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Tracking the Path of Transcending: The Source of Creativity in Lope de Vega's *El ganso de oro*

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Abstract

Spain produced so many important artists and writers during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that this epoch in its culture came to be called the "Spanish Golden Age." This age particularly saw a florescence of drama. One of the most prolific and influential playwrights of this period was Lope de Vega, a contemporary of William Shakespeare. Approximately four hundred of his plays have been preserved. El ganso de oro (The Golden Goose) is one of his lesser-known works, an early effort written between 1588 and 1595. Critics regard it as minor because they believe it fails to integrate all its elements into a cohesive whole. This essay argues that it deserves a more important status. Among Lope's plays, it stands out as a coherent, unified, and metadramatic text that delves into the mechanics of creativity. This argument is upheld by Maharishi Vedic Science, which provides a deep and rich understanding of the metadramatic process depicted in the comedia. El ganso de oro is a play that probes the dynamics of creativity and shows that its source, located within the transcendental Self (symbolized by the metaphorical cave) can lead to the creation of a play or the transformation of an ordinary person into a "hero." Maharishi Vedic Science holds that such a heroic or enlightened personage, performing spontaneous right action, could restore a society to the ideal extolled in Spain's Golden Age, that "heaven on earth" so often evoked by poets and philosophers in all societies throughout the ages.

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Introduction

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1972) states that “all the successful poets have tracked the path of transcending. They start from what the eyes see, or the hands feel, or the ears hear, and they travel into space and time and direct their focus on to the beyond.” The creative process, then, is akin to the art of transcending. To transcend is to contact the level of unmanifest creative intelligence, which is the source of all creativity. When we hear in Maharishi’s (1969) reading of the Bhagavad-Gita (*Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita: A New Translation and Commentary, Chapters 1–6*) how intelligence operates within itself to generate nature, “Curving back on myself I create again and again” (v. 9.8), we could almost be listening to Robert Browning who traced his poetic insights to a radiant “spring and source within us” (cited in Orme-Johnson, p. 351). Kenneth Chandler (1987) describes a similar source for all humanity:

Many thousands of years ago, the seers of the Himalayas discovered, through the exploration of the silent levels of awareness, a unified field where all the Laws of Nature are found together in a state of wholeness. This unity of nature was directly experienced to be a self-referral state of consciousness. . . . (p. 5)

If literature emerges from this “source” and can be contacted deep within every self, then it would seem writers would want to understand and describe such a process. Lope de Vega (1916) was such a writer, and *El ganso de oro* (pp. 1588–95), one of his early neglected comedias, proves itself to be a coherent, unified, and metadramatic text that delves into the mechanics of creativity, tracks the path of transcending, and possesses the power of transformation. In the following pages we will see how its artificial language, Arcadia itself, and its pastoral inhabitants get transformed through the power of transcendence—suggested in this play by the hero’s archetypal journey—into a golden age resembling that mythic time with which Arcadia is often confused.

The Rhetoric of Love

But before examining the play’s transcendental virtues, first let us consider the pastoral world of Vega’s characters, a world constructed equally from a specialized set of social codes and a highly specific and artificial language. The first act of *El ganso de oro*, notes Richard Glenn, “derives mainly from the traditional motif of the chain of lovers. Three shepherds and two shepherdesses, Belardo, Silvero, Pradelo, Lisena, and Belisa, are hopelessly in love with the wrong man or woman.” Only one couple, Belardo-Belisa, demonstrate romantic reciprocity, but all assiduously seek amorous love experiences indicated by the one type of speech relished in Arcadia: A rhetoric of love ranging from laments for unrequited passion to rhetorical forms of seduction that attempt to bind the love object.

The artificiality of such discourse is deflated by Lisena who repeatedly punctures the poetic, synthetic world her would-be lover seeks to construct. In answer to Pradelo’s seductive rhetoric she proclaims: “Toda me has hecho un jardín” (“You have made me

into a garden” [p. 154]). She thus reduces his botanical conceits to an anomalous and risible commonplace. After such a tactical failure, Pradelo’s strategy turns away from seduction to lament. Taking as a model the mythological tale of Iphis, he threatens suicide:

Voy a colgarme de un árbol
sólo para ver si el cielo
convierte a Lisena en mármol
ese corazón de hielo.

(“I am going to hang myself from a tree, just to see if Heaven will turn Lisena and her heart of ice into marble” [p. 155]). But again Lisena counters his mythical and poetic language with prosaic common sense. Similar language and a similar response are found in another great Renaissance writer: William Shakespeare. In Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* Rosalind notes: “The poor world is almost six thousand years old, and in all this time there was not any man died in his own person, videlicet, in a love cause. . . . Men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love” (4.1., pp. 89–103). Rosalind’s speech closely parallels Lisena’s debunking of love, and it may be that Shakespeare used *El ganso de oro* as a model (de Armas, “But Not For Love”). Notice the resemblance to Rosalind’s speech in the following:

Sois los hombres desta suerte,
que siempre nos engañáis
con fingirnos que os dais muerte,
y de cuantos os matáis
muy poca sangre se vierte...
Que pensar que por amor
ha muerto nadie, es mentira.

(“You men are such that you are always deceiving us pretending that you kill yourselves, but very little blood is spilled from many that so die. . . . To think that anyone has died for love is a lie” [p. 155]). Leander, Pyramus, and Iphis, Lisena explains, died in accidents, but not for love.

According to William Empson (1935), the essential trick of the old pastoral is “to make simple people express strong feelings (felt as the most universal subject, something fundamentally true about everybody) in learned and fashionable language” (p. 11). And yet the power and universality of the shepherds’ discourse is brought into question by Lisena. Not only does she mock her would-be lover’s learned language as inappropriate for a rustic, but she also exposes his attempts to appropriate the power of mythology. Rather than mirroring Empson’s universality of feeling, shepherds in *El ganso de oro* seem intent on imitation, to change others rather than being themselves, to sham rather than express their truest feelings.

Arcadia, the Golden Age, and the Rhetorical Ideal

Lope de Vega’s *Arcadia* is thus a rather curious place, one that differs considerably from its pastoral tradition and one which certainly establishes a counterpoint with a sec-

ond myth often linked to it. The Arcadia of the ancient Greeks was often conceptualized as that idealized utopia known as the Golden Age, but the Arcadia devised by the writers of the Renaissance was not quite so perfect. According to Renato Poggioli, the primeval innocence and happiness of the Golden Age represent the genesis of the pastoral ideal expressed in literature since Theocritus. The Arcadia of the Renaissance is often compared to that earlier age of humankind when truth, harmony, and distributive justice prevailed, a land of perpetual spring according to Ovid, where nature's gifts to humankind were represented by the holm-oak, bearer of honey and the acorn, a later staple of the Arcadian diet. Indeed, Thomas G. Rosenmeyer ((1969) asserts that the land of Arcadia and the Golden Age are "two sides of the same coin" (p. 235). They are so closely related in literature and art that Harry Levin has to warn: "Arcadia is one myth; the Golden Age is another; and though they have significant linkages, art history does not help by confounding the two" (pp. 194–95).

Because of this constant confusing of the two, one ought to expect, then, the same harmony that characterizes the Golden Age to also be found in de Vega's Arcadia. But the distance between the two myths is great, particularly in their various uses of language, the issue most germane to this paper. Along with its edenic locations, the Golden Age expresses itself in languages of truth with a clear link between signifier and signified. In the Arcadia of *El ganso de oro*, not only is idealized language derided, but words are used to manipulate, prevaricate, establish boundaries, and cause confusion.

Utilizing a different terminology, Vedic grammarians are also concerned with ideal language which they find in the close connection between linguistic parts. Patanjali (1972) states, for example, that "Sound and sense and the relationship subsisting between the two" are eternal (pp. 57–8). In other words, the syllables of sound in the name (signifier) determine the form (signified). Other Vedic grammarians see ideal speech as emerging from the subtlest *Parâ* or transcendental level where name and form are related. Rhoda Orme-Johnson (1987), who summarizes Maharishi's lectures on Vedic speech, states: the full range of the object's reality will be contained within the word chosen to express the speaker's subjective experience of it. When this word falls upon a listener whose consciousness is also fully developed, it will evoke in that consciousness the full reality from which it sprang (p. 344).

Summarizing Maharishi, Orme-Johnson explains how a word, any word such as "rose," can produce a beneficial effect on the consciousness when experienced at the deepest level of the Self (p. 346). Orme-Johnson's choice of examples is fortunate, for the rose, according to Edward Friedman, is "the ideal poetic symbol. . . . From classical antiquity onward, it has represented beauty and the impermanence of youth, of beauty and of earthly existence" (p. 437). The inept shepherd in Lope's play utilizes the name of the rose, but his effect remains on the surface:

¡Y esa frente tan hermosa!
 ¡Y esa boca colorada,
 que no es boca, sino rosa!

("And such a beautiful forehead! And a mouth so red that it is no longer a mouth, but a rose" [p. 154]). Pradelo's attempts to cultivate botanical conceits out of language fail to

evoke the symbol, much less the form, of the flower, and he is therefore destined to remain instead at the level of what Julia Kristeva calls the sign: His “rose” fails to move Lisena since his language does not emerge from a deep level, such as the *Parâ* level of consciousness recognized in Vedic Literature. Indeed, using them as weapons, Lisena redirects the botanical metaphors against her would-be lover and poet. Thus miscommunication rules in Lope de Vega’s play, producing a false Arcadia.

We see then in Pradelo’s inept attempts language will always produce an effect, but not necessarily the one desired. When language originates from a superficial source, the more erratic will be the communication and the more frustrations it will create. In order to give rise to the deepest possible level of speech, Maharishi states, the speaker (or writer) must possess an expanded awareness, and the listener, in order to fully profit from the speaker’s words, must also operate from a deep level of consciousness. Lisena intuits the superficiality of Pradelo’s language. She also appreciates the depth of feeling expressed by Belardo. Hearing Belardo poeticizing his love for Belisa through an apostrophe to nature (p. 156), Lisena does not attempt to satirize this speaker’s language of love; instead, finding sincerity and truth in his words, she becomes enamored of him. Unfortunately, penetrating the depth of feeling in his poetry does Lisena little good since Belardo is not addressing her.

In her ensuing jealousy, Lisena turns language against herself, embracing a self-inflicted death she had once rejected: “que voy a ahorcarme en los lazos / de la vid más firme y vieja” (“that I am going to hang myself from a noose formed from the oldest and strongest vine” [p. 158]). Firmeza or constancy in love is replaced by the firm embrace of death. Through language, Arcadia is exposed as a land far removed from the timeless Golden Age. Images of suffering and dissolution predominate over those of harmony and happiness. Relationships are capricious and inconstant; Lisena ignored by Belardo switches her attention to the shepherd Silvero, whom she only pretends to love in order to arouse the passion and jealousy of Belardo.

Silvero accepts that shepherds are often doomed to suicidal thoughts arising from unrequited love, but he will not follow the example of Iphis, although sanctioned by pastoral discourse. He instead appeals to the magical powers of his father Felicio who appears before his cave to solve his son’s difficulties: “Todo lo que jamás ajuste y cuadre / a tu remedio tengo prevenido” (“I have arranged all that will ever be right and proper to bring about your well-being” [p. 158]). Although the magician speaks from a deep level of consciousness, Silvero apprehends his words on a more surface level, believing that his father will unite him with the scornful shepherdess Belisa, an act far from the truth.

The Journey to the Self

We have seen how words spoken or understood only on the surface level of consciousness create misunderstandings and disruptions. The same can be said of action; Maharishi (1994) explains: “All speech, action, and behavior are fluctuations of consciousness. All life emerges from and is sustained by consciousness” (p. 68). Action in

the early stages of Lope de Vega's play fails to bring fulfillment to its characters unsupported by their environment. The element of consciousness needs to be added to their lives to transform their constant problems into harmony and contentment:

Gaining the full support of Nature through development of the full creative potential of consciousness makes the student a master of life. He spontaneously commands situations and circumstances; he spontaneously controls his environment; his behavior is always spontaneously nourishing to himself and everyone around him. He has the ability to spontaneously fulfill his interest without jeopardizing the interest of other's. (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1994, p. 115)

Lope's characters on the other hand do jeopardize others. Shepherds construct amorous intrigues to bring unhappiness to rivals, and Belardo-Belisa, the one relationship based on constancy in love expressed in sincere, amorous rhetoric, is literally torn apart by a savage who abducts Belisa and takes her into a hidden cave. The barbarity of the incident suggests a lack of support from Nature for the play's characters, but it also ironically suggests just the opposite—a rise in consciousness symbolized by the descent into a cave.

In most pastorals, the savage (*salvaje*) is a thoroughly negative character whose intrusion into the pastoral landscape serves to disrupt the prevalent harmony. In Montemayor's *La Diana*, for example, three savages must be vanquished by Felismena, an icon of the goddess Diana, before the pilgrimage to Diana's temple can continue (Damiani, 1983, pp. 73–5). In *El ganso de oro* the unvanquished savage is feared by all, and his presence is another sign that Arcadia is not synonymous with the Golden Age. The *salvaje*, however, does not completely represent evil; for although he causes tragedies, his abduction of Belisa helps to free the shepherds from their false paradise.

Belardo, in love with Belisa, enters the cave to rescue her. Caves are common features in pastoral landscapes, and Lope de Vega makes extensive use of one in his pastoral romance *La Arcadia* (de Armas 1985), where he associates it with a *vates* (poet-prophet). In both play and romance Lope imitates a number of classical models. In Virgil's Fifth Eclogue, the cave appears as the abode of the shepherd-poet (Berg, 1974, p. 116). In the Fourth Georgic it is utilized as a catabasis, a hero's journey to the depths of the earth in search of knowledge. These journeys, whether to the underworld or merely within a cave, symbolize the journey within the self. Since the poet must go to the deepest levels of the self to gain inspiration, such a journey is also a symbol of poetic creation. In the Fourth Georgic, Orpheus, the prototypical poet for many Renaissance writers intent on imitating the classics, descends into the underworld in search of his dead Eurydice: "In Virgil's Georgics 4 and Ovid's Metamorphoses 10 and 11, Orpheus is the *vates*, the eloquent artist, whose lyric power moves the world and the underworld where he charms the spirits of Hades, including immovable Pluto. When Eurydice disappears for a second time, he tames beasts and enchants trees [with his song]" (Barnard, 1992, pp. 4–5).

Orpheus suggests the Vedic ideal, a poet who can positively affect various levels of the listener's consciousness. Maharishi says, "When poetry arises from the depths of awareness it will inspire life. That is, its flow will stimulate a similar flow of life in the listener and enliven various levels of the listener's consciousness" (Orme-Johnson, 1987, p. 350). In *El ganso de oro*, Belardo recalls the myth of Orpheus when he readies

himself to pursue Belisa into the cave (p. 159). Following the path of the poet, his entrance into the cave symbolizes the journey within consciousness previously traversed by great visionary *vates*.

Drawing from the Nekya or eleventh book of the Odyssey and from the deeds of heroes such as Gilgamesh, Theseus, and Orpheus, Raymond J. Clark concludes that in a catabasis the hero descends to the lower world in search of wisdom. By alluding to Orpheus, Belardo links his own cave episode to a catabasis. He wanders through dark subterranean passages and eventually stumbles upon a wedding. Belisa (in Belardo's cave-vision) is marrying the ruler of Naples. The ceremony may be viewed as a projection of Belardo's fear, a prophecy he does not wish to face. Desperate, he attempts to interrupt the ceremony, only to discover it is an illusion. As it vanishes, he realizes that in his fury he has misplaced the thread to the outer world. Lost in his inner darkness, Belardo laments the folly of his "amoroso exceso" and, since life and love are so precarious, decides to walk with death.

Northrop Frye (1976) discussing themes of descent explains, "When it is wisdom that is sought in the lower world, it is almost always wisdom connected with the anxiety of death in some form or other, along with the desire to know what lies beyond" (p. 122). In *El ganso de oro*, the cave has provided Belardo with a vision of those elements he fears most, separation from his beloved and death. But his experience is not a negative one since he achieves inner stability when confronted by threatening circumstances. Previously, he had been lost even while clutching what would lead him back to the surface ("de un frágil hilo asido / voy entre riscos perdido" "holding a fragile thread I am lost amongst the rocks" [p. 162]). But then, lacking the precious thread, he is forced to rely on Nature and his inner awareness to lead him from the cave. Emerging in the countryside around Naples, he finds the world as it should be, since destiny had decreed that this particular shepherd must save Naples from the plague.

Rhoda Orme-Johnson (1987), in her study of Cupid and Psyche from Apuleius' Golden Ass, finds a catabasis that serves as an archetypal pattern for descents in several modern novels. She also demonstrates how it parallels the path of transcendence during the practice of the Transcendental Meditation® technique: "The pattern of descent into another world followed by a life-enhancing return thus metaphorically depicts the transcending process, the natural dive of conscious awareness toward its source, the field of pure intelligence or the Self" (p. 363). The pattern of transcending is also clearly albeit metaphorically depicted in *El ganso de oro*.

Belardo's entrance into the cave is like the descent within the Self. At first the shepherd holds on tightly to the thread, making the process difficult. Only when he lets go of it does he succeed, thus mirroring the principles of effortlessness and spontaneity in the Transcendental Meditation technique. In his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita, Maharishi (1969) explains, "It is, in fact, perfectly easy to lead the attention to the field of Being [transcendence]: one has only to allow the mind to move spontaneously from the gross field of objective experience, through the subtle fields of the thought-process to the ultimate transcendental Reality of existence" (pp. 97–8). Later he states: "The process of contemplation and concentration both hold the mind on the conscious thinking level, whereas [the] Transcendental Meditation [technique] systematically takes the

mind to the source of thought, the pure field of creative intelligence” (p. 350). By not concentrating on the thread, but rather letting go, Belardo is able to contact his own analogous field of Being.

The Hero in Harmony with Nature

Belardo’s actions follow those of the archetypal hero as described by Joseph Campbell (1986), the hero who emerges triumphant from underground regions or the deeper level of the Self with the power to “bestow boons on his fellow men” (p. 30). In terms of the process of transcending, Belardo, by contacting the deepest level of the Self—Being—he has, according to Maharishi (1986), “come into contact with the unlimited creative intelligence of the cosmic life” (p. 465), or according to quantum physics, the unified field of all the laws of nature.

Supported by the laws of nature, Belardo is now capable of assuming his role as hero. Coming out into the world Dardanio, a magician buried for ten centuries, informs him that the opening of his tomb has triggered the plague in Naples. This odd coupling of events illustrates a principle found in the Bhagavad-Gita, namely, that in the field of relativity action is unfathomable. Maharishi (1988) explains that for action to always be right, to be in harmony with the Laws of Nature, it is necessary for the actor’s awareness to be permanently open to the field of Being, the field of total potential of Natural Law in the state of Cosmic Consciousness. In this state life is spontaneously harmonious and action meets with the least possible resistance (p. 250).

This principle of harmonious action is demonstrated in *El ganso de oro* in an exchange between Dardanio and Belardo. Although Belardo may not possess cosmic awareness, he nonetheless has uncanny good luck and repeatedly performs at a high level of right action. His first piece of good fortune is Dardanio’s explanation of how to end the plague. It will only abate, the magician explains, when someone goes to the cave where he himself had been buried and kills the serpent presently abiding there:

Entra en mi cueva que mostrarte quiero
una sierpe encantada y venenosa
cuya cerviz degollarás . . .

(“Enter into my cave. I want to show you the enchanted and poisonous reptile whose head you will sever” [p. 165]). This discussion with Dardanio proves the deeper laws of nature are no longer hidden from Belardo. Now familiar with the cave, suggesting the more subtle and more powerful levels of the Self, Belardo’s actions will have a greater and more positive impact on his surroundings, as exemplified by his attempt to rid Naples of the serpent/dragon.

An environmentalist’s nightmare, the breath of this fantastical creature poisons the heavens—“la región del aire contagiosa / que agora sobre Nápoles se extiende” (“the contagious region of air that now spreads over Naples” [p. 165]). During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, plague was believed to result in part from meteorological phenomena such as comets that corrupted the air. The description of the *sierpe* recalls one particular type of meteor, the draco volans. Hence, this fiery malefic was thought to be the devil himself (Heninger, 1969, p. 95).

Medical manuals of the period explain that meteors also formed in the microcosm of the human body. They were believed to be the products of the fears and passions that plague the self, not unlike the allegorical passions slain by ancient heroes. On entering the cave carrying a “frágil hilo” (“fragile thread” [p. 162]), Belardo compares himself to Theseus who slayed the Minotaur; according to Campbell’s monomyth, a typical heroic deed representing the purging of selfish passions. In terms of Maharishi Vedic ScienceSM, a similar cleansing takes place during the Transcendental Meditation technique. As the mind settles to deeper levels of consciousness, the process of transcending removes physical as well as psychological stress accumulated in the nervous system. Thus, metaphorically, the killing of the *sierpe* will not only restore health to the land, it will also evince Belardo’s newly acquired equanimity and valor.

Having killed the dragon and rid Naples of the plague, Belardo has been transformed from shepherd to hero to monarch whom some even believe: “Poder trujo celestial” (“has brought with him celestial power” [p. 167]). In the logic of Maharishi Vedic Science (1969), Belardo’s archetypal pattern of transformation tracks the process of transcending: “When the mind comes out from the field of Being, the plane of cosmic law, into the relative field of activity, which is under the influence of innumerable Laws of Nature, it automatically enjoys the support of cosmic law, and this makes possible the accomplishment of any aspiration and the ultimate fulfillment of life” (p. 351).

Although Belardo has become hero and monarch, and through the act of transcending (as represented by his descent into the cave) has come in touch with the creative source, he still possesses human weaknesses. Unlike Maharishi’s enlightened seeker who has gained that state when Transcendental Consciousness is never lost—a state of perfect equanimity, a state where all personal desires are satisfied, a state where all opposites are resolved—Belardo still has room for growth. His insightful acts have led the country to crown him their new king, but he is unable to recognize Belisa (who still acts and speaks in her role as shepherdess) when she comes to Naples, an indication of his still limited awareness.

Beyond Human Weakness

Belardo’s inability to recognize Belisa also suggests a lack of communication between Arcadia and Naples. Like these two contrasting realms, many important oppositions exist in Lope’s comedia, emphasizing the limited world of differences: pastoral and polis, shepherds and magicians, poets and rulers. However, if there is a chain of opposites that separate, there is also a transcendent realm symbolized by the cave that connects these opposites, reducing them to different manifestations of the same transcendent source. This cave and its transformative qualities is familiar to Belardo, since he has used it to move from the prison of passion to the freedom of destiny.

In spite of his successes in the external world, Belardo remains most concerned with his experiences in the cave, which he has yet to fully understand. We should recall that the cave had provided him with what he sees as a suspect vision of Belisa’s wedding. He has come to believe that the representation of a fickle Belisa marrying a prince must be a shadow play performed by demons:

¿Qué más claros testimonios
de que ha sido aquella boda
dentro del infierno, y toda
sombra y ficción de demonios?

(“What clearer testimony [than] that wedding took place in hell and that it was all a shadow and a fiction fashioned by devils?” [p. 164]) He wonders if the cave is as false as the mock-paradise of Arcadia. It is clear he has failed to grasp the significance of what he sees within the cave/Self. In terms of Maharishi Vedic Science, Belardo is in the process of developing awareness. He is aware enough to have a prophetic vision in the cave, but not aware enough to interpret it correctly; he has not yet attained a state such as Cosmic Consciousness, a state of awareness according to Maharishi (1976) in which “all knowledge is within its grasp” (p. 150). The end of the play will show Belardo attaining to such a state verified by his full support of Nature.

From here a number of highly dramatic events bring the play to its conclusion. Belardo (and perhaps the magician Felicio) come to control their behavior and environment, spontaneously fulfilling their desires “without jeopardizing the interests of others” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1994, p. 115). Felicio, responsible for Belisa’s abduction, gives Silvero the power of invisibility, allowing him to enter the palace of Naples unseen. Paralleling the actions of Gyges recounted by Plato and Herodotus, Silvero will attempt to murder the new monarch to assuage his jealous passion.

A fratricide by Felicio, the magus ex machina who claims to be following the laws of destiny, is staged but avoided. The magician had warned Silvero that in giving him the dagger, he was “dándote mayor bien del que deseas” (“giving you a greater good than what you desire” [p. 171]). The statement is both literally and figuratively true because instead of a murderer, Silvero turns out to be brother to King Belardo. Felicio explains that he himself was once King of Athens, but retired to Arcadia where he raised his daughter Belisa. While abiding in Arcadia, he met the old King of Naples who journeying through the area met and fell in love with the nymph Niseida who gave birth to Silvero and Belardo, brothers not raised as brothers. This final anagnorisis paves the way for the happy ending structured by Felicio, whose name is a variation of felicity, and the royal wedding between Belisa and Belardo is the fulfillment of the real vision the cave had depicted. Belardo had not realized at the time that the king he saw marrying Belisa was none other than himself. He had merely misinterpreted his vision since he as yet had not been transformed by the path of transcending (his descent into the cave).

Belardo’s original distortion of his vision demonstrates the powerlessness of a surface reality, as does the aborted attempts to manipulate the world through superficial language or to operate, with unfathomable and sometimes deadly results, from a state of ignorance. The weaknesses inherent in such superficial thinking and consequential activity is suggested in *El ganso de oro* through two important images. The rose and dragon on a surface level typify a false paradise and a plague-ridden kingdom, and their significance is deepened when related to the transcendental cave that connects the two realms the rose and dragon represent.

In this liminal area between the rose and the dragon, beyond opposing lands, Belardo is nurtured and transformed, emerging from an Orphic catabasis capable of ridding the city of contagion. The shepherd has become hero and king. In the language of Maharishi Vedic Science, Belardo has transcended his limited self, his individual ego, symbolized by his entrance into the cave, and there through the transforming power of Being (Transcendental Consciousness) that the cave represents he emerges a wiser and more dynamic individual who enjoys the support of Nature. Fulfilled within himself he returns to his kingdom ready to take on great responsibility and exert the positive influence of his highly developed state of consciousness for the benefit of all humanity. His benign effect on his environment is seen in the healing of Naples and through the marriages that restore order and resolve the play's love interests. Pradelo marries Lisena, Silvero marries the daughter of the King of Rome, and Belardo marries Belisa, who turns out to be the daughter of the King of Athens.

Helping to comprehend the symbolic patterning in the play's conflicts and resolutions, Maharishi Vedic Science also assists in a deeper understanding of the metadramatic process of Lope's play. For *El ganso de oro* not only functions as a comedia, it also probes the dynamics of creativity. It demonstrates that the source of creativity is located within the transcendental Self (the metaphorical cave), and contact with this source can lead to the formulation of a play or can transform an ordinary shepherd into a poet-king, an archetypal hero, an enlightened being. And through the transformation of the individual can come the transformation of society, led by an exalted being like Belardo whose spontaneous right action can lead society away from false paradises and plagued lands towards a restoration of the primordial Golden Age, that "heaven on earth" so often evoked by poets and philosophers throughout the ages.

Notes

¹All Spanish citations from *El ganso de oro* are followed by my own English translations.

²When the princess Anaxarate mocked Iphis, he hanged himself in despair on the door of her house. Anaxarate was punished for her lack of compassion by Venus, who turned her into stone.

³Rosalind gives as examples Troilus and Leander. Traces of the Pyramus story can be found later in Shakespeare's play (de Armas, "But Not For Love").

⁴I would like to thank Peter M. Scharf of Brown University for pointing out this reference. Modern scholars debate whether the author of the Yoga Sutras is the same Patanjali who wrote the Mahabhasya presumably in the first or second century B.C.

⁵Kristeva's notion of symbols is far from the transcendental since she sees their meaning as acquired knowledge rather than an intuitive exercise.

⁶In this instance of role-reversal, Lisena sees herself as the Iphis of mythology, while Belardo must be envisioned as the uncaring princess Anaxarate.

⁷Belardo's love rhetoric ranges from apostrophes to nature (p. 156–7) to the discussion of the representation of the beloved's name on a *tablilla* through the use of two let-

ters, b and a, and a picture of a flower, the *lis* (p. 158). Belisa accepts these verbal gifts from her lover since they seem to emerge from a deeper level of consciousness. Maharishi explains that in those whose speech arises from the Unified Field “expressions would be more lucid, easier to understand, appealing, not creating frustrations in the environment, but creating more harmony” (Fulfilling the Purpose of Language, cited in Orme-Johnson, p. 343). While Pradelo’s botanical conceits lead to frustration, Belardo’s flower contributes to the harmony between the lovers. In addition, Belardo’s rhetoric will not emerge as inappropriate in a rustic, since he will be shown to be of royal blood at the end of the comedia.

⁸According to Oleh Mazur: “The geographical location of Lope’s *salvaje* was Europe, and his favorite abode a cave in the mountains” (p. 212).

⁹“Quantum field theories of modern science have glimpsed the Unified Field, the home of all the Laws of Nature, and Maharishi (1984) has shown that the complete knowledge of the Unified Field is available in Vedic Science” (p. 13).

¹⁰Commenting on the verse “Unfathomable is the course of action,” Maharishi (1969) states: “Every thought, word or act sets up waves of influence in the atmosphere. These waves travel through space and strike against everything in creation. Wherever they strike they have some effect. The effect of a particular thought on any particular object cannot be known because of the diversity and vast extent of creation” (p. 276).

¹¹Speaking of Cosmic Consciousness, Maharishi (1988) asserts: “The individual then comes in tune with the cosmic life, the movements of the individual are in accord with the movements of the entire cosmos, the purpose of the individual is found in the purpose of the entire cosmos, and the life of the individual is found established in cosmic life” (p. 250).

¹²An ancient Greek legend describes Theseus as the son of Aegeus, King of Athens. He was one of seven youths who along with seven maidens were sent to Crete every year to be devoured by the Minotaur (a monster that was half human and half bull, the offspring of Pasiphae and a bull). In Crete, Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos and Pasiphae, fell in love with Theseus and provided him with a sword to kill the Minotaur and a thread to find the way out of the labyrinth where this beast abided.

¹³On tales of invisibility in Spanish Golden Age literature see de Armas, “Invisibility and Interpolation.”

¹⁴“When the Absolute informs itself about itself and becomes aware of the infinite potentiality of its own nature, the flow of information begins. . . . On this level all information is ‘inside information.’ If individual awareness can attune itself to this level of consciousness, all knowledge is within its grasp” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1976, p. 150).

¹⁵Belardo is one of the poetic names used by Lope de Vega.

¹⁶In the literature of the Spanish Golden Age, one of the more common ways of evoking the first age of humankind was through reference to the goddess *Astraea*. See de Armas, *The Return of Astraea*.

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