can
And that should settle what's at stake.
As I've not much experience

440

And our Laurencia loves not well,
I wonder how we'll ever tell?

FRONDOSO: To suffer such indifference!

(Enter Flores.)

FLORES: God keep you, good folk! As you were. 445

PASCUALA: So the retainer's sent to talk
For the Commander.

LAURENCIA: Chicken hawk!
What brings you here today, fine sir?

FLORES: You see this uniform, don't you?

LAURENCIA: So then, Fernán is coming back? 450

FLORES: The battle's won, though our attack
Entailed the loss of not a few
Brave men and blood of good allies.

FRONDOSO: Do tell us how the fighting raged.

FLORES: Who better to, since war was waged 455
Before these witnesses, my eyes?
To undertake this swift campaign
Against a city by the name
Of Ciudad Real, our most
Courageous, noble Master raised 460
An army of two thousand men—
All loyal vassals—with whom rode
Three hundred more of mounted troops
Comprised of friars and laymen both
For anyone who wears this Cross 465
Must rally to its battle cry,
Including priests, especially when
The foes are Moors, you read me right?
Thus did the gallant youth ride forth

Bedecked in an embroidered coat 470
Of green with golden monograms.
His glistening brassards alone
Shone through the openings in his sleeves
Held fast by hooks with golden braids.
A sturdy charger rode he, bred 475
In our fair South and dapple-gray,
Which drank from the Guadalquivir
And grazed upon the fertile spots
Nearby. Its tailpiece was adorned
With buckskin straps, its curled forelock 480
In pure-white bows resembling cloth
That expert weavers deftly wove
To match the patches on its hide,
Or 'flies on snow,' as they are known.
Your liege lord, Fernán Gómez, rode 485
Beside him on a honeyed steed
That bore some white upon its nose,
Accenting its black mane and feet.
Atop a Turkish coat of mail
His armor breast and back-plate shone 490
Both bordered with an orange trim
Relucent with pearls set in gold.

And from his burnished helmet waved
A crown of plumes that seemed to stretch
In orange-blossom whiteness down 495
To meet his orange vestment's edge.
A red and white brace held his lance
In readiness, although this bore
More likeness to a huge ash tree
To petrify Granada's Moors. 500
And so the city took up arms
In affirmation of the stance
That it obeyed the rightful crown
And would defend its king and lands.
The Master mounted an attack 505
And, after fierce resistance there,
Decreed that all who'd wagged their tongues
Against his honor be prepared
To die beheaded for their crime,
While those who rallied round the flag 510
Among the simple city folk
Were flogged in public, bound and gagged.
There in the city he abides,
As well loved as he is well feared;
A man who battles, castigates 515

And crushes foes, still raw in years,
The town believes will come to be
The scourge of Africa some day,
Subjecting blue and crescent moons
To his Red Cross's one true faith. 520
So many gifts has he bestowed
Upon our brave Commander now,
It seems that he's despoiling not
The city, but his manor house.
But listen! Hear the music play? 525
Come welcome your great hero home,
For no wreath suits a victor like
The good will shown him by his own.

(Enter the Commander and Ortuño, Musicians, Village Magistrates Esteban and Alonso, and Village Councilman Juan Rojo.)

MUSICIANS: *(Singing) All hail, victorious*
Commander! Thy bold deeds be praised! 530
For thou hast slain our foes
And left their rebel cities razed!
Long life to thy Guzmáns
And to our Master's proud Giróns!
In times of peace thy speech 535

Is couched in calm and measured tones

Though thou wouldst battle Moors

Courageous as an oak is strong.

From Ciudad Real

To Fuenteovejuna throng

540

Thy still triumphant troops

And here thy lofty pennants wave!

Fernán Gómez, God grant

A thousand years to one so brave!

COMMANDER: Kind villagers, I thank you for this true
Outpouring of affection I've been shown.

545

ALONSO: 'Tis but a fraction of our love for you
And scarce reflects the sentiments you're known
To merit.

ESTEBAN: Fuenteovejuna deems
Your presence here an honor, and our own
Town council begs you to accept what seems

550

No doubt a paltry offering conveyed
By cart to one the village so esteems
And tendered in goodwill mid poles arrayed
With ribbons, though the gifts themselves be
small. 555

To start, glazed earthenware our potters made.
Next, an entire stock of geese—see all
Their heads protruding through the mesh to
voice

Praise for your valor with their cackling call!
Ten salted hogs, each specimen more choice, 560
Jerked beef, rich delicacies, and pork hides
Which, more than perfumed gloves, make men
rejoice.

A hundred capons and plump hens, the brides
Of future widowed roosters of the same
Sort dotting these lush fields, are yours besides. 565

You'll not fetch arms or horses for your fame,
Nor trappings here embroidered with pure gold
Unless you take for gold the love you claim.

And having said 'pure,' may I be so bold
As to suggest these wineskins hold such wine 570
That winter soldiers scarce would mind the cold

As they patrolled outdoors if they could line
Their stomachs with this, steelier than steel,
For wine can cause the dullest blades to shine.
I'll skip the savories and the cheese you'll feel 575
Most tempted by, except to say it's right
That we should pay you tribute for our weal
And wish your household hearty appetite.

COMMANDER: For this, much thanks, good councilmen.
You may retire with all my best. 580

ALONSO: We bid you, sir, enjoy some rest
And welcome you back home again.
This sedge and bulrush at your door,
A touch of grace our town unfurls,
Might well have been oriental pearls— 585
Though surely you deserve far more—
Had we but means to furnish these.

COMMANDER: Kind folk, I doubt not what you say.

May God be with you.

ESTEBAN: Singers, play
Our song of triumph once more, please. 590

MUSICIANS: *(Singing.) All hail, victorious
Commander! Thy bold deeds be praised!
For thou hast slain our foes
And left their rebel cities razed!*

(Exit Musicians. The Commander turns toward his residence but stops at the entrance to speak with Laurencia and Pascuala.)

COMMANDER: Abide a while, the two of you. 595

LAURENCIA: What can we do for you, good sir?

COMMANDER: Why, just the other day you were
Aloof toward me, is that not true?

LAURENCIA: I think he's giving you more sass.

PASCUALA: Not me, dear! That's enough of that. 600

COMMANDER: I'm talking both to you, wildcat,
And to this other lovely lass,
For aren't you mine?

PASCUALA: Good sir, no doubt,
But hardly in the way you think.

COMMANDER: Then come in, you've no cause to shrink. 605
You see my servants are about.

LAURENCIA: Well, had the magistrates come, too—
For one's my father, you may know—
It might have seemed correct to go.

COMMANDER: You, Flores!

FLORES: Sir!

COMMANDER: Can it be true 610
That they refuse what I implore?

FLORES: He said, go in!

LAURENCIA: Don't touch us, man!

FLORES: You're being silly.

PASCUALA: While you plan
To lock us in and bolt the door?

FLORES: He only thought you'd like to see 615

The spoils he gathered in this batch.

(The Commander turns to enter his dwelling.)

COMMANDER: *(Aside to Ortuño.)* If they do enter, draw the latch.

LAURENCIA: I told you, Flores, leave us be!

ORTUÑO: You mean the two of you are not
More booty?

PASCUALA: Let it rest awhile 620
And get out of my way or I'll ...

FLORES: Enough, for now. You see they're hot.

LAURENCIA: How much more tribute would it take
To make him happy with these meats?

ORTUÑO: Your meats would be the sweeter treats. 625

LAURENCIA: I hope they make his belly ache!

(Exit Laurencia and Pascuala.)

FLORES: He'll give us both an earful when
We dare return without the girls
And curse us like a pair of churls
While we take his abuse again. 630

ORTUÑO: Well, masters sometimes grow annoyed.
To prosper in the servant class,
You have to let their foul moods pass:
Be patient or be unemployed.

(Exit Flores and Ortuño.)

[A room in the palace of the Catholic Kings]

(Enter King Ferdinand, Queen Isabel, the courtier Don Manrique, and retinue.)

ISABEL: You would do well to heed the threat 635
Alfonso's army now presents.
His Portuguese have pitched their tents

In nearby fields and must be met
With troops who'll counter this deceit
By striking ere these foes attack 640
For if our men don't drive them back
Our side will suffer sure defeat.

FERDINAND: Navarre and Aragon both aid
Our righteous cause and shall until
We steel our forces in Castile 645
And see their re-formation made,
A measure which should guarantee
Our triumph in an allied thrust.

ISABEL: Your Royal Majesty, we must
Be certain of this victory. 650

MANRIQUE: Your Highness, there are aldermen
From Ciudad Real here who
Request an audience with you.

FERDINAND: Brave Don Manrique, show them in.

(Enter two Aldermen from Ciudad Real.)

1 ST ALDERMAN: Great Ferdinand, most Catholic king, 655
Whom Heaven's sent with grace to reign
Through all Castile and Aragon,
Our noble succor and true aid,
On Ciudad Real's behalf
We've come to sue for royal help 660
In true humility before
Your valiant and all-powerful self.
We'd held our own selves fortunate
To be the subjects of this crown
Till adverse fortune intervened 665
And turned our destinies around.
Rodrigo Téllez Girón, sire,
Famed bearer of his family name
Whose courage on the battlefield
And strength belie his tender age, 670
Of Calatrava Master, has
Assailed our city to expand
The Order's power and estate,

His lands erstwhile by royal grant.
We bravely readied our defense 675
In hopes resistance would rebuff
His forces, but our streams ran red,
Discolored with the fallen's blood.
In short, he took the city but
He never could have had Fernán 680
Gómez withheld his counsel, troops,
And guidance in this treacherous plot.
He bides still in our captured town,
His vassals and sad subjects we
Who suffer this loss with regret 685
And hope it soon be remedied.

FERDINAND: And where is Fernán Gómez now?

1ST ALDERMAN: In Fuenteovejuna, sire,
A humble village, I believe,
The cruel Commander now retires 690
To have his way with peasant girls
More freely than we care to state.

He keeps his vassals there as far
From happiness as they can stay.

FERDINAND: Have you no captain in your ranks? 695

2ND ALDERMAN: It's sure we haven't anymore,
As every nobleman they seized
Was wounded or has faced the sword.

ISABEL: This matter begs a quick display
Of strength, for cautious remedy 700
Would only make this enemy
The bolder given our delay.
Thus Portugal might view this stall
A chance occasion fortune yields
To cross Extremadura's fields 705
And so bring grievous harm to all.

FERDINAND: Manrique, take two companies

Of soldiers to their bivouac
And launch a merciless attack
To castigate their tyrannies. 710

The Count of Cabra, who won fame
For his exploits as Córdoba,
Will ride with you, and never a
More valiant soldier could Spain claim.
This seems the most expedient 715
Proceeding we can now effect.

MANRIQUE: Your judgment, sire, is most correct
And this dispatch most provident.
As long as life runs through my veins,
I'll see that youth put in his place. 720

ISABEL: I'm confident success shall grace
Our cause with such men at the reins.

(Exit all.)

[An open field in Fuenteovejuna]

(Enter Laurencia and Frondoso.)

LAURENCIA: I had to leave the wash half wet,
Fronoso, just to keep the town
From gossiping. The brook's no place 725
For men to gallivant around.
The villagers are whispering
About how you persist. They know
I've caught your eye as you have mine
And keep their eyes now on us both. 730
As you're the type of brazen swain
To strut throughout the village clad
In elegant attire that costs
Far more than any other lad's,
There's not a girl or guy about 735
These woodlands, meadows, groves, and brush
Who isn't saying to himself
That we two are already one.
They all await that blessed day
When Juan Chamorro, sacristan, 740
Will lay down his bassoon just long
Enough to carry out our banns,
Though they'd be better off by far
To see their granaries duly stuffed
With heaps of autumn's golden wheat 745

And have their wine jars filled with must.
The rumors that the villagers
Keep spreading here have caused me pique
But aren't so irritating as
To have deprived me of dear sleep. 750 750

FRONDOSO: Your harsh disdain so flusters me,
Laurencia, that I fear each time
I see your face or hear your voice
I place existence on the line!
For if you know my sole desire 755
Is that we marry, why repay
These good intentions with such scorn?

LAURENCIA: I know but one way to behave.

FRONDOSO: How can it be you feel no pain
To see me in the grip of grief 760
When, at the merest thought of you,
I lose desire for food and sleep?

How can that sweet, angelic face
Bring such hardheartedness with it?
But, Lord, how rabidly I rave!

765

LAURENCIA: Then you must seek a curative.

FRONDOSO: The cure I seek resides in you
So we can be like turtledoves
That perch together rubbing beaks
And coo contentedly in love—
I mean, provided that the church ...

770

LAURENCIA: Go ask my uncle first and charm
Juan Rojo, for although I feel
No passion yet, I sense a spark.

FRONDOSO: Oh, no! Look over there—it's him!

775

LAURENCIA: He must be hunting deer nearby.

Quick, run and hide within these woods!

FRONDOSO: It's jealousy I need to hide!

(Enter the Commander.)

COMMANDER: I can't say it displeases me
To set out for a fearsome buck 780
And come upon a lovely doe.

LAURENCIA: I left my pile of wash half done
For this brief respite from my chores
But now, I fear, the brook awaits
So, by your leave, I'll go now, sir. 785

COMMANDER: The brusqueness in your cruel disdain,
Laurencia, is a sharp affront
To all the grace and comely looks
The heavens have bestowed on you
And makes you seem unnatural. 790
You've managed in the past to flee

The loving of my arms' embrace
But now this field, our silent friend,
Has pledged to keep our secret safe.
Come, there's no need for diffidence 795
Or any reason to avert
Your gaze from me, your rightful lord,
As if I were some peasant churl.
Did not Pedro Redondo's wife
Sebastiana gladly yield, 800
And young Martín del Pozo's, too,
Although the latter's wedding seal
Had scarcely dried, our happy tryst
But two days after she was wed?

LAURENCIA: These women, sir, could by that time 805
Claim much experience with men
As that same road you took to them
Had been well traveled for some years
By all the lads with whom they'd lain.
God keep you as you hunt your deer; 810
Were you not costumed with that cross,
I'd take you for the devil's spawn

To hound me so relentlessly.

COMMANDER: What haughty insolence you flaunt!

I'll lay my crossbow on the ground

815

And use these hands to put an end

To all your mincing ways.

LAURENCIA: How now?

You don't mean you'd be capable ...

(Enter Frondoso, who picks up the crossbow.)

COMMANDER: *(Not noticing Frondoso.)* Don't try to fight me off.

FRONDOSO: *(Aside.)* I pick

His weapon up, but hope to God

820

I'll have no cause for using it.

COMMANDER: Relent already!

LAURENCIA: Heavens, help
A girl in need!

COMMANDER: We're all alone.
There's no need now to be afraid.

FRONDOSO: Commander, you've a generous soul 825
So leave her be or rest assured
I'll make a bull's-eye of your chest
Though, even in my rage, that cross
Elicits my profound respect.

COMMANDER: Vile dog!

FRONDOSO: I see no dogs round here. 830
Quick, run, Laurencia!

LAURENCIA: Careful now,
Fronoso!

FRONDOSO: Off with you, I said!

(Exit Laurencia.)

COMMANDER: The fool who'd lay his own sword down
Deserves the trouble he incurs.
I feared my prey would hear its clap 835
So I pursued the hunt ungirt.

FRONDOSO: By God, don't make me loose the catch
Or you'll be pierced like game, my lord.

COMMANDER: She's gone! Come, give the crossbow up,
You thieving, treacherous, peasant rogue! 840
Just give it here, I said!

FRONDOSO: For what,
So you could take my life with it?
Remember, sir, that love is deaf

And, from that day it reigns supreme,
Will not be swayed by argument. 845

COMMANDER: Am I to turn my back upon
A village churl? Shoot! Shoot, you knave,
But be prepared to stand on guard,
For as a nobleman I break
Chivalric code to challenge you. 850

FRONDOSO: No need, sir, for I'm satisfied
With my low station here on earth
But, as I must protect my life,
I'll take this crossbow as I flee.

COMMANDER: He plays a rash and perilous game 855
But I shall have my vengeance for
This crime of standing in my way!
Why didn't I just attack the clod?
The heavens see how I've been shamed!

ACT II

[The town square in Fuenteovejuna]

(Enter Esteban and Village Alderman Cuadrado.)

ESTEBAN: We've still abundant stocks of wheat reserved 860
But really mustn't raid our granaries more.
These recent forecasts have us all unnerved
And I believe our strength lies in this store
Though some don't see what good these stocks
have served.

CUADRADO: I've always been of one mind on this score; 865
Abundance means there's governance in peace.

ESTEBAN: We'll tell Fernán Gómez, then, this must cease.
These fool astrologers do irritate!
Though ignorant of the future, they've a hoard
Of unconvincing prattles that relate 870
Grave secrets vital only to the Lord.
They think they're theologians and conflate

Before and after into one accord:
Ask any one about the present, though,
And you'll soon learn how little any know! 875
What, do they own the clouds that dot the air
Or the trajectory of the heavens' light?
How can they see what's happening up there
To give us all an endless case of fright?
They tell us when to plant our crops and
where— 880
Wheat there, now greens, your barley to the
right,
Here mustard, pumpkins, now cucumber beds—
I swear to God that they're the pumpkin heads!
First, they predict a herd of cows will die
And die they do—in Transylvania! 885
They forecast that our wine yield won't be high
But see beer flowing in Westphalia.
The cherry frost in Gascony they spy
And hordes of tigers in Hyrcania.
Plant what we will, though, blessed by them or
cursed, 890
The year still ends December thirty-first.

(Enter the university graduate Leonelo and Barrildo.)

LEONELO: Looks like the gossip corner's doing well;
The tardy pupil can't be teacher's pet!

BARRILDO: Was Salamanca grand?

LEONELO: I've much to tell.

BARRILDO: You'll be a second Solomon.

LEONELO: Not yet.

895

Salami-maker, maybe. But I dwell
Upon what's doctrine for the jurist set.

BARRILDO: I'm sure you studied with the utmost care.

LEONELO: I tried to gain important knowledge there.

BARRILDO: So many volumes are in print today 900
The multitudes imagine they are wise.

LEONELO: Yet they know less, it saddens me to say,
For so much wisdom's hard to summarize
And all their vain attempts to find a way
Just make the letters swim before their eyes. 905

The more a person reads the printed word
The more the letters on the page look blurred.
I don't doubt that the art of print has saved
The best cuts from this cloth of rhetoric
By salvaging sage works from Time's depraved 910
Consignment of all earthly things to quick
Oblivion; this the printing press has staved.

To Gutenberg we owe this curious trick,
A German from the town of Mainz whose fame
Is more than any Fame herself can claim. 915

Some writers who were once deemed erudite,
Though, lost their erudition on the page
While dumber men who never learned to write
Have published using names of men more sage.
Still others have penned treatises so trite 920

That, overcome by jealousy and rage,
They've signed their rivals' names to these poor
works
To make their readers think these authors jerks!

BARRILDO: They couldn't do such things!

LEONELO: It's natural
For fools to reap revenge on real success. 925

BARRILDO: Still, Leonelo, print is notable.

LEONELO: We've lived for centuries without the press
And I don't see these modern times more full
Of St. Augustines or Jeromes, do you?

BARRILDO: Let's sit a while before you start to stew. 930

(Enter Juan Rojo and a Villager.)

JUAN ROJO: If what we've seen is true, you couldn't raise
A dowry out of what four farms would yield.
Now anyone who'd know the truth can gaze
Upon our town's disruption unconcealed.

VILLAGER: Peace, friend. What news of the Commander's
days?

935

JUAN ROJO: He cornered poor Laurencia in a field!

VILLAGER: That lecherous animal! I'd love to see
The villain hanging from that olive tree!

(Enter the Commander with Ortuño and Flores.)

COMMANDER: God keep you, townsfolk, in His grace.

CUADRADO: My lord.

COMMANDER: Good villagers, at ease

940

Now, as you were.

ESTEBAN: Your lordship, please
Be seated in your wonted place.
We'll stand, as this suits everyone.

COMMANDER: I'll order you to sit down, then.

ESTEBAN: You honor us as only men 945
Of honor can, as men who've none
Can scarcely proffer what they've not.

COMMANDER: Come, sit. I'd like us to confer.

ESTEBAN: Have you received the greyhound, sir?

COMMANDER: The dog continues to besot 950
My valets, magistrate, and stuns

The servants with its noble speed.

ESTEBAN: A fine example of its breed!
Good lord, that noble creature runs
As fast as any suspect or 955
Delinquent that the law pursues.

COMMANDER: Well, given but the choice, I'd choose
To have you point the dog straight for
A certain frisky little hare
Too swift for any but this hound. 960

ESTEBAN: I will, but where might she be found?

COMMANDER: I'm speaking of your daughter there.

ESTEBAN: My daughter?

COMMANDER: Yes.

ESTEBAN: How could she be
A consort suitable for you?

COMMANDER: Do give her a good talking to. 965

ESTEBAN: Why, pray?

COMMANDER: She's set on vexing me.
A lady here in town you'd call
Distinguished noted my designs
And, at the first sign of my signs,
Succumbed.

ESTEBAN: Then she disgraced us all. 970
If you don't mind me saying, sir,
Your language ought to be less free.

COMMANDER: The rustic speaks so loftily!
Ah, Flores! Have this villager
Read one of Aristotle's tomes, 975
The *Politics*.

ESTEBAN: We of the land
Are glad to live by your command
And seek but honor for our homes
As Fuenteovejuna, too,
Can boast distinguished residents. 980

LEONELO: (*Aside.*) To hear that villain's insolence!

COMMANDER: Has what I said offended you
Or any gathered here today?

CUADRADO: Commander, this is most unjust.
You're wrong to say such things and must 985

Not stain our honor in this way.

COMMANDER: Your what? Who do you think you are,
The Friars of Calatrava, then?

CUADRADO: No doubt that Order numbers men
Who wear the cross with bloodlines far 990
Less pure than simple townsfolk own.

COMMANDER: So should our lines mix, theirs would be
Forever fouled?

CUADRADO: Iniquity
Defiles, not cleanses—that's well known.

COMMANDER: Whatever reasoning you seek, 995
Your women should be honored so.

ESTEBAN: Such words do shame us all, and no
One thinks you'd do the deeds you speak.

COMMANDER: These peasants can be tiresome!
In cities they know how to treat 1000
A man of qualities and meet
His every wish when he is come.
There, husbands deem it flattery
When other men pursue their wives.

ESTEBAN: You say this so we'll all live lives 1005
Of equal moral laxity.
God still inhabits cities, though,
Where vengeance is more swift and clean.

COMMANDER: That's it! Be on your way!

ESTEBAN: You mean
You wish the two of us to go? 1010

COMMANDER: No, I don't want to see a soul!
Now clear the square and don't come back!

ESTEBAN: We're leaving then.

COMMANDER: Not in a pack!

FLORES: Sir, please, a little self-control.

COMMANDER: They'll plot against me left alone, 1015
Each boor a co-conspirator.

ORTUÑO: Have patience with these rustics, sir.

COMMANDER: I marvel at how much I've shown.
Go severally home now, all of you—

I won't have anything amiss.

1020

LEONELO: *(Aside.)* Just heavens, will you suffer this?

ESTEBAN: It's time that I returned home, too.

(Exit the Villagers.)

COMMANDER: Men, don't you find these clods absurd?

ORTUÑO: They know you scarcely deign to mask
Your condescension when they ask
That their petitioning be heard.

1025

COMMANDER: So now they think us peers of sorts?

FLORES: Who equals whom does not pertain.

COMMANDER: How does that crossbow thief remain

At large, unsentenced by our courts? 1030

FLORES: I thought I'd spied him lingering near
Laurencia's doorstep late last night,
Though now I know I wasn't right:
I slit some knave's throat ear to ear
When I mistook his cloak to be 1035
Fronoso's in the eventide.

COMMANDER: I can't imagine where he'd hide.

FLORES: Oh, he'll turn up eventually.

COMMANDER: Would anyone who tried to kill
A man like me remain close by? 1040

FLORES: The heedless bird will blithely fly
Into a snare lured by a trill,
The foolish fish swim toward the hook.

COMMANDER: It galls me that a lowborn pest
Could point a crossbow at the chest 1045
Of this brave captain, whose sword shook
Granada and Cordova both.
It's at an end, this world we knew!

FLORES: He acted as love bid him to.
You're still alive, so by my oath, 1050
I think you're in the peasant's debt.

COMMANDER: I swear, Ortuño, had I not
Disguised my feelings toward this lot,
Two hours would not have passed by yet
And I'd have run the whole town through. 1055
Until I judge the time is right,
I'll keep the reins on vengeance tight
And then do what I need to do.
What says Pascuala?

FLORES: She replied
That any day now she's to wed. 1060

COMMANDER: If she'd still care to lend her bed ...

FLORES: She's sending you where they'll provide
Your lordship with such things for cash.

COMMANDER: What says Olalla, then?

ORTUÑO: The girl's
A lively one.

COMMANDER: Her quips are pearls. 1065
To wit?

ORTUÑO: She and her husband clash

Of late because, she'd have you know,
He's jealous of the notes I bring
And mad that you'd go visiting
His wife with manservants in tow. 1070
Just wait until he drops his guard
And you'll be first inside again!

COMMANDER: This knight is glad upon it, then.
The peasant watches her but hard.

ORTUÑO: It's true, though his attention strays. 1075

COMMANDER: And sweet Inés?

FLORES: Who?

COMMANDER: Anton's bit.

FLORES: Her offer stands most definite
And ought to liven up your days.
We spoke in the corral outside—
Go round the back and in that door. 1080

COMMANDER: Loose women I've a soft spot for
But less so once I'm satisfied.
Ah, Flores, if they only were
Aware of what their charms are worth!

FLORES: As letdowns go, there's none on earth 1085
Like plain capitulation, sir.
A woman's quick surrender blights
The pleasure men anticipate,
Though certain girls corroborate
A wise philosopher who writes 1090
That females crave male company
As form desires material shape,
Which shouldn't leave your mouths agape
For this is but reality.

COMMANDER: A man whom ardor's heat lays waste 1095
Is glad to have his pleasure sealed
By lady friends who readily yield,
Though he disdain them for this haste.
The surest course for love to run
Once all delight has been bestowed 1100
Is down oblivion's well-worn road
Of favors far too easily won.

(Enter Cimbranos, a soldier.)

CIMBRANOS: Is the Commander hereabouts?

ORTUÑO: What, don't you see him standing there?

CIMBRANOS: Oh, brave Fernán Gómez! Throw off 1105
Your hunter's cap and be prepared
To strap your battle helmet on!
Replace your cloak with armor now!
The Master of Santiago and
The Count of Cabra's troops surround 1110

Young Don Rodrigo Girón in
Support of the Castilian queen
At Ciudad Real. Good sir,
I'm certain you can plainly see
That all the blood your Order's lost 1115
Will be for naught should they succeed.
Our forces can already glimpse
The figures on their coats of arms:
Castile's two castles paired with lions
By Aragon's heraldic bars. 1120
So while the King of Portugal
Would like to honor staunch Girón,
The youth would do well just to reach
Almagro and be safely home.
Quick, saddle up your charger, sir; 1125
They'll head back to Castile as soon
As you ride boldly into sight.

COMMANDER: Be still while I think what to do.
Ortuño, have the trumpet sound
So all may hear it from the square. 1130
How many soldiers have I here?

ORTUÑO: Some fifty horsemen stand prepared.

COMMANDER: Inform them that we sally forth.

CIMBRANOS: If we don't start out now, good sirs,
Then Ciudad Real will fall.

1135

COMMANDER: Fear not, we shan't let this occur.

(Exit all.)

[An open field in Fuenteovejuna]

(Enter Mengo, Laurencia, and Pascuala, fleeing.)

PASCUALA: Oh, please don't leave us here alone!

MENGO: How can these fields inspire such dread?

LAURENCIA: I think it's best for us to head

To town now, Mengo, on our own— 1140
Just women, unaccompanied—
In case we should cross paths with him.

MENGO: He couldn't make our lives more grim
Were he the very demon's seed!

LAURENCIA: He's sure to hound us till we're his. 1145

MENGO: Oh, lightning bolts, cast down your fires
And purify these mad desires!

LAURENCIA: A bloody beast is what he is,
Our arsenic and pestilence
In town.

MENGO: Laurencia, I've been told 1150
That poor Frondoso grew so bold
In championing your innocence

He aimed at the Commander's chest.

LAURENCIA: You know how much I've hated men
But, Mengo, I confess since then 1155
I've realized he's not like the rest.
How valiant Frondoso was!
I fear this bravery might mean
His death.

MENGO: He never can be seen
In town, whatever else he does. 1160

LAURENCIA: I love the man, although it's plain
That I, too, know that he must flee.
Still, he responds to such a plea
With raging anger and disdain
While our Commander wastes no breath 1165
Affirming he'll hang upside down.

PASCUALA: Will no one garrotte him in town?

MENGO: I'd rather see him stoned to death.

Sweet heavens, if I only knew

Some way to use my sling, I vouch

1170

Just stretching back this leather pouch

Would good as crack his skull in two!

You wouldn't find depravity

Like his in Rome's own Sabalus.

LAURENCIA: You mean Heliogabalus,

1175

Whose reign surpassed indecency.

MENGO: Sir Gawain's misdeeds were no worse.

Though history's outside my ken,

Our own Commander's crueller than

This legendary rogue of verse.

1180

Has nature spawned another man

The likes of Fernán Gómez?

If he would fancy you his slut, 1195
He'll surely use me as his moll.

(Exit Laurencia.)

PASCUALA: A man might help you to escape;
I can't defend you in distress.

(Exit Pascuala.)

MENGO: I'll have to act like one, I guess,
As I'm a man in name and shape. 1200
Come by my side and never fear.

JACINTA: But have you arms?

MENGO: The oldest known
To man.

JACINTA: A sling without a stone?

MENGO: Jacinta, there are stones right here.

(Enter Flores and Ortuño.)

FLORES: Thought you could run away, did you? 1205

JACINTA: Now I'm as good as dead!

MENGO: Good sirs,
How can these honest villagers ...

ORTUÑO: So, mustering up the derring-do
To champion a lady's cause?

MENGO: I'd first defend her with my pleas, 1210
As I'm male kin, but failing these,
Would look to force and nature's laws.

FLORES: Enough, now. Run the beggar through.

COMMANDER: My leave, you want? Retaliate,
Men, by my leave, against the churl.
Come, drop the sling.

MENGO: My lord, they bade ...

COMMANDER: Peace! Flores and Ortuño, bind
His hands. Cimbranos, help in kind. 1235

MENGO: You'd act thus, called to virtue's aid?

COMMANDER: What do the townsfolk think of me
In Fuenteovejuna, cur?

MENGO: How has our village or I, sir,
Offended you so grievously? 1240

FLORES: Are we to kill him, then?

COMMANDER: Why draw
Your swords to sully steel you'd grace
With honor in a better place?

ORTUÑO: What are your orders?

COMMANDER: Whip him raw.
There, lash the peasant to that oak 1245
And, when his back is bared, go seize
Your horse's reins ...

MENGO: Have mercy, please,
Sir! Mercy! You are gentlefolk.

COMMANDER: ... And flog this man relentlessly
Until the studs fly off the straps. 1250

MENGO: Do heaven's righteous laws collapse
To grant these deeds impunity?

(Exit Flores, Ortuño, Cimbranos, and Mengo.)

COMMANDER: You, girl, what are you running for?
You find a clod that tills the earth
More pleasing than a man of worth? 1255

JACINTA: Is this the way you would restore
Lost honor when it was your plan
To have me carried off by force?

COMMANDER: So, I desired you?

JACINTA: Of course,
Because my father is a man 1260
Well spoken of, though not your peer
In birth, with manners gentler still
Than any you possess.

COMMANDER: This shrill
Effrontery will not, I fear,
Assuage my wrath or aid your plight. 1265
Now, come along at once.

JACINTA: With you?

COMMANDER: Correct.

JACINTA: Pay heed to what you do.

COMMANDER: I'll heed your detriment, all right.

Who needs you? Why should I deprive

The troops of coveted supplies?

1270

JACINTA: Not all the force beneath the skies

Could make me suffer this alive!

COMMANDER: Come on now, strumpet, move along.

JACINTA: Have mercy!

COMMANDER: Mercy won't exist.

JACINTA: Then I've no choice but to enlist

1275

The heavens to redress this wrong.

(The Commander exits as soldiers carry Jacinta off. Enter Laurencia and Frondoso.)

LAURENCIA: How can you show your face around
Here unafraid?

FRONDOSO: I thought that some
Such recklessness would make you come
To see the troth to which we're bound. 1280
I watched the dread Commander part
While hiding in the hills above
And, seeing you deserve my love,
Lost all the fear that plagued my heart.
I hope he goes far off to thrive! 1285
Good riddance, too!

LAURENCIA: Don't waste your breath.
Besides, the more men wish your death,
The longer you'll remain alive.

FRONDOSO: If that's so, then long life to him,
For both sides profit by this quirk: 1290

LAURENCIA: Enough with blandishments! We mince
Words when it's evident to us 1310
That you have only to discuss
The matter with my father since
He comes now with my uncle, see?
Fronoso, don't lose faith, for I'm
To be your wedded wife in time— 1315
That much is sure.

FRONOSO: God bolster me!

(They hide. Enter Esteban, Alonso, and Juan Rojo.)

ALONSO: So, in the end, the townsfolk rose
In vocal protest on the square,
And rightly so, for they'll not bear
More crimes from him resembling those. 1320
The scale of his intemperance
These days can scarcely fail to stun
While poor Jacinta's now the one
Who suffers his incontinence.

JUAN ROJO: All Spain will soon be governed by 1325
The Catholic Kings, whose well-earned fame
For piety bestows their name,
Which they do both exemplify.
Soon, too, brave Santiago will
Reach Ciudad Real's razed lands 1330
And win it back from Girón's hands
By marshaling his general's skill.
I'm sorry for Jacinta, though,
A stalwart lass in every way.

ALONSO: They whipped old Mengo's hide, you say? 1335

JUAN ROJO: No ink or flannel that I know
Of ever looked more black or blue.

ALONSO: Enough! You know my blood begins
To boil just picturing the sins
That make his reputation true. 1340

Why should I carry this baton
Of office if it serves no use?

JUAN ROJO: His men inflicted the abuse,
So why should you feel woebegone?

ALONSO: Well, what about the time they found 1345
Redondo's wife in this deep glen,
Left raped by the Commander's men,
Among whom she'd been passed around
Detestably when he did cease
To take by force what she'd deny? 1350

JUAN ROJO: I hear someone! Who's there?

FRONDOSO: Just I,
Who look for leave to speak my piece.

JUAN ROJO: Frondoso, as my house is yours,

Speak freely if you feel the need.

You owe life to your sire's seed 1355

But I'm owed what your grace ensures.

You're like a son to me; I reared

You with much love.

FRONDOSO: Then, sir, I seek—

Based on this love of which you speak—

A gracious favor volunteered. 1360

You know who fathered this proud son.

ESTEBAN: Were you aggrieved by that crazed beast

Fernán Gómez?

FRONDOSO: To say the least.

ESTEBAN: I thought as much—another one.

FRONDOSO: This pledge of love that you confide 1365
Now moves me likewise to profess
I love Laurencia and express
My wish here that she be my bride.
This tongue deserves a reprimand
For hastiness, which you'll excuse, 1370
As usually another sues
The sire for his daughter's hand.

ESTEBAN: Your swift return here is a boon,
Fronoso, and prolongs my years.
Dispelling what my heart most fears, 1375
Your coming is most opportune
And so I thank the skies above
That you've emerged to cleanse my name
And thank your passion just the same
For showing purity in love. 1380
It's only right that your good sire
Should learn at once what you've proposed.
For my part, I am well disposed
To help you realize this desire.
I would consider myself blessed 1385

If this sweet union came to pass.

JUAN ROJO: Well, first we'd better ask the lass
To verify she's acquiesced.

ESTEBAN: You needn't go through all that fuss;
In this case nothing is untoward: 1390
The two were firmly of accord
Before he pled his case to us.
We may as well, then, at our ease,
Discuss the dowry that is due.
The sum I gladly offer you 1395
Was saved up in *maravedís*.

FRONDOSO: If I decline, don't feel forlorn;
What I don't need can pass unwept.

JUAN ROJO: You should be thankful he'll accept
The girl as bare as she was born. 1400

ESTEBAN: That may be, but in any case,
I'll ask the maid if she approves.

FRONDOSO: Good thinking, as it ill behooves
Your pressing what she won't embrace.

ESTEBAN: Sweet child! Laurencia!

LAURENCIA: Father dear. 1405

ESTEBAN: I'm sure she will, though you decide.
You see how promptly she replied?
My child, Laurencia! Only sheer
Love urges me to ask today—
Come closer, girl—would you commend 1410
Fronoso marrying your friend,
Good Gila? He's some fiancé,
The most upstanding of our men,

Proud Fuenteovejuna's son.

LAURENCIA: What? Gila wed ... ?

ESTEBAN: If any one 1415
Among our maids deserves him, then ...

LAURENCIA: I do commend their union, yes.

ESTEBAN: Yes—though she's ugly, which makes some
Believe Frondoso should become
Your husband. That we all could bless. 1420

LAURENCIA: Oh, father! Still inclined to jest
And gibe at your advanced age, too!

ESTEBAN: You love him, child?

LAURENCIA: He knows I do
And, though his love's likewise professed,
Unpleasant actualities ... 1425

ESTEBAN: Should I inform him you consent?

LAURENCIA: Yes, bring him news of my intent.

ESTEBAN: So then it's I who hold the keys?
Well, said and done! Let's all away
To seek our good friend in the square. 1430

JUAN ROJO: Let's go.

ESTEBAN: My lad, as for a fair
Amount in dowry, would you say
Four thousand might work like a charm?
I've that much in *maravedís*.

FRONDOSO: How can you speak of such things? Please, 1435
You do my honor grievous harm.

ESTEBAN: Come now, son, you'll feel otherwise
Within a day for, by my word,
A dowry that's left unconferred
Goes wanting in some other guise. 1440

(All exit except Frondoso and Laurencia.)

LAURENCIA: Frondoso, are you happy, dear?

FRONDOSO: Just happy? I'm so overjoyed,
The state I'm in leaves me devoid
Of all my senses when you're near!
The smiles to which my heart is prone 1445
Pour out in gladness from my eyes
To think, Laurencia, my sweet prize,
That I can claim you as my own.

(Exit Frondoso and Laurencia. Enter the Master, the Commander, Flores, and Ortuño.)

COMMANDER: Sir, flee! We can't do more to hold our ground!

MASTER: The weakness of these city walls before 1450
Their army's forces brought about our fall.

COMMANDER: The blood it's cost them, and the countless lives!

MASTER: They failed to seize our standard, though, to
count
The Calatravan colors mid their spoils,
Though it had brought great honor to their toils. 1455

COMMANDER: Your stratagems are at an end, Girón.

MASTER: What can I do if turns of fate from night
To morn appear to be blind Fortune's will?

VOICES: (*Within.*) A victory for the monarchs of Castile!

MASTER: Our foes now crown the battlements with lights, 1460

Emblazoning the windows in the towers
Above with standards marking victory.

COMMANDER: And well they might, for all the blood it's cost.
Their joy seems tragic given what they've lost.

MASTER: I'll set back out for Calatrava, then. 1465

COMMANDER: And I to Fuenteovejuna while
You ponder whether to support your kin
Or pledge allegiance to the Catholic king.

MASTER: I'll write when I'm resolved of my intent.

COMMANDER: Here Time itself will be your guide.

MASTER: Ah, youth! 1470
May your deceptions keep me not from Truth!

[Esteban's house]

(The wedding is in progress. Enter Musicians, Mengo, Frondoso, Laurencia, Pascuala, Barrildo, Esteban, Alonso, and Juan Rojo.)

MUSICIANS: *Oh, many happy years*
To you, sweet bride and groom!
Oh, many happy years!

MENGO: You dashed that off in seconds flat, 1475
Now didn't you? It's not much good.

BARRILDO: What? You don't mean to say you could
Compose a better song than that?

FRONDOSO: He's more familiar with the lash
Than with the melodies of verse. 1480

MENGO: Don't shrink, but some have suffered worse.
One man that blackguard didn't thrash
Was taken to the vale one day ...

BARRILDO: Stop, Mengo, please! Be merciful!
That homicidal animal 1485

Dishonors all who pass his way.

MENGO: A hundred soldiers—not one less—
Administered my pummeling.
I'd nothing on me but my sling
And never suffered such duress. 1490
But, as I was just saying, a
Fine man whose name I won't evoke,
Esteemed by all the village folk,
Was given quite the enema
Of ink and pebbles all in one. 1495
Who'd stand for vileness of that sort?

BARRILDO: The savage looked on it as sport.

MENGO: Well, enemas are far from fun
And, while they are salubrious,
I'd rather that my death come fast. 1500

FRONDOSO: So, may we hear now at long last
The ditty you've composed for us?

MENGO: *Oh, many happy years to you,
Dear newlyweds! God's grace decree
That envy and vile jealousy 1505
Should never come between you two!
And when your years on earth are through,
Depart this life from satiety!
Oh, many happy years!*

FRONDOSO: A curse upon the rhyming hack 1510
Who dashed off such a poor refrain!

BARRILDO: It did sound hasty.

MENGO: Let me deign
To say a word about this pack:
You know how fritter-makers throw

Their bits of batter in the oil 1515
And add more as they watch it boil
Until the kettle's filled with dough?
How some look swollen when they're turned,
Misshapen and a sorry sight,
Some lumpy on the left or right, 1520
Some nicely fried but others burned?
That's what I've come to understand
A poet does to draft a strain,
Material sprung from his brain
Like dough he forms with pen in hand. 1525
Then, whoosh! He plops the poetry
On sheets—the role the kettle plays—
Assuming that a honey glaze
Will mute the public's mockery.
Though once the audience takes a look, 1530
There's scarce a buyer to be found
Because the only one around
Who'll eat that rubbish is the cook!

BARRILDO: I think we've heard enough of this;
It's time the lovers made a speech. 1535

LAURENCIA: Give us your hand, sir, we beseech.

JUAN ROJO: Sweet child, my hand you wish to kiss?
First ask your father for this grace
On both yours and Frondoso's part.

ESTEBAN: I pray God sees it in His heart 1540
To fold them in His fond embrace
And bless the new life they've begun.

FRONDOSO: May you both bless us all life long.

JUAN ROJO: We shall. Come, lads, let's have a song 1545
For now these two are joined as one!

MUSICIANS: *The maid with flowing tresses roamed
Through Fuenteovejuna's vale*

*And all the while, unknown to her,
A Knight of Calatrava trailed.
She hid within the leafy wood, 1550
Pretending she had spied him not
And, by turns bashful and abashed,
Concealed herself amid the copse.
'Why do you steal away, fair lass?'
He asked the maiden in the grove, 1555
'You know full well my lynx-eyed love
Has penetrated walls of stone.'
The knight approached the maiden who,
Abashed and quite disquieted,
Began to fashion jealousies 1560
From boughs entangled overhead.
But just as anyone who loves
Will think it insignificant
To cross the mountains and the seas,
The knight asked his fair maid again: 1565
'Why do you steal away, fair lass,
My lovely maiden in the grove?
You know full well my lynx-eyed love
Has penetrated walls of stone.'*

(Enter the Commander, Flores, Ortuño, and Cimbranos.)

COMMANDER: Don't stop the feast on my account. 1570
Calm now, no need to be distraught.

JUAN ROJO: We recognize you're in command,
But this, sir, is no game you halt.
Sit here if you would stay. What cause
Is there for such warlike array? 1575
Had you some triumph? But, why ask?

FRONDOSO: Stars, I'm a dead man! Send me aid!

LAURENCIA: Frondoso, flee while you've the chance!

COMMANDER: Not this time. Bind the peasant tight.

JUAN ROJO: Resign yourself to prison, son. 1580

FRONDOSO: I'll never leave the place alive!

JUAN ROJO: Why? What is your offense?

COMMANDER: I'm not

The sort to kill without due cause

For, if I were, this cur who stands

Before us would by now have lost

1585

His life, run through here by my guard.

Confine him to a prison cell

Until his father should pronounce

The punishment his crime compels.

PASCUALA: Please, sir, not on his wedding day.

1590

COMMANDER: Why should these nuptials change my mind?

Are there no other men in town?

PASCUALA: You're able to forgive his crime;

You have that power.

COMMANDER: Were I the one

Aggrieved, Pascuala, then I could. 1595

But Master Téllez Girón was

Insulted by this criminal,

His Order and his honor both,

And it's imperative that all

Bear witness to this punishment 1600

In case some other foe feels called

To raise a standard versus his.

You may have heard one afternoon

He aimed a crossbow at the chest—

My vassals, such a loyal group!— 1605

Of your esteemed commander here.

ESTEBAN: Sir, if a father-in-law may

Defend a deed of his new son,

It isn't hard to contemplate

How someone so in love as he 1610

Might well have rankled with chagrin

If it is certain you conspired

To take his wife away from him.

What swain would not have done the same?

COMMANDER: You're talking nonsense, magistrate. 1615

ESTEBAN: I speak for your own virtue, sir.

COMMANDER: I'm innocent of all you claim;
She wasn't yet his wife back then.

ESTEBAN: You're guilty, sir. I'll say no more
But rest assured the king and queen 1620

Who rule Castile will issue forth

New orders for disorder's end.

They'd be remiss, though now at rest

From war, to suffer that their towns

And far-flung villages let men 1625

As powerful and cruel as you

Display a cross so grandiose.

This sign is but for noble breasts

So let it grace the monarch's robes

And not the cloaks of lesser men. 1630

COMMANDER: You, there! Relieve him of the staff.

ESTEBAN: Obedient, I surrender it.

COMMANDER: (*Striking Esteban.*) I'll use it on you as I'd lash
An untamed and unruly horse.

ESTEBAN: As you're my lord, I must submit. 1635

PASCUALA: You'd cudgel an old man like that?

LAURENCIA: He thrashes him because he is
My sire. Avenge yourself on me!

COMMANDER: You, take her to the prison grounds
And station ten guards at her cell. 1640

(The Commander exits with his men.)

ESTEBAN: Sweet heavens, send your justice down!

(Exit Esteban.)

PASCUALA: The wedding has become a wake!

(Exit Pascuala.)

BARRILDO: Who'll speak? Are there no men around?

MENGO: I took my licks, thanks much! The welts
Are red as cardinals on my back 1645
So save yourselves that trip to Rome!
Let someone else provoke his wrath.

JUAN ROJO: We'll speak to him as one.

MENGO: Perhaps,
Though now we'd best let silence reign;
Don't you recall they whipped my cheeks 1650
Till they were pink as salmon steaks?

ACT III

[The council chamber in Fuenteovejuna]

(Enter Esteban, Alonso, and Barrildo.)

ESTEBAN: What's keeping them?

BARRILDO: They know full well we wait.

ESTEBAN: Assembling here grows riskier by the hour.

BARRILDO: Most everyone's heard why we congregate.

ESTEBAN: With poor Frondoso captive in the tower 1655
And my Laurencia under such duress,
If God does not do all within His power ...

(Enter Juan Rojo and Cuadrado.)

JUAN ROJO: Why raise your voice, Esteban, when our chief

Aid must be stealth if we're to have success?

ESTEBAN: My false restraint should bring none here relief. 1660

(Enter Mengo.)

MENGO: I'll slip into the meeting hall as well.

ESTEBAN: An old man whose gray hairs are bathed in grief
Asks you, good villagers, how best the bell
For our dear town's lost honor might be tolled
Now that she's been so ravished and abused. 1665
And how, if these be honors, can we hold
Such rites? Is there a single man left here
Whom that barbarian has not unsouled?
Why don't you answer? Is it, as I fear,
That you've all had your honor basely used? 1670
Then, make your firm commiseration clear
For, if this common loss can't be excused,
What stays your hand? Or have these blows been
slight?

MENGO: If the Commander hears the noise, he'll frown
So on this council, he might kill us all.

CUADRADO: Our tree of patience has come crashing down,
Our ship of fear floats lost beneath this pall. 1690
For such an upright man, who leads this land,
To watch his daughter dragged away in thrall
To brutes, and have the staff of his command
So splintered on his head, I ask of you,
What slave endures more from his master's
hand? 1695

JUAN What is it you would have our village do?
ROJO:

CUADRADO: Die, die or put those tyrants to the sword.
We've many villagers, while they are few.

BARRILDO: Rise up in arms against our rightful lord?

ESTEBAN: The king's our only lord by heaven's laws, 1700
Not that barbaric and inhuman horde.
If God assists us in our righteous cause,
What have we all to lose?

MENGO: Take care, good sirs,
Rash actions such as these should give us pause.
I speak for all the simple villagers 1705
Who bear the brunt of this vile injury
And fear still more harm from these tormentors.

JUAN
ROJO: We suffer this misfortune equally;
Why should we wait until our lives are lost?
They burn our homes and vineyards down with
glee; 1710
Revenge upon such tyrants bears no cost!

(Enter Laurencia, disheveled.)

LAURENCIA: You let me pass, for I've a right
To enter where the men confer.
A woman may not have a vote
But she can make her voice be heard. 1715
Don't you know me?

ESTEBAN: Good God, are you
My daughter?

JUAN ROJO: You don't recognize
Your own Laurencia?

LAURENCIA: I'm afraid
I must appear a dreadful sight
For you to doubt it's I you see. 1720

ESTEBAN: My child!

LAURENCIA: Don't dare call me your child

Again.

ESTEBAN: Why not, my dearest heart,
Why not?

LAURENCIA: I've reasons of all kinds,
But let the first among them be
Allowing tyrants, unavenged, 1725
To snatch me from my family's grasp
Without your seeking due revenge.
I'm not Frondoso's wife yet, so
You cannot claim reprisal's weight
Devolves upon a husband's lot 1730
When such revenge is yours to take.
Until the wedding night has passed,
Our codes prescribe that you'd assume
This obligation stands among
A father's duties, not a groom's. 1735
For even if I buy a jewel,
Until it isn't brought to me,
It's not my place to fret about

Who's guarding it or who's a thief.
You watched Fernán Gómez abduct 1740
A maid and didn't lift a hand
Like coward shepherds who allow
The wolf to carry off the lamb.
How many daggers at my heart
And gallant speeches I endured! 1745
How many threats and foul misdeeds
From one who'd be my paramour
And yearned to see my chastity
Surrendered to his appetites!
Look at my hair for evidence 1750
Of how I fought him through the night
And see the blood spilt by his blows.
Have you no honor left as men?
Have I no kinsmen here, no sire?
How has my sorry plight not left 1755
Your likes contorted with the pain
Of seeing me so cruelly pained?
You're lambs, the sheep from which our town's
Old sheep well takes its timid name!
Give me your weapons, then, if you'd 1760
Stand useless there like stones, bronze shards

Or jasper blocks. Brute tigers! No,
Not tigers. While these creatures are
Unfeeling, they hunt down and kill
The beasts that rob them of their cubs. 1765
Not even waves can harbor those
That venture to attack their young.
You cowards were born craven hares,
Not Spaniards but barbarians,
Frail chickens—hens!—whose women are 1770
Abandoned to their captors' whims!
Wear distaffs on your belts, not swords!
Why even gird those rapiers on?
By God above, I'll see to it
That only womenfolk respond 1775
To tyrants who'd leave honor stained
By seeking their perfidious blood!
They'll just throw stones at you and laugh,
You spinning women! Fags! Enough!
You're cowardly as little girls! 1780
Perhaps, tomorrow you can use
Our headdresses and petticoats
Or make your faces up with rouge!
That cruel Commander, meanwhile, plans

To hang Frondoso for his crime 1785
From high upon a battlement
In secret and without a trial.
He'll do the same to all of us,
You half-men, which I wouldn't spurn
For, with its women dead, our town 1790
Would see its honor cleansed as earth
Reverted to that Golden Age
Of Amazons who made men quake.

ESTEBAN: Brave child, I cannot count myself
Among those you would designate 1795
With such dishonorable terms.
I'll go myself now, even if
The whole world stands against my cause.

JUAN ROJO: I, too, however daunted with
The power of this enemy. 1800

CUADRADO: We'll die together, then.

BARRILDO:

A rag
Tied to a stick is flag enough.
Now let those monsters breathe their last!

JUAN ROJO: What order should we recognize?

MENGO: Kill all of them disorderly! 1805
The village must be of one mind
And all the villagers agreed
The tyrant and his men must die.

ESTEBAN: Then grab your cudgels and your bows,
Your pikes and swords and lances, too! 1810

MENGO: Long live the Catholic Kings, our sole
True lords!

ALL: Long may they live and reign!

MENGO: And death to tyrant traitors! Death!

ALL: Yes, traitorous tyrants, you must die!

(The men exit.)

LAURENCIA: *(To the village women.)* The heavens echo your
behest, 1815
So forward, women of the town!
March on if you would set about
Regaining your lost honor! March!

(Enter Pascuala, Jacinta, and other village women.)

PASCUALA: What's happening? We heard these shouts.

LAURENCIA: Girls, can't you see the town is off 1820
To kill Fernán Gómez today?
The merest boys have joined the men
To send that devil to his grave.
But why should they alone enjoy
The honor stemming from this feat? 1825
As women we have suffered most

The outrage from his foul misdeeds.

JACINTA: What is it you would have us do?

LAURENCIA: Let's all of us form ordered ranks
And undertake an act so bold 1830
We'll leave the wondering world aghast.
Jacinta, for your suffering,
I name you corporal; you're in charge
Of this brave women's squadron here.

JACINTA: Yet you've endured much worse by far. 1835

LAURENCIA: Pascuala, standard-bearer, right?

PASCUALA: I'll look around here for a pole
So we can hoist a flag on it.
You'll see I'm worthy of the post!

LAURENCIA: We haven't time for that right now 1840
Since fortune presses us to fight
But let us use our headdresses
As pennants we can wave on high.

PASCUALA: We'll have to name a captain, though.

LAURENCIA: Not true.

PASCUALA: How so?

LAURENCIA: Because who needs 1845
El Cid or Rodomonte when
It's I who'll lead with gallantry?

[A room in the Commander's residence]

(Enter Frondoso with his hands bound, Flores, Ortuño, Cimbranos, and the Commander.)

COMMANDER: Now take the extra rope you used to bind

His hands and hang him so he's punished more.

FRONDOSO: You're leaving a black legacy behind. 1850 1850

COMMANDER: This battlement should serve us on that score.

FRONDOSO: But sir, it never even crossed my mind

To seek your death!

FLORES: What's all the ruckus for?

(Loud noise is heard offstage.)

COMMANDER: What ruckus?

FLORES: Would the peasants in this town

Obstruct our justice?

ORTUÑO: Sir, the doors are down!

1855

(The noise grows louder.)

COMMANDER: How dare they when they know this is the seat

Of our command?

FLORES: They to a man rebel!

JUAN ROJO: *(Offstage)* Now burn and raze the place! We'll

not retreat!

ORTUÑO: These popular revolts are hard to quell.

COMMANDER: They rise against their lord?

FLORES: The peasants beat 1860

Your doors down, sir, from grudges that impel

Their fury on.

COMMANDER: Come, set the prisoner free.

Fronoso, calm the magistrate for me.

FRONOSO: Yes, sir. It's love that made their passion wake.

(He exits.)

MENGO: *(Offstage)* May Ferdinand and Isabel prevail! 1865

But death to traitors!

FLORES: Sir, for your own sake

I urge you, flee!

COMMANDER: It's futile to assail

A garrison one cannot hope to take.

They'll soon turn back.

FLORES: Those wronged on such a scale

Aren't likely to retreat until blood flows

1870

And they've exacted vengeance on their foes.

COMMANDER: We'll make a stand here at the door and fight,

A false portcullis marking out our cage.

FRONDOSO: (*Offstage*) On, Fuenteovejuna!

COMMANDER: Hey, they've quite

A leader there! I say we meet their rage.

1875

FLORES: It's your rage, sir, not theirs that gives me fright.

ESTEBAN: The tyrant and accomplices, I wage.

Fight, Fuenteovejuna! Tyrants, die!

(Enter all.)

COMMANDER: Wait, men!

ALL: Redress cannot sit idly by.

COMMANDER: Then tell me where I've erred. In my renown 1880

For chivalry, I'll make it up to you.

ALL: On, Fuenteovejuna, for the crown!

Die, wicked Christians and false traitors, too!

COMMANDER: I'm speaking to you and you shout me down?

I am your rightful lord!

ALL: Our sole true lords

1885

Remain the Catholic Kings!

COMMANDER: Men, wait. Stand by!

ALL: On, Fuenteovejuna! Now you die!

(The Commander and his men flee, pursued by the men of Fuenteovejuna. Enter the village women, armed.)

LAURENCIA: Let's stop a bit and reconnoiter here,

Not women now but valiant fighting men!

PASCUALA: For vengefulness, a woman has no peer. 1890

We'll spill his blood right here! If not now,

when?

JACINTA: Then let's impale his body on a spear.

PASCUALA: We've said we ought to time and time again.

ESTEBAN: (*Offstage*) Now die, Commander traitor!

COMMANDER: Here's my death!

I beg Your mercy, Lord, with my last breath. 1895

BARRILDO: *(Offstage)* There's Flores!

MENGO: That's the rogue so quick to dole

My lashes out. Lay into him and how!

FRONDOSO: *(Offstage)* I'll be avenged when I tear out his

soul!

LAURENCIA: We need no leave to enter.

PASCUALA: Steady now.

We'll guard the door.

My flogging would impeach you all the same.

PASCUALA: Come, hand him to us women. Where's the

race,

Man? Stop your pointless running.

MENGO: Sure, I'm game.

This sounds like punishment enough to me. 1910

PASCUALA: You'll be avenged.

MENGO: That's all I want to see.

JACINTA: Die!

FLORES: Being killed by women isn't just.

JACINTA: Seems quite a turn of fate.

PASCUALA: What tears are these?

JACINTA: Perverse procurer for your master's lust!

PASCUALA: Oh, die now, traitor!

FLORES: Mercy, ladies, please!

1915

(Enter Ortuño, fleeing from Laurencia.)

ORTUÑO: Look here, I'm not ...

LAURENCIA: I know you well, I trust!

Come, let the blood of these vile dogs appease

Your swords!

PASCUALA: Oh, let me meet death slaughtering!

ALL: On, Fuenteovejuna! Thrive, dear king!

(Exit all.)

[A room in the palace of the Catholic Kings]

(Enter King Ferdinand, Queen Isabel, and Don Manrique.)

MANRIQUE: Our plan of action worked so well

1920

That all objectives were attained

And we were met with no sustained

Resistance as the city fell.

The opposition, sire, was light

But, had their side presented more

1925

To counteract our force at war,

It surely would have proven slight.

The Count of Cabra stays behind

To guard the city from attack

In case their army doubles back

1930

To mount a second thrust in kind.

FERDINAND: We deem it wise that he remain

To muster and command our troops,

Ensuring that our force regroups

And curbing passage through the plain. 1935

It ought to be impossible

For any harm to blight us, then,

Although Alfonso gathers men

To join his force in Portugal.

It's fitting that the city should

1940

Be left in such reliable hands

For, where our able Count commands,

All marvel at his hardihood.

In this way, he can turn aside

The danger threatening our realm,

1945

A loyal guardian at the helm

Who'll keep our kingdom fortified.

(Enter Flores, wounded.)

FLORES: King Ferdinand, good Catholic sire,

To whom the heavens did concede

The crown of proud Castile in light

1950

Of all your noble qualities,

Attend to this account of acts

Unmatched in cruelty by men

Throughout this world, from where the sun

First rises bright to where it sets.

1955

FERDINAND: Come, steady now, man!

FLORES: Sovereign king,

The wounds you see would not consent

To my delaying this report

For this life surely nears its end.

In Fuenteovejuna, sire,

1960

That farming town from which I've fled,

The people with inclement breast

Have put their rightful lord to death.

Fernán Gómez lies murdered there,

A victim of the grievances

1965

Perfidious vassals claimed to bear,

For those aggrieved scarce need pretext.

Thus, dubbing him tyrannical

By full consensus, these vile plebs

Became emboldened over time

1970

To carry out this treachery.

They stormed through the Commander's home

And, though he was a nobleman,

Did not provide him with the chance

To quit these debts and make amends.

1975

Not only were his pleas ignored

But, spurred by their impulsiveness,

The villagers left him with wounds

That rent the cross worn on his chest

Then hurled him out a window down

1980

Into a furious waiting horde

Of women, who proceeded to

Impale him on their pikes and swords.

They dragged his body to a house

And, each displaying greater rage,

1985

Began to pluck his hair and beard

While cruelly slicing up his face.

So outsized did their fury seem

And fierce their mounting hate appear,

The largest pieces left intact

1990

On the Commander were his ears!

Expunging, next, his coat of arms,

They shouted that they wished, instead,

To march beneath your own because

The former caused them great offense.

1995

Then, lastly, they ransacked his home

As if it were some enemy's

And happily among themselves

Divided up his property.

All this I saw with my two eyes

2000

For, infelicitously, fate

Would not consent that I should die

While lying in my hiding-place,

My wounds fresh, waiting out the day

In hope the dark of night would come

2005

So I could steal away unseen

And tell you what the town had done.

You're merciful and just, good sire,

So see these wanton criminals

Are punished by your code of law

2010

For acts so reprehensible.

Oh, hear his spilt blood crying out

And make them pay harsh recompense!

FERDINAND: Brave fellow, you may rest assured

They won't escape our punishment.

2015

So grievous are these late events

We find ourselves bereft of words

And therefore deem it best a judge

Should verify such deeds occurred

To castigate the culpable

2020

And make examples of their breed.

A captain shall escort him hence

To warrant his security.

Malfeasance such as this deserves

Exemplary punishment soon.

2025

But now, look to this soldier here

And be attentive to his wounds.

(Exit all.)

[The town square in Fuenteovejuna]

(Enter the villagers, with the head of Fernán Gómez on a lance.)

MUSICIANS: *Oh, many happy years*

To you, good Catholic Kings,

And death to tyrants all!

2030

BARRILDO: Frondoso, let's hear your song now.

FRONDOSO: Here goes, however freshly penned.

Let quibblers with my meter mend

The verse the best way they know how.

Long live our lovely Isabel

2035

And Ferdinand of Aragon,

Whose union is a paragon

And who, though two, are one as well!

St. Michael take you both to dwell

In Heaven when you hear God's call.

2040

Long life to you, we wish,

But death to tyrants all!

LAURENCIA: Your turn, Barrildo.

BARRILDO: Here goes mine.

I put a lot of thought in it.

PASCUALA: Recite the poem as you see fit

2045

And it should come out sounding fine.

BARRILDO: *Oh, many happy years to you,*

Famed monarchs, fresh from victory!

From this day forward you shall be

Our lords, who bring us luck anew!

2050

May evil dwarves and giants, too,

Succumb before your battle call

And death to tyrants all!

MUSICIANS: *Oh, many happy years*

To you, good Catholic Kings,

2055

And death to tyrants all!

LAURENCIA: Now Mengo sing.

FRONDOSO: Let's hear your stuff.

MENGO: I dabble, so I'll take a whack.

PASCUALA: Those hash marks on your belly's back

Are witness you've had whacks enough!

2060

MENGO: *'Twas on a lovely Sunday morn*

When I, on orders of this here,

Was whipped until my aching rear

Writhed frightfully, its soft skin torn,

I bearing what hence won't be borne.

2065

Long live our Christian monarchers

And death to all these tyranters!

MUSICIANS: *Oh, many happy years!*

ESTEBAN: Remove his noggin from that lance.

MENGO: His face has all a hanged man's charms.

2070

(Enter Juan Rojo, bearing an escutcheon with the royal coat of arms.)

CUADRADO: Look here, the royal coat of arms.

ESTEBAN: Let our whole village cast a glance.

JUAN ROJO: Where should its splendiddness be hung?

CUADRADO: Right here, upon our own town hall.

ESTEBAN: Shine on, brave shield!

BARRILDO: Bring joy to all!

2075

FRONDOSO: The warm sun rising here among

These symbols hails a bright new day.

ESTEBAN: Long live León! Castile, live on,

And prosper, bars of Aragon,

But death to tyrants and their sway! 2080

Dear Fuenteovejuna, heed

The sage advice of this old man

For none who've marked my counsel can

Affirm I've ventured to mislead.

It won't be long before the crown 2085

Sends someone to investigate

The goings-on round here of late

And, with the king lodged near our town,

We ought devise, while there's still time,

Some pretext no one can dismiss.

2090

FRONDOSO: Your thoughts?

ESTEBAN: Claim unto death that this

Was Fuenteovejuna's crime

And not have anyone confess.

FRONDOSO: The murder, all must be agreed,

Was Fuenteovejuna's deed.

2095

ESTEBAN: Is this how we will answer?

ALL: Yes!

ESTEBAN: Why don't I act like I've the task

Of the investigator now

So I might best instruct you how

To face the questions he will ask?

2100

Here, let's have Mengo be the first

Upon the rack.

MENGO: You couldn't choose

A frailer guy?

ESTEBAN: I'll only use

You to rehearse.

MENGO: Then, do your worst!

ESTEBAN: Who killed the town's Commander, you? 2105

MENGO: All Fuenteovejuna, sir!

ESTEBAN: Don't make me torture you, vile cur!

MENGO: Kill me and it would still be true!

ESTEBAN: Confess, thief!

MENGO: I do as I'm told.

ESTEBAN: So?

MENGO: Fuenteovejuna! There! 2110

ESTEBAN: Pull tight.

MENGO: It's nothing I can't bear.

ESTEBAN: We'll foul up any trial they hold!

(Enter Cuadrado.)

CUADRADO: What are you doing, dallying here?

FRONDOSO: Cuadrado, what's so troublesome?

CUADRADO: The crown's investigator's come.

2115

ESTEBAN: Hide quickly while the coast is clear!

CUADRADO: A captain also guards the man.

ESTEBAN: The Devil watch his back this day!

We all know what we have to say.

CUADRADO: They're seizing everyone they can 2120

As hardly any soul has hid.

ESTEBAN: There's no need fear should make us weak.

You, who killed the Commander? Speak!

MENGO: Who? Fuenteovejuna did!

(Exit all.)

[A room in the mansion of the Master of Calatrava]

(Enter the Master of Calatrava and a Soldier.)

MASTER: This murderous deed's left me distraught. 2125

That such should be his last reward!

I ought to put you to the sword

As payment for the news you've brought.

SOLDIER: I'm just a message-bearer, sir,

And never meant to stir your wrath. 2130

MASTER: Their outrage in the aftermath

Of insult caused this to occur!

I'll take five hundred men with me

And raze the village to the ground.

The lawless names of those still found

2135

There will be struck from memory.

SOLDIER: You might well calm such fury down

As they're now subjects of the king

And surely not for anything

Would one wish to enrage the crown.

2140

MASTER: But they fall under my command

So whence their fealty to Castile?

SOLDIER: These grievances our own courts will

Consider when the time's at hand.

MASTER: Now when did any such assize

2145

Remove possessions from the throne?

They are our sovereign lords, I own,

A truth I duly recognize.

We're all the monarch's vassals now

And, given this, I'll check my ire 2150

Although an audience with my sire

Might serve my case best and allow

A youthful aspect to excuse

Whatever grave offense I've done.

My tender age may well be one 2155

Defense this loyal heart can use.

I'll go to see the king in shame,

Compelled by honor to proceed

With fortitude in pressing need

To clear my honorable name.

2160

(They exit.)

[The town square in Fuenteovejuna]

(Enter Laurencia, alone.)

LAURENCIA: True love's concern for its beloved's good

Becomes thereafter love's appended pain

For fear harm may befall love is a bane

That brings concern as all new worries would.

Though watchful thought decrease this

likelihood,

2165

The mind, perturbed, will readily show strain

As love's well-being, stolen, roils the brain,

A torment nowise easily withstood.

I do adore my husband and this dire

Occasion will condemn me to duress

2170

Should fortune fail to favor him on high.

His happiness is all that I desire;

When he is present, sure is my distress,

When he is absent, just as sure I die.

(Enter Frondoso.)

FRONDOSO: Laurencia, love!

LAURENCIA: Sweet husband, here?

2175

This move displays a steely nerve!

FRONDOSO: Does such solicitude deserve

This cold reception from you, dear?

LAURENCIA: I beg you, darling mine, beware,

For here you'll meet a ghastly end. 2180

FRONDOSO: Laurencia, may the skies forfend

That my well-being should cause you care.

LAURENCIA: Aren't you afraid to view the throes

Your townsmen face in their ordeal

Or the investigator's zeal 2185

In hastening to inflict their woes?

Stay out of harm's way while you can

And flee before they capture you.

FRONDOSO: What? How could you expect me to

Do deeds unworthy of a man?

2190

Would it be proper to betray

The others in this circumstance

Or not see you when I've the chance?

Don't order me to go away.

What reason would there be for me

2195

To save myself, untouched and whole,

But not acknowledge my own soul

When facing such calamity?

(Cries are heard offstage.)

If I can trust my ears, it seems

The noise I'm hearing are the cries

2200

Some tortured wretch hurls toward the skies.

Come listen closely to his screams.

(The Judge is heard interrogating villagers offstage.)

JUDGE: The truth and you'll be freed, kind gent.

FRONDOSO: They torture an old man to make

Him speak.

LAURENCIA: He's too strong-willed to break.

2205

ESTEBAN: Pray, loose the ropes a bit.

JUDGE: Relent.

Now say, who killed Fernán, good man?

ESTEBAN: Give Fuenteovejuna blame.

LAURENCIA: Brave father, may God praise your name!

FRONDOSO: What courage!

JUDGE: Grab that boy there. Wretch!

2110

Lay on! Still tighter, mongrel. I'm

Convinced you know. Who did this crime?

No answer? Stretch him, drunkard, stretch!

BOY: Sir, Fuenteovejuna did!

JUDGE: Dumb clods, by all the king commands, 2215

I'll strangle you with my own hands!

Who murdered the Commander, kid?

FRONDOSO: To think a tender lad could face

Such torment and resist so long!

LAURENCIA: Brave villagers!

FRONDOSO: Yes, brave and strong! 2220

JUDGE: You, seize that woman there and place

Her body next upon the rack.

Now it will be the maiden's turn.

LAURENCIA: His anger's causing him to burn.

JUDGE: You'll tell me or I'll kill the pack

2225

Of you right here if he's not caught.

Which one's the guilty villager?

PASCUALA: It's Fuenteovejuna, sir!

JUDGE: Still tighter!

FRONDOSO: This is all for naught.

LAURENCIA: Pascuala hasn't said a thing.

2230

FRONDOSO: The children, either. What's to fear?

JUDGE: Have you bewitched the townsfolk here?

Pull!

PASCUALA: Heaven ease my suffering!

JUDGE: What are you, deaf? I told you, pull!

PASCUALA: Still Fuenteovejuna, yes!

2235

JUDGE: That fat oaf clad in tattered dress

Is next, the one whose paunch looks full.

LAURENCIA: Poor Mengo! Who else could it be?

FRONDOSO: Though no one's broken yet, he might.

MENGO: Ow, ow!

JUDGE: Just slowly stretch him tight.

2240

MENGO: Ow!

JUDGE: This should jog your memory.

MENGO: Ow, ow!

JUDGE: Come, bumpkin, out with it:

Who laid the town's Commander low?

MENGO: Please stop! I'll tell you all I know!

JUDGE: You, let up on the ropes a bit.

2245

FRONDOSO: He's breaking.

JUDGE: Use your back until The lever halts.

MENGO: I'll tell you when

You stop!

JUDGE: All right, who slew him, then?

MENGO: Old Fuenteovejuna!

JUDGE: I've never seen such villainy!

2250

They make a mockery of pain!

The one I thought could least refrain

From talking held up valiantly.

I'm weary. Come, let us depart.

FRONDOSO: Good Mengo, may God keep you near!

2255

Your courage has dispelled the fear

I felt for us both in my heart.

(Enter Mengo, Barrildo, and Cuadrado.)

BARRILDO: Three cheers there, Mengo!

CUADRADO: Yes, my word!

BARRILDO: And one cheer more!

FRONDOSO: That was some feat!

MENGO: Ooh!

BARRILDO: Here, friend, have a bit to eat

2260

And drink.

MENGO: What is it?

BARRILDO: Lemon curd.

MENGO: Ooh!

FRONDOSO: There you go, man, drain the cup!

BARRILDO: I knew you could.

FRONDOSO: He's swilling, so it must be good.

LAURENCIA: More food here while he's drinking up.

2265

MENGO: Ooh, ooh!

BARRILDO: This round is my treat, too.

LAURENCIA: He's stately as he knocks them back.

FRONDOSO: It's easy once you're off the rack.

BARRILDO: More?

MENGO: Ooh! As long as it's on you ...

FRONDOSO: Drink up, old friend. Lord knows you've

grounds.

2270

LAURENCIA: This makes one quaff per turn, all told.

FRONDOSO: Bring him some clothes, he must be cold.

BARRILDO: More still?

MENGO: Uh, maybe three more rounds.

Ooh, ooh!

FRONDOSO: Yooh ... want the wine you've earned?

BARRILDO: Yooh dooh? Here's more to slake your thirst.

2275

Home brew should fill resisters first.

What's wrong?

MENGO: I think this wine has turned.

Let's go before I catch a chill.

FRONDOSO: This jug, you'll see, holds better wine,

But who killed the Commander, swine?

2280

MENGO: Old Fuenteovejuna!

(Exit all except Frondoso and Laurencia.)

FRONDOSO: He's honored by our show of love

But could you please inform me, wife,

Who took the town Commander's life?

LAURENCIA: Who? Fuenteovejuna, dove.

2285

FRONDOSO: Who killed him?

LAURENCIA: Stop, you're scaring me!

Sure, Fuenteovejuna, churl!

FRONDOSO: And how did I slay you, sweet girl?

LAURENCIA: By loving me so tenderly.

(Exit Frondoso and Laurencia.)

[The queen's chamber]

(Enter Ferdinand and Isabel.)

ISABEL: Your presence here is a surprise, 2290

My lord. Good fortune smiles on me.

FERDINAND: You are a glorious sight to see,

My queen, a comfort to these eyes.

We make for Portugal and seize

This chance to stop en route and rest. 2295

ISABEL: Your Majesty knows when it's best

To change his course and take his ease.

FERDINAND: How did you leave our dear Castile?

ISABEL: In peace, sire, quiet and serene.

FERDINAND: We wonder not when such a queen 2300

Imparts tranquility at will.

(Enter Don Manrique.)

MANRIQUE: Sire, Calatrava is now just

Arrived and seeks an audience

With you in humble reverence

To pledge his troth and ask your trust. 2305

ISABEL: It's been my hope to meet the lad.

MANRIQUE: My lady, though he may look young,

I promise you he ranks among

The finest soldiers we have had.

(The Master of Calatrava enters as Don Manrique exits.)

MASTER: I'm Rodrigo Téllez Girón, 2310

Your servant, sire, and Master of

The Calatravan ranks whose love

Entreats forgiveness from the throne.

I here confess I've been deceived

Into transgressing noble laws 2315

Established by Castile because

Of faulty counsel I'd received

From cruel Fernán, who led me down

A road of false self-interest, true

But faithless. As you now construe, 2320

I beg forgiveness of the crown

And, should Your Highness grant to me

This mercy, which I scarce deserve,

I promise this day forth to serve

The royal cause stoutheartedly

2325

In, say, your long campaign, my lord,

Against Granada, where you ride

And where you will observe with pride

The valor latent in my sword

Whose unsheathed steel will bravely vie 2330

With foes who'll suffer crushing loss

So I might drape my Order's cross

O'er Moorish battlements on high.

For this, I'll send five hundred men

To fight beside your own troops now 2335

And hereby give my solemn vow,

Sire, never to displease again.

FERDINAND: Rise, Master, off this bended knee,

For we two hold your presence dear

And you are always welcome here.

2340

MASTER: These favors are grief's remedy.

ISABEL: Your words are equally as fine

As your brave feats and gallant air.

MASTER: You are, dear queen, an Esther fair

And you a Xerxes, sire, divine!

2345

(Enter Don Manrique.)

MANRIQUE: Your Majesty, the judge is back

From Fuenteovejuna, whence

He comes with news of the events

There that occasioned the attack.

FERDINAND: You judge the rogues who cut him down.

2350

MASTER: I'd show them, were you not here, sire,

What doom awaits those who conspire

To kill Commanders of the crown.

FERDINAND: Their punishment rests with the throne.

ISABEL: I do confess, I'd love to see 2355

My lord wield this authority

Should it please God this power be shown.

(Enter the Judge.)

JUDGE: I rode, sire, with due diligence

To Fuenteovejuna where,

Attending to my charge with care, 2360

I acted with expedience,

Investigating how this crime

Was carried out before I'd come

But bear no signed confession from

A soul there after all this time.

2365

The townsfolk spoke as one with stout

Conviction for their common good

And when I'd ask, 'Who did this?' would

Shout 'Fuenteovejuna' out!

Three hundred villagers there swore 2370

That they knew nothing through their pain

And I despair we'll ever gain

More information on that score.

We even lashed lads ten years old

Upon the rack who held their peace 2375

Despite our promises to cease

And other such things they were told.

In short, I've started so to frown

On finding someone to condemn

That either you must pardon them

2380

Or else eradicate the town.

To second what I've said, sire, some

Have journeyed hence to make their case

And tell you more of this disgrace.

FERDINAND: Then let them enter if they've come.

2385

(Enter Esteban, Alonso, Frondoso, Laurencia, the village women, and as many other villagers as are needed.)

LAURENCIA: Are those the monarchs over there?

FRONDOSO: Castile's own might, however far.

LAURENCIA: My God, what handsome beings they are!

St. Anthony exalt the pair!

ISABEL: Are these the murderers you mean?

2390

ESTEBAN: Amassed before you at a stroke

Stand Fuenteovejuna's folk

Who humbly wish to serve their queen.

It was the tyranny and cursed

Insistence on purveying dread 2395

Of that Commander who's now dead—

But not before he'd done his worst—

That was behind our vengeful role.

He had our scant possessions seized

And raped our women when he pleased, 2400

All mercy alien to his soul.

FRONDOSO: So much so that when finally

This lovely lass the heavens sent

To make my heart on earth content

And me as happy as can be

2405

Agreed to take me as her spouse,

He acted as if he'd been wived

And, when our wedding night arrived,

Had her abducted to his house!

Were that pure girl not prone to fend

2010

Off the advances he'd begun,

I think it's clear to everyone

Her virtue would have met its end.

MENGO:

Is it not time I said a word?

If, by your leave, I may say so,

2415

You'll all be scandalized to know

How bruised I was by what occurred

For rushing straight to the defense

Of one of our poor village girls

As she was being snatched by churls

2420

To undergo some vile offense.

My sorry derriere still aches

From that perverted Nero's lash

And darn it if they didn't thrash

My backside pink as salmon steaks!

2425

Three men administered the belts

So utterly unsparingly

That I'm convinced you still can see

The stripes they left beneath the welts.

All told, the ointment and the salve

2430

Concocted from the myrtle shrub

Which I use as a soothing rub

Are worth more than the farm I have!

ESTEBAN: In short, sire, we do gladly serve

As humble vassals of the crown 2435

And have long since hung in our town

Your coat of arms, which all observe.

We ask, my lord, that you respond

With clement mercy in this case.

To recompense this act of grace, 2440

We pledge our innocence as bond.

FERDINAND: As it appears that at no time

There'll be confessions signed in ink,

Though murder is most foul, we think

To grant forgiveness for this crime.

2445

It's well the village should repair

To the protection of Castile

And may depend on us until

We send a new Commander there.

FRONDOSO: This speech, Your Majesty, commends

2450

The measure of your providence

So with these words, wise audience,

Here *Fuenteovejuna* ends.

NOTES

Act I setting—Order of Calatrava: a military confraternity founded by Cistercian monks in the twelfth century to defend against Moorish attacks in the absence of absolutist Spanish royal authority.

l. 1—Master (and ll. 69 ff.): leader of the Order of Calatrava.

l. 58—the pope (and l. 79): Pius II (1405–1464), elected pope in 1458.

l. 59—your youth (and ll. 69 ff.): the historical father of Rodrigo Téllez Girón, Pedro Girón, relinquished leadership of the Order of Calatrava in order to marry the Infanta Isabel, sister of King Henry IV of Castile, but died before their marriage. Rodrigo, Pedro's illegitimate son, was only eight years old at the time, and needed papal dispensation to assume the title of Master.

l. 80—Paul: Pope Paul II (1417–1471). Elected pope in 1464 upon the death of Pius II.

ll. 81–82—Juan Pacheco, Master of Santiago: Marquis of Villena (see l. 125), first Duke of Escalona, and leader of the chivalric Order of Santiago, appointed coadjutor because of Rodrigo's tender age.

l. 90—Henry: King Henry IV of Castile (1420–1474), ruled from 1454 until his death.

l. 91—Alfonso: King Alfonso V of Portugal (1432–1481), married King Henry IV's daughter Juana in 1475 (see l. 101).

1. 95—Prince Ferdinand of Aragon: later, King Ferdinand V of Castile (1452–1516). Claimed the Castilian throne through his marriage to Isabel.

1. 97—Isabel: (sometimes Isabella) of Castile (1451–1504), half-sister of King Henry IV and Queen of Castile. Married Ferdinand of Aragon.

1. 101—Juana: King Henry IV's only child (1462–1504).

1. 106—Almagro: seat of the Order of Calatrava, and residence of Rodrigo Téllez Girón.

1. 107—Ciudad Real: city in south-central Spain whose name means 'royal city.'

II. 121–122—Counts of Urueña: among these was Alonso Téllez Girón, father of Juan Pacheco.

1. 125—Marquis of Villena: among these was Juan Pacheco.

1. 263—true Spaniards (and II. 989–991): although Jews had resided peacefully in Spain for centuries, intolerance for non-Christian religions increased during the Reconquest of territories from Muslim forces, and Jews who did not convert to Catholicism were expelled from Spain in 1492.

1. 286—rebec: a bowed, stringed instrument of medieval origin; precursor of the violin.

1. 366—love does not exist: what follows is a pastiche of a pastoral philosophical discussion using snippets of Platonic and Aristotelian tenets.

1. 373—the elements: the Greek philosopher Empedocles (490?–430 B.C.) believed that all matter was composed of earth, air, fire,

and water.

ll. 377–378—melancholy ... / Blood, cholera ... phlegm: the ancient Greeks believed that these four bodily humors, each associated with a distinct personality trait, had to be kept in balance in order to ensure good health. These fluids were also each associated with one of the four elements posited by Empedocles.

l. 380—all is harmony: the Greek physician Hippocrates (460–377 B.C.), known as ‘the father of medicine,’ held that harmony was paramount in bodily systems, and that ill health resulted from an imbalance among humors.

ll. 409–410—desire / For beauty: from Plato’s *Symposium*. See below.

l. 423—Plato: famed Greek philosopher (427?–348? B.C.) whose positing of non-erotic love is reductively exaggerated here.

l. 468—Moors (and l. 500): Moors, mostly Muslims from North Africa, settled in Spain and ruled vast kingdoms from 711 to 1492.

l. 472—brassards: armor pieces covering the arm, usually from elbow to shoulder.

l. 477—Guadalquivir: a river that passes through the southern cities of Cordova and Seville.

ll. 518–519—Africa ... / blue and crescent moons: a reference to north African Moorish insignia.

l. 643—Navarre and Aragon: provinces of northern Spain.

l. 705—Extremadura: a province of southwestern Spain bordering Portugal.

II. 711–712—Count of Cabra ... / Córdoba: Diego Fernández de Córdoba, Marshal of Baena.

1. 885—Transylvania: a western region of present-day Romania, invoked here as a place remote from Spain.

1. 887—Westphalia: an eastern region of present-day Germany and obvious site of beer consumption.

1. 888—Gascony: a region of southwestern France.

1. 889—Hyrcania: a region of the ancient Persian empire in present-day Iran and Turkmenistan believed by classical and medieval authors to be a propitious habitat of tigers.

1. 894—Salamanca: city in western Spain and site of the country's oldest university, founded in 1218 by King Alfonso IX of León.

1. 895—Solomon: King of Israel (970–928 B.C.) famed for his wisdom and judiciousness. His reign is related in 1 Kings Chs. 1–11 and 2 Chronicles Chs. 1–9.

1. 913—Gutenberg: Johann Gutenberg (1398?–1468), German inventor of the printing press.

1. 929—St. Augustines or Jeromes: St. Augustine (354–430), Bishop of Hippo, Church Father and author of the *Confessions*; St. Jerome (340?–420), Church Father and translator of the Bible into the Latin Vulgate version.

II. 975–976—Aristotle's tomes, / The *Politics*: Aristotle, famed Greek philosopher (384–322 B.C.) whose materialist concept of the universe opposed the metaphysics of his teacher, Plato. Aristotle was the author of the *Politics*, a classic treatise on the nature of government and the city-state.

1. 1090—a wise philosopher: Aristotle in the *Physics* 192a. See also his ‘On the Generation of Animals.’

1. 1118—coats of arms: following his marriage to Isabel of Castile, King Ferdinand of Aragon’s escutcheon bore the symbols of both of the formerly autonomous kingdoms.

1. 1167—garrotte: a medieval form of execution in which a seated prisoner was slowly asphyxiated through the tightening of an iron collar attached to a pole at his back.

1. 1175—Heliogabalus: Roman emperor (203–222) who ruled from 218 until his death. His reign was marked by sexual decadence and a disregard for Roman religious traditions.

1. 1177—Sir Gawain: a nephew of King Arthur and hero of legend whose character was variously depicted as courtly and brave as well as brutal and treacherous.

1. 1396—maravedís (and 1. 1434): relatively low-value Spanish coins fixed by King Ferdinand in 1475 at the price of one-thirtieth of a real.

II. 1645–1646—cardinals ... / Rome: a comic reference to the red cloaks worn by cardinals of the Catholic Church.

1. 1793—Amazons: brave women warriors of classical Greek mythology.

1. 1846—El Cid: Rodrigo (Ruy) Díaz de Vivar (1044?–1099), Spanish military leader nicknamed ‘the lord’ in Arabic; a principal figure of the Spanish reconquest of territories from the Moors.

1. 1846—Rodomonte: fearsome and boastful leader of the Moors in the epic poem *Orlando Furioso* by Ludovico Ariosto (1474–1533).

1. 2039—St. Michael: the archangel who, in Christian tradition, guides the souls of the faithful to Heaven.

1. 2078—León: a province of northwestern Spain.

1. 2344—Esther: Jewish woman who becomes the queen of Persia upon her marriage to King Ahasuerus. The Bible's Book of Esther recounts how she prevented a massacre of the Jewish people.

1. 2345—Xerxes: also known as Ahasuerus, king of Persia (reign 485–465 B.C.), husband of Esther.

1. 2389—St. Anthony: of Padua (1195–1231), Franciscan missionary renowned for his oratorical skills and devotion.

1. 2423—Nero: dissolute Roman emperor (37–68) who ruled from 54 A.D. until his death.

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