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ACADEMIA DAS SCIÊNCIAS DE LISBOA

Separata do «Boletim da Segunda Classe», Vol. IX

GIL VICENTE

POR

AUBREY F. G. BELL



COIMBRA

IMPRESA DA UNIVERSIDADE

1915

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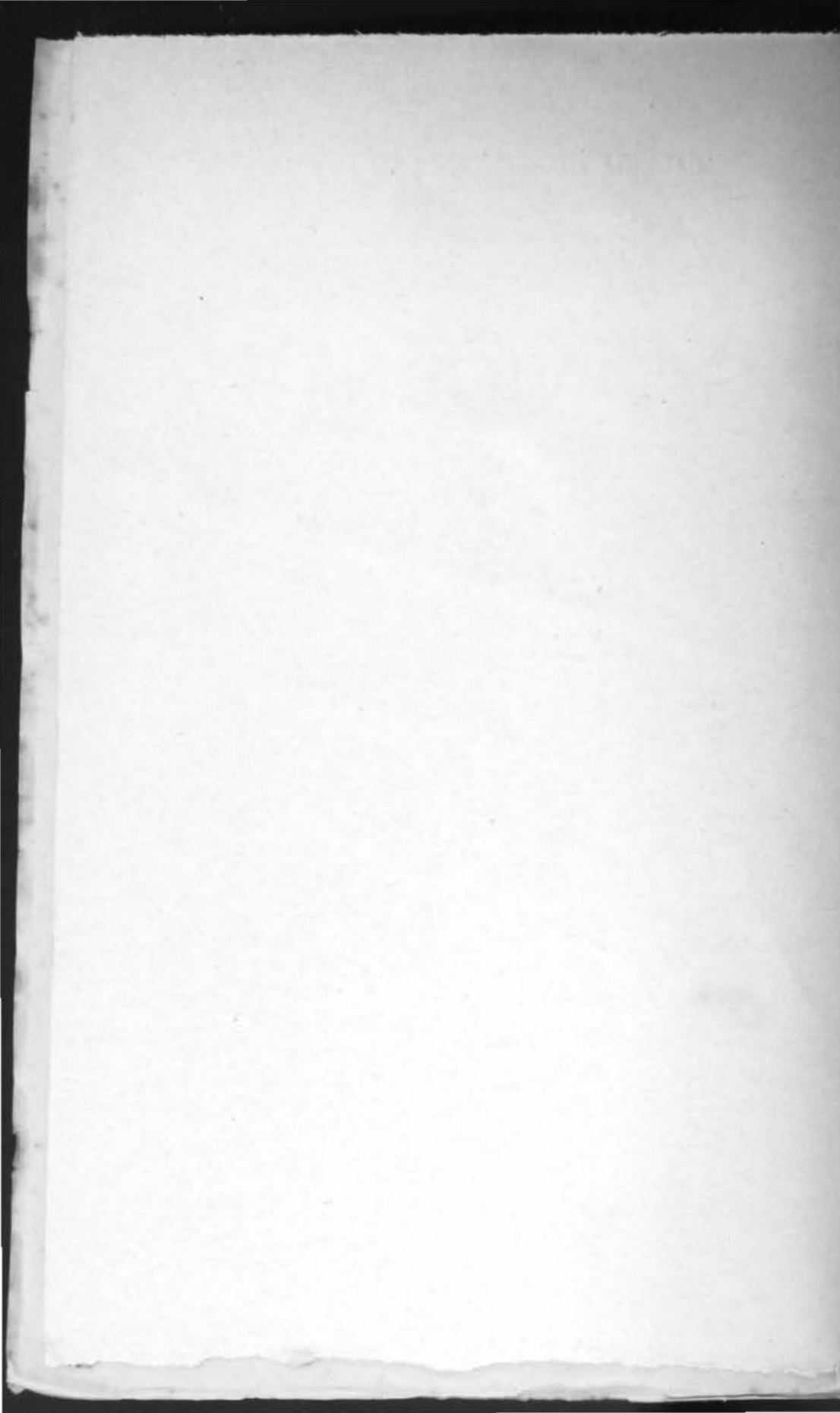
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GIL VICENTE

The beginning of the 16th century was nowhere more interesting than in Portugal. Many and various influences were contributing to make Lisbon, what it has since remained, one of the most perplexing and fascinating cities in Europe, while events were passing of a nature to shake to their depths even the remote Portuguese provinces which had accepted successive conquests and the advent of Christianity without losing their original, illiterate, essentially pagan character. Noble and peasant alike were now lured to the Court or further afield to the newly-discovered Indies. The first gold arrived from Quiloa, the scent of the Eastern spices dispeopled the land. King João II had established the supreme power of the throne which the Church not yet and the nobles no longer sought to dispute. The two great influences of the century, the Reformation of the *maldito de Martinho Lutero*¹ and the Renaissance were soon to make themselves felt in Portugal, but in the first years of the century the chief cause of unrest was the conquest of that new world with which Portugal failed so signally to redress the balance of the old, and the concentration of the nation's life in Lisbon. The Portuguese,

¹ So called in the trial of Damião de Goes (1502-74) before the Inquisition.

ever eager for new things ¹, turned their attention almost exclusively to the Indies. Portugal was neglected. The soil remained unploughed, the price of bread rose, the landed proprietors sank into poverty and the peasant aspired to wealth and position. More than one poet deplores, like Duarte da Gama, *aas desordeãs q̄ aguora se costumã em Portugal*. Some of the provincial gentry give up their estates in order to live in Lisbon :

Vendem a erdade
por cõprar tapeçarya ²
... outros hã por cousa boa
nã ter homes nẽ caualos
e despreçã os vasalos
por se vyrẽ a Lixboa. ³

As to the peasants:

Os lauradores
com suas maas nouydades
querem ter as vaydades
dos senhores. ³

The old distinctions between class and class were weakened, and the *nouveau riche*, flaunting his prosperity, broke the heart if not the pride of the knight who could not afford to keep a horse ⁴. The *parvenu* belongs to all

¹ They are *cheos de nuvidades* says Affonso d'Albuquerque in a letter to king Manoel in 1512. *Cartas*, 4 vol., Lisboa, 1884-1910.

² A good equivalent of the Spanish phrase «to throw one's house out of the window».

³ Duarte da Gama in the *Cancioneiro Geral*. Garcia de Resende speaks of a *soberba dos vilãos*.

⁴ He is mentioned more than once in the *Canc. Geral* and reappears in Gil Vicente :

pobre escudeirão
sem cavalo e sem tostão.
(*Floresta de Enganos*).

time — the Archpriest of Hita had complained of money that

Él faze cavalleros de neçios aldeanos¹

— but circumstances rendered him especially frequent now in Portugal. A poet of the *Cancioneiro Geral*, Alvaro de Brito Pessana, embittered by his own sinking fortunes² into becoming a *laudator temporis acti, os outros tēpos passados*, as he says, cries out pathetically against this mixing of the classes: *nam sejamos todos huūs*, and against the *muytos bayxos* who, with their fine dress and their chains of gold, *perualeçem*. All the peasants wished to be of the palace, says Gil Vicente³, and the brand-new *engrandecidos* about whom the perfume of turnips still hovered⁴ and who were «more nearly related to the plough» — all honour to them — «than to the Meneses»⁵, no doubt added picturesqueness to a city which had now become «the gate of the East and of the West»⁶ and was rendered motley by the many foreigners, Flemish, Castilian, Italian, merchants from Venice, Genoa, Florence,

¹ Ed. Julio Cejador, 2 vol., Madrid, 1913, vol. 1, p. 185.

² Os meus feitos vão no fūdo
... com a pobreza pelejo.
Ela faz que triste seja
nam alegre.

³ Cf. *Romagem de Aggravados*:

ninguem não se contenta
Da maneira que sohia

⁴ Gil Vicente, *Clerigo da Beira* (1526): *cheirais a nabos*.

⁵ Gil Vicente, *ibid.*

mais propinquos dos arados
que parentes dos Meneses.

⁶ *Cancioneiro Geral*.

travellers¹ and foreign scholars and students, a multitude of Jews and «new Christians», negroes, mariners with strange tales to tell to any who would listen, newly appointed officials to deal with the «conquest and navigation of Africa, India and Ethiopia», a crowd of notaries, money-changers, usurers.

The travelled Portuguese returned to his country with an inclination *a desdanhar portugueses*², to praise Spain and Flanders and introduce foreign fashions and *mil fallas de França*. The Court which in the time of King Duarte already numbered 3000 persons³ had increased in numbers and in brilliance. The fame of its *serões* was noised abroad. A little after dusk on Sundays and fête days the courtiers made their way to the palace, the ladies of fashion, whose worst punishment was to be banished for some days—*degradadas*—from the *serão*, purposely arriving late to make the greater impression,⁴ the men priding themselves on coming through the streets accompanied, like a Roman patron, by many friends, *bem acompanhado*⁵. At these palace parties all was laughter, dance and song; in the streets laughter and starvation, dance and tavern brawls. From time to time the plague drove from Lisbon all who could follow the Court, leaving priests and monks busy imploring the mercy of God and burying the dead.

The enlightened Alvaro de Brito, in 61 *cobras* (in the metre of the *Coplas de Manrique*) addressed to the Lisbon

¹ «Nam cum hominibus eruditis & cum iis qui varias regiones peragrauerāt sermonem libētissime cōferebat.» Bp. Jeronymo Osorio of King Manoel. *De Rebus Emmanuelis*, Olysippone, 1621, p. 479.

² *Cancioneiro Geral*.

³ King Duarte. *Leal Conselheiro* (Paris, 1842) p. 310.

⁴ Gonçalo Mendez Çacote in the *Cancioneiro Geral*.

⁵ *Cancioneiro Geral*.

town-councillors, suggests that to clear the streets of *os podrydos esterqueyros* and the

monturos muy altos
fedorentos

would have a better effect on Lisbon's *ares corrutos* even than pilgrimage or procession

que solene perçycam
nem romarya.

On the other hand Gil Vicente in a passage of the *Nao d'Amores* (1527) allows the city of Lisbon to explain that

Se peste não fosse, todos meus ereos
Não conheceriaõ que hi havia Deos,
que seria peste muito mais perigosa.

However that may be, it was an age of swift reversals of fortune, the sea and the plague both claiming a large death-roll and adding to it with dramatic suddenness.

Huns acabam, outros vem,
e huns tem, outros nam tem. †

It only required a man of genius in a position from which he could see life steadily and whole to convert this human comedy into a possession for all time. Had Gil Vicente been, as Ticknor has it, «a gentleman of good family» he might have shared the prejudices and narrower outlook of the poet of the *Cancioneiro Geral* who complains to the King that three Judges wish to pass sentence against him in favour of a peasant!

It would be easier to believe in the ancestry drawn up

† Garcia de Resende in the *Cancioneiro Geral*.

for himself in mock humility, no doubt as an answer to taunts at his modest birth and rustic art ¹. In the same passage he gives his birth-place as Pederneira ². This is not usually accepted as serious, and the three towns regarded as his possible birthplace are Guimarães (Minho), Lisbon (Estremadura) and Barcellos (Minho), especially the first two. It is a matter of no consequence. Πᾶσα γῆ, or at least all Portugal, is the birthplace of a man of his genius. But it is interesting to note how familiar he is with the distant province of Beira and how large a place it occupies in his plays. It is not only that he places on the lips of his Beira peasants words which according to the grammarian Fernão d'Oliveira, a native of the province, survived only in Beira ³. It is possible to explain the use of *samicas*, *abem*, *algorrem*, *asuso* and «outras piores vozes» of which Oliveira says «ainda agora as ouuimos e zōbamos d'ellas» ⁴, as purposely allotted by the dramatist to the slow-witted *beirões*. They were considered the Boeotians of Portugal — as wrongly as the Galicians have been considered the Boeotians of Spain, since many of the greatest men of both countries have sprung from these provinces. Beira was further from Portugal than France or Castille. Nuno Pereira in the *Cancioneiro Geral* laments the fate of a lady who left the Court to marry and care about spinning and keeping chickens *antros soutos laa na Beira*, among Beira's chestnut-groves. Another poet declares that far from the Court he has become *tam difforme, tam beiram* ⁵, and Fernão d'Oliveira tells us of certain words recently in use

¹ *Auto da Lusitania* (1532).

² In Estremadura.

³ *Grammatica de linguagem portugueza*. Segunda ed. conforme á de 1526. Porto 1871, p. 81, 82, 118.

⁴ *Ib.* p. 81.

⁵ Diogo Brandam in the *Cancioneiro Geral*.

and now *muyto auorreçadas*: «Yet if we place these and other similar words on the lips of an old man of Beira or a peasant they will not sound ill»¹.

But Gil Vicente knows the province well: Cea with its cheeses *feitos á candea*, Gouvea's chestnuts, the milk of Manteigas, the *finos pannos* of Covilhã, the *casas no cume da serra*, the *Val dos Penados*, the hills «of the three roads»². Nearly all his shepherds are of the Serra da Estrella. Even if Vasco Affonso in the *Auto Pastoril Portugues* had not explicitly said that he comes «from beyond Thomar» his speech would betray him, and although there are some fifteen Villarinhos in Portugal, the *pastor* of the *Barca do Purgatorio* is unmistakably from Beira. And Gil Vicente introduces songs of the *serra* and *bailos da Beira*: in fact it is constantly in his thoughts. He even makes a good citizen of Burgos refer to the Serra da Estrella, of which in real life he would certainly know nothing³. And who but a *beirão* would have introduced the Portuguese Fame as a girl of Beira — *hã mocinha da Beyra?* (*Auto da Fama* (1516?)). The words *da Beyra*, present in the extremely rare editions of 1562 and 1586 have been omitted in all subsequent editions!

But whether or not Gil Vicente had kept goats in the Serra da Estrella, as one would like to think, or (in his own laughing allusion) made Alemtejan *mantas* (perhaps not in Alemtejo but at Covilhã) or lived, as the son and perhaps apprentice of Martim the goldsmith, at Guimarães, the intimate knowledge of country and village life shown in a hundred passages of his plays makes it clear that he was not brought up in Lisbon. The passage in the MS. of *Christovam Alão de*

¹ *Grammatica*. Ed. 1871, p. 81.

² *Tragicomédia pastoril da Serra da Estrella*.

³ *Comédia do Viuvo*.

Moraes which says that Gil Vicente was the only son of Martim Vicente, goldsmith, of Guimarães and that he was buried at Evora, gives no further indication of his birth-place. There was a tradition that the first Portuguese *trovador* was of Guimarães and the inhabitants, we read, *em todos os seculos* had been eager to maintain their reputation as poets¹. Any well-known poet they would willingly claim as their own. The name Gil Vicente was common, sometimes borne by men of good birth, more often by men in humble station. For some time Gil Vicente the poet was identified with a master carpenter of Santarem, till it was realized that the latter died (1500) before Gil Vicente's first play had been produced at Court or Quiloa sent the gold of which the famous Belem monstrance was wrought.

The known existence of several contemporary Gil Vicentes makes the problem of identity between poet and goldsmith especially delicate. To help us, we have not even the exact date of the poet's birth or death. The former has been arbitrarily fixed as 1470 owing to two lines of a sad celebrity spoken by an old man in the *Floresta de Enganos* (1536):

Ya hice sesenta y seis
Ya mi tiempo es pasado.

Subtract 66 from 1536: 1470. That is to say, Gil Vicente's age is to be determined because it happened to suit his rhyme to say 66, not 69 or 65. As well devise some profound reason for the fact that Maria Parda decrees that 127 priests shall attend her funeral. It rhymed with *Alcouchete*. In January 1531, although obviously active and in good health, able to deliver a sermon of no mean elo-

¹ Antonio Carvalho da Costa. *Corografia Portuguesa*. 3 vol. Lisboa, 1706-12. vol. 2, p. 193.

quence, he speaks of himself as «near death», and although he died before April 19, 1540, he writes to the King that the collection of his works had been a burden to his old age (*minha velhice*). This would seem to point to a slightly earlier date for his birth. But his strenuous activities as poet, musician, scene-manager, actor, and, yes and goldsmith, may well have aged him before his time, and *velhice*, at least in the 15th century, did not go beyond the age of 70 ¹. 1465-70 remains the approximate date of his birth. Thus his youth was spent in the reign of João II, he lived through the splendour of King Manoel's age, and after that Lord of the East had left his palace for the last time ² continued to produce plays at Court for fifteen years, writing his last *comedia* in 1536. From time to time he laments his poverty, but he received in *tenças* far more than ever was given to Camões, and as he probably owned the *Quinta do Mosteiro* near Torres Vedras, he was certainly not neglected either by King Manoel or King João III. The *tença* of three bushels of wheat in 1525 was in itself a substantial gift. ³ And although in his old age he evidently sometimes felt with Browning's Andrea del Sarto that

I have laboured somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely

¹ King Duarte. *Leal Conselheiro*. Cap. I: *Velhice ataa LXX, senyum ataa LXXX*. (Ed. Paris, 1842, p. 16).

² Gil Vicente. *Romance á morte d'Elrei D. Manoel* :

Já passada a meia noite,
Tres horas antes do dia,
Mettido em hum atauda
O qu'inda ha pouco regia,
O gran senhor do Oriente
Dos seus Paços se partia.

³ According to Garcia de Resende (*Miscellania*) the price of a bushel of wheat at Evora rose in his time from between 15,000 and 20,000 réis to 70,000 réis and more,

he was perhaps not ill-satisfied. In the *Auto da Festa*, acted probably about 1535, he represents himself as very stout and over sixty.¹ The question is rather: Would such large *tenças* have been given to Gil Vicente simply as *trovador* in a land where the number of poets was countless as the sands?

The problem of the identity of poet and goldsmith is largely a study in probabilities. To take first the facts or arguments against identity. Gil Vicente refers to himself as *Gil Vicente o autor*,² *Gil Vicente que faz os autos a el Rei*,³ *hum Gil... que faz os autos a el Rei*;⁴ never to his work as goldsmith. João de Barros in 1540⁵ speaks of *Gil Vicente comico*, without, however, any apparent intention of distinguishing the playwright from another Gil Vicente. On August 6 1517 Gil Vicente the goldsmith renounced his post of *Mestre da Balança* in the Lisbon *Casa da Moeda*, and criticism at a gallop has argued that he resigned, therefore was ill, therefore died. But it may well have been that the growing business of the *Casa da Moeda* had become a burden⁶ and that he preferred to have more time to devote to the production of his plays. The lines

Mas ja não auto bofê
como os autos que fazia
quando elle tinha com que.⁷

¹ *Auto da Festa*. Ed. Conde de Sabugosa. Lisboa 1906 p. 118.

² *Auto da Lusitania* (1532).

³ *Auto da Festa* (circa 1535).

⁴ *Auto Pastoril Portugues* (1523). It will be noticed that all these dates are subsequent to the retirement of Gil Vicente, *ourives* (1517).

⁵ *Dialogo em louvor da nossa linguagem* (*Compilação* (1785) p. 222).

⁶ «A casa de moeda onde sempre s'está batendo & cunhando». There had been two chief officials since a few yaers before Gil Vicente's appointment.

⁷ *Auto Pastoril Portugues*.

In 1519 (*Cortes de Jupiter*) he represents *os da Moeda* as ga-

may be explained quite naturally as a reference to the days before 1517 when he held the post of *Mestre da Balança* and perhaps found himself out of pocket owing to his determination to produce his plays with as much pomp as possible.

Other arguments against identity are extremely weak. How it has been asked, could a learned poet like Gil Vicente spell *acabou aquabov* on the inscription of the *Custodia*?¹ But spelling more barbarous is to hand in his plays and it is a little hard to make him responsible for the spelling of his time. Or, again, it is said, how could he accompany the Court to Evora, Almeirim, etc., and at the same time have a goldsmith's workshop at Lisbon? The travels of Benvenuto Cellini, at least, were as numerous as and far less peaceful than those of Gil Vicente. But would a goldsmith have offended his patrons by his satire? Gil Vicente found in the King a full and sufficient patron and was not concerned to conciliate others. And Cellini's patrons accepted worse abuse from him than is to be found in Vicente's plays.

On the other hand the arguments in favour of identity are cumulative and overwhelming, and invalidate such unreliable documents as genealogies, manuscript or printed. We have in an official document a Gil Vicente, goldsmith of Queen Leonor (King Manoel's sister) and *Mestre da Balança*, appointed in 1509 overseer (*Vedor*) of all works in gold and silver for the Convent of Thomar, the Hospital of all Saints (Lisbon) and Belem; and a Gil Vicente

roupas de Guiné, a reference quite natural in one who knew them well but no longer was one of them. He would hardly have introduced them — between the students and the marketwomen — had they not had some especial interest for him.

¹ Camillo Castello Branco, *Historia e Sentimentalismo*, 2.^a ed., 2 vol., 1880, vol. 2. The word is said to have misled a French critic to assign the *Custodia* to a Senhor Aquabo.

who is asked by the same Queen Leonor to contribute verses to a poetical contest¹ printed in the *Cancioneiro Geral* (1516), the subject of which is a gold chain²; and a Gil Vicente who writes plays for the same Queen Leonor.

In several plays he shows technical acquaintance with the goldsmith's art.³ The identity of goldsmith and poet, moreover, need have caused no special comments, it was no isolated case. In the *Cancioneiro Geral* Diogo Fernandes, an *ourives*, also writes verses; and Garcia de Resende gives us his opinion of another *ourivez beberam* who composed *trouas*:

Eu vos acho maaõ endiçio
Em cuydardes que soys hum
Em trovar & noutro offiçio
& em tudo soys nenhum.

Possibly a covert hit at Gil Vicente, though aimed ostensibly against Afonso Valente, of Thomar.

But to crown all, General Brito Rebello (himself now an opponent of identity) discovered on f. 20 v. of vol 42 of the Registers of the Chancellery of King Manoel in the *Torre do Tombo* a manuscript contemporary note *Gil Vicente trovador mestre da balança*, a note, that is, placed above and explana-

¹ Probably not many years before 1516, certainly not in the reign of King João II. Gil Vicente is presumably already no longer young. Reference is made to his time as past: *Em vossos dias*.

² Another participator in the contest asks Gil Vicente if he does not remember how much money the lover-marquis has lavished on jewels and necklaces, — *quantas joias & colares*.

³ These who oppose identity are led into damaging admissions. Cf. Theophilo Braga. *Gil Vicente*. Porto 1898. p. 137: «Estas duas individualidades confundem-se por vezes nos documentos historicos; o poeta Gil Vicente falla da Ourivesaria nos seus Autos como se conhecesse tecnicamente aquella arte; o ourives e mestre da balança Gil Vicente é tambem apontado em um documento official como trovador».

tory of the official document recording the appointment of Gil Vicente, *ourives* of Queen Leonor, as *mestre da balança* of the *Casa da Moeda* at Lisbon. Look at it how we may, it is impossible to explain away this note, which existed long before the question of identity was first discussed by Dr. Theophilo Braga in 1873.¹ If we accept the identity Gil Vicente's position at Court becomes clear. As an official he had every opportunity of quiet observation, and otherwise his appearance at Court as author of the *monologo do Vaqueiro* (1502) seems as abrupt and violent as the entrance of the *vaqueiro* himself. His contribution to the *Cancioneiro Geral* must, as already indicated, be assigned to a later date. Queen Leonor's goldsmith could associate with and study men of all classes, and perhaps Gil Vicente learnt at the expense of his purse to portray the gorgeous *fidalgo* of the *Farça dos Almocreves* who left his *ourives* for years unpaid. He belonged to no class and understood all. He held up a mirror in which the life of the Court, the city and the nation was reflected in *figuras muy naturaes*.

Gil Vicente wrote for the Court, and to some extent his art was hampered by this fact; but he did not write for the *doces d'orelhas* of whom Fernão d'Oliveira speaks or the *preciosos* mentioned in the *Cancioneiro Geral*. He was a great realist and with perfect truth to life introduced into his plays the whole of reality as he saw and knew it. He has been called the Portuguese Archpriest of Hita,² and he shares his humour, his love of outdoor life, his delight in long catalogues of names,³ his power of portraying graphically in a few sentences a scene or a character, to some extent his coarseness. He lacks the cynicism that characterizes

¹ In the Lisbon periodical *Artes e Letras*. anno 2. p. 4-6, 18-20.

² By Senhora Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcellos.

³ Cf the list of animals and plants in the *Auto dos Quatro Tempos* (1504?).

much of the Archpriest's humour and is more purely lyrical. Certainly he is nearer Ruiz, who died over a century before Vicente was born, than to Camões who was born before Vicente died.

A list of his *dramatis personae* gives some idea of the mediaeval medley that are his plays: *autos*, *farças*, *comedias* and *tragicomedias*. We have shepherds and shepherdesses, peasants, ploughmen, *serranas* from the hills, marketwomen, fishwives, servantgirls, gardeners, blacksmiths, a Jewish tailor, a cobbler, a bakeress, negroes, beggars, gipsies, dwarfs, fairies, witches, fortune-tellers, pilgrims, pages, noblemen, knights and squires, courtiers, princes, a Count, Dukes, Kings, Emperors, a Pope, a Bishop an Archbishop, a Cardinal, hermits, monks, friars, priests, chaplains, nuns, a devout woman (*beata*), a cardsharper (*taful*), carriers, sailors, sirens, singers, doctors, merchants, a goldsmith, an usurer, rabbis, judges, centurions, the Sea, the Sun, the *Serra da Estrella*, the *Serra de Cintra*, the Seasons, Time, the World, Providence, Fortune, Fame, Justice, Learning, Prudence, Poverty, Faith, Fortitude, Humility, Love, Venus, Cupid, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Juno, Christ, the Virgin, Prophets, Saints, Apostles, Angels and Archangels, Gabriel, Satan, Devils, Lucifer, Belial, Beelzebub, Adam and Eve, Abel, Moses, Abraham, Job, Cassandra, heroes of Greece and Troy, the Church, Rome, Spaniards, an Italian, a Frenchman, the Month of May, Portugal, the city of Lisbon, etc, etc. His truly Elizabethan vein of lyricism, his love of Nature, his quick observation make of this medley a series of interesting and delightful scenes. It is all, as it were, in the rough. He gives out of his abundance and scarcely pauses to round off a lyric, develop a character or give elaborate execution to his conception of a play. Therefore he cannot be called a great dramatist, but as a sketcher of rapid character portraits and as a lyric poet he has rarely been excelled. His love of Nature pierces, without a

sign of elaborate effort, at every turn. In a line at haphazard here and there the recalls the flowered hills in May or the June meadows:

tanta bonança
 Como da Maio ás flores da serra;¹
 plado florido
 La mañana de S. Juan;²

many a passage might, had he cared, or any one cared, have developed into a perfect lyric, of which there are a few, but disappointingly few, in his plays.

And the nearer his characters are to Nature, the more lovingly does he depict them. Children have never been revealed more naturally than his little girl shepherdess who would start to run when she heard the Church bells ring and had seen God, she said, «often and often,³ or the *pastorinhos* Joanne, Pedrinho, Affonsinho and Cismeninha, chattering open-mouthed together on the hills:

JOAN. Di rogo-te, Cismeninha,
 Viste-m'a minha burrinha?
 CISM. Viste-m'a minha burrinha?
 JOAN. Olha, olha o que te digo.
 CISM. Olha, olha o que te digo.
 JOAN. Sempre tu has de chufar?

 CISM. E eu não tenho no carril
 Dous alfinetes que achei?
 JOAN. Tambem eu ar acharei
 Algum dia algum ceitil.
 PED. E a mim dão-me sardinha inteira.
 AFF. Oh!⁴

¹ *Comedia sobre a divisa da cidade de Coimbra.* (1527).

² *Auto da Fé* (1510).

³ *Auto da Barca do Purgatorio* (1518).

⁴ *Comedia de Rubena* (1521).

And many a shepherd, *pobre, vestido de pelle*, and peasant are hit off to the life, e. g. the market-women burdened with heavy loads yet finding energy for an incessant flow of words ¹, the carriers discussing their prospects as they ride leisurely along on their mules ², the fishwives, *regateiras do pescado*, Branca do Rego and Marta do Prado ³, the old woman of Lisbon with her fear of *ma crianca* and of what the neighbours will say ⁴. In delineating or rather suggesting such types Gil Vicente is evidently at his ease; but he had to remember that his object was to entertain his courtly audience, that they might *ficar muy ledos* ⁵; and so his plays are sometimes wrenched away from natural scenes to courtly devices. The puzzle-verses with which the *Auto das Fadas* ends would suit, far better than a popular lyric, the Court taste for such mechanical literature and for personal allusions ⁶. The sufficiently broad allusions in Gil Vicente's plays must have given the Court many a merry hour, and if the pleasure of the laugher of to-day was tempered by the thought that he might himself be the object of laughter to-morrow, it was precisely the generality of this satire that took off its edge and made it possible. In a Court where, as Garcia de Resende said,

os mays, polo geeral,
folguam muyto d'ouytr mal,
& pouco de dizer bem,

¹ *Auto da Feira* (1527).

² *Farça dos Almocreves* (1526).

³ *Romagem de Aggravados* (1533).

⁴ *Quem tem farelos?* (1505).

⁵ *Obras varias. Ao Conde do Vimioso.*

⁶ In this taste, at the request of King João III, Garcia de Resende wrote 48 *trouas de louvores & deslouvores* for a game of cards, which might have been called «the murder of genuine lyrical poetry», and João de Barros, similarly, reduced the *Ethics* of Aristotle to an elaborate *jogo*.

Gil Vicente was the safety-valve. He poked his fun impartially, at Garcia de Resende's corpulence, for instance, or at Gil Vicente's (*he logo muy barregudo*). His license is a proof of the new absolute power of the throne. Below the King no one is protected from the shafts of his wit. Nobles and peasants, priests and officials are attacked in biting phrases. The King and royal family on the other hand, are spoken of almost in terms of adulation. In one passage only, in the *Auto da Barca da Gloria* (1519), acted before the King at Almeirim, is a king introduced who had led a *muy pecadora vida* and who is warned that he must become a *morador naquelles fogos*. Flattery and lies, diamonds and sapphires will now avail him nothing. King Manoel, we may safely say, had heard no words more outspoken since the bluff voice or rather pen of Affonso d'Albuquerque had ceased four years before. But he may not have regarded the allusion as personal, and at all events the King with the rest finally enters the *barca da Gloria*. That a deeper practical purpose often lay beneath Gil Vicente's merriment is certain. He ridicules the useless ignorant pilots against whom Affonso d'Albuquerque vented his anger; ¹ he had meditated on the position of women which then and later attracted much attention; ² he inveighed against the growth of luxury as vigorously as did Sá de Miranda; he speaks out against the «infinite oppression» ³ of the peasants and he rebukes their pre-

¹ Letter 95: You hang a man, he says, for stealing an Alemtejan *manta*, why not a pilot for losing a shipload?

² As may be seen in many passages of the plays of Antonio Prestes and Jorge Ferreira de Vasconcellos. Women are Lisbon's news-mongers going about the city, says the latter in *Ulysipo: correos das novas*. The married woman, says Prestes, should be

tres horas na igreja
E o mais que em casa esteja.

³ *Romagem de Aggravados*.

sumption ¹. But primarily he was the Court jester, whose office it was to provide a pleasant evening, a *farça de folgar*, for a number of frivolous persons. He has been called a great philosopher, a great philologist, a forerunner of Erasmus. Nothing could be more absurd. Certainly he was not simply a pliant courtier nor, on the other hand, by any means a demagogue: he was a man of character ² who could, when occasion required, set his face firmly against what he calls a *desvairada opinião do vulgo*. His attitude towards the «new Christians», Jews recently converted, or who pretended to be converted ³ to, the Christian faith, was probably the same as that of Antonio Vieira a century later: he would have wished them to be tolerated, even encouraged, for the good of the State. His attacks on the priests and the Church are in spirit poles apart from the attitude of the Reformers. He himself was deeply religious and inclined to mysticism, and perhaps cared less for creeds and Churches than for communion with the living God: all the more surely it never occurred to him to form a sect or creed apart. His criticisms were essentially popular, i.e. of the people, and, like the similar satire in other countries throughout the Middle Ages, only show that reform must have come from within the Church, had not Luther, who was no mystic, thrust in his own Reformation. That a play of Gil Vicente's which excited a scandal in Brussels caused nothing but laughter in Lisbon, merely proved the greater piety of Portugal. The Church seemed there so firmly established that no possible

1

Mais formoso está no villão
Mao burel que mao frisado, etc.

(*Farça das Almoceves*).

² The coarseness of some passages of his plays is due to his desire to be true to life, and he accordingly allows his peasants expressions which must have shocked the *doces d'orelhas*.

³ Some of them, according to a poet of the *Cancioneiro Geral*, would sell the true God for a *tostão*.

harm could be done by a little merriment at its expense, or by vehement criticism. That priests and monks come in for a disproportionate share of Gil Vicente's ridicule is explained in part by their number (*somos mais frades qu'a terra sem conta na Christandade*)¹ and importance in the life of the village², and in part as a traditional form of humour exceedingly popular in the Middle Ages. In Gil Vicente the priests are portrayed as sensual, ambitious, hypocritical, greedy, pleasure-loving, card-playing, fond of money; and we cannot doubt that here as always he drew from life, recorded, especially, in his perfectly natural reproduction of peasants' conversations, what was wont to be said of them by ignorant gossips. Other poets of the *Cancioneiro Geral* were no less outspoken. Gregoryo Affonso, in the service of the Bishop of Evora, speaks of

o sacerdote
que uiue como o leygao;

Alvaro de Brito says that

Algũs ha na crelezya
que leuam errados rrumos,
mao costume
de vestyr epocresya,
sam deuotos mais dos fumos
que do lume...
Leues pecados alheos
muy gravemente defendem
& nam tardam
de fazer outros mays feos, etc.

¹ *Fragoa d'Amor* (1525).

² When Margarida finds an image of the Virgin on the hills she at once thinks of calling the priest, when Gonçalo has been robbed of his hare and capons he suggests to his parish priest that he should give him a *responso* by which he may recover them. The priest was thus the butt of the peasants' wit and their *deus ex machina* in time of need.

Duarte da Gama deploras a *cobiça dos prelados*. Anrique da Mota makes merry over the *muyto gordo vigayro d'Ouidos* and seems to hint that in oral confession is *pouco proveito d'alma*, a doubt which subsequently troubled Damião de Goes. And instances might be multiplied. Were all these poets Portuguese forerunners of Erasmus? As to the famous passage in which Gil Vicente upbraids Rome:

Ó Roma sempre vi lá
 que matas peccados ca
 e leixas viver os teus...
 Assolves a todo o mundo
 e não te lembrás de ti
 nem ves que te vas ao fundo.¹

it is almost an imitation of the two long *sirventes* of the troubadour Guillaume Figueiras of Tolosa, «son of a tailor and himself a tailor» against the *fals clergatz*. Each verse begins by invoking Rome in the same way as does Gil Vicente:

Roma falsa e tafura...
 Roma per aver
 Fait manta fellonia
 E mant desplazer
 E manta vilania...²

The fact is of course that Church and clergy in the Middle Ages and to the time of the Reformation were considered

¹ *Auto da Feira* (1527).

² Raynouard. *Choix des poésies originales des Troubadours* 6 vol., Paris 1816-21. vol. 4. p. 307. Cf. also the passage in the *Prophétie des Abus* (16th century):

O gras tondus...
 Votre autel est ruiné,
 Votre règne est bien miné,
 Il tombera.

(In C. Lenient. *La Satire en France ou la littérature militante au XVIIe siècle*. Paris 1806).

fair prey for the satirist.¹ Other traditional types in Gil Vicente's plays are the vainglorious swashbuckling Spaniard, of the kind that in one of Ferreira de Vasconcellos' plays vaunts that all Lisbon would fit into Seville Cathedral; the old man amorous (the *velhos namorados* of the *Cancioneiro Geral*);² the corrupt judge or other official; and especially the impoverished nobleman and famished *escudeiro* who have furnished a sad stock-in-trade to all realistic writers of satire in the Peninsula from Martial to Pereda or the *Fidalgos da Casa Mourisca*. The poet of Bilbilis knew the type at first hand:

Nunquam se cenasse domi Philo jurat, et hoc est:
Non cenat quotiens nemo vocavit eum.

(Ep. v. 47).

Hic quem videtis gressibus vagis lentum,
Amethystinatus media qui secat Saepta...
Oppigneravit modo modo ad Cladi mensam
Vix octo nummis anulum unde cenaret.

(Ep. ii. 57).

In the *Cancioneiro da Vaticana* (no. 1168) we read of an *infançon's* kitchen which is so cold that it would serve excellently for a wine-cellar or for sleeping the *sesta*

¹ The Archpriest of Hita abounds in such satire. The seller of indulgences did not escape. Gil Vicente's *assolves a todo o mundo* is related not to the private heart-searchings of Damião de Goes but to popular criticisms of the *buldero* described by Lazarillo as sowing indulgences broadcast: *el mayor echador dellas que jamas yo vi*. (*Lazarillo de Tormes*. Conforme á la edición de 1554. Ed. H. Butler Clarke. Oxford 1897. p. 78).

² In the *Cancioneiro Geral* we find many of Gil Vicente's characters in embryo: *clerigos casados, villãos postos em alguma honrra, borrachas que bebem mays do que fyam, the fidalgo who keeps gram estado & a rrenda casy nada, etc.*

without fear of flies. And we have the Archpriest of Hita's Don Furon:

¿Non tenié que comer? Ayunav' el pecador.

Gregoryo Affonso in the *Cancioneiro Geral* writes of

o jejum
que se faz por nam ter pam
and of the
cavaleyro
que nam tem bem de comer.

And there is the Toledan *escudero* in *Lazarillo de Tormes*; and the *raphanophagus* of Nicolaus Clenardus, «fasting at home in order to make good show out-of-doors». So Gil Vicente introduces us to the *escudeiro* who

Sueñase muy gran señor
Y no tiene media blanca

and to another who is

Todo o dia sem comer

and late at night

Toma hum pedaço de pão
E hum rabão engelhado; ¹

and to the *fidalgo de muito pouca renda* who *usava muito estado* and maintains six *moços de pé* although his revenues are shrinking like Alcobaça cloth:

Quer ter muitos apparatus
E a casa anda esfaimada. ²

The type is the same, but is in each case observed from

¹ *Quem tem fardos?*

² *Farça de Ines Pereira* (1523).

life. We know that «certain men of good learning»¹ doubted Vicente's originality, but the doubt need not greatly concern us. «Man spricht immer von Originalität» said Goethe «allein was will das sagen! So wie wir geboren werden fängt die Welt an auf uns zu werken und das geht so fort bis ans Ende»; and, when a doubt was expressed as to whether a writer was original, he exclaimed. «Das ist sehr lächerlich. Man könnte ebensogut einen wohlgenährten Mann nach den Ochsen, Schafen und Schweinen fragen die er gegessen und die ihm Kräfte gegeben». Gil Vicente certainly did not spring full-fledged like Minerva from the head of Zeus. That he had read widely he himself tells us: *Os livros das obras que escriptas vi... assi em metro como em prosa... os antigos e modernos não leixarão cousa boa por dizer nem inuenção boa por achar nem graça por descobrir*. That he had at least a smattering of French and Italian, and a wide knowledge of macaronic Latin his plays prove. In his first compositions, the *Visitação* (1502) and the *Auto Pastoril Castelhana* (1502) he is content to follow Encina, and follow him rather closely. When his conception of them grew more ambitious and he intended them to be something more than a «pobre coisa,» he no doubt took his material from a wider field. He was acquainted with other Spanish writers besides Encina. He was not apparently

muy sentido
Das trouas de Joam de Mena,

but he evidently admired the *Coplas* of Jorge Manrique and the Spanish romances, and the *Libro de Buen Amor* of Juan Ruiz; he had read the *Celestina*, although his plays do not echo it so persistently as do, for instance, the *Celestina* plays

¹ King Duarte had used the same phrase of his father, King João I: *de grande & boo saber*.

of Jorge Ferreira de Vasconcellos. He more than once refers to Macias, as the lover *par excellence*, in the fashion of the time. With the *Cancioneiro Geral*, or with its poems before Garcia de Resende published them in 1516, he was closely familiar. Stress need not be laid on the fact that the line

Se se podesse dizer¹

occurs in a poem by Luis Anriquez in the *Cancioneiro Geral*: *Se sse podesse dyzer*; but many of Gil Vicente's subjects and metres are to be found in the poems of Alvaro de Brito Pestana, Nuno Pereyra, Duarte de Brito, Dioguo Brandam. The lines in Dioguo Brandam's *lamentaçam*:

O morte que matas quẽ he prosperado
Sem de fermoso curar nem de forte, etc.²

are imitated in the eight lines beginning. *Deje la muerte las niñas, las dueñas*³.

The spelling *Té toi, té toi*⁴ would seem to imply that Gil Vicente's knowledge of French was derived rather from conversation than from books: and similar phonetic spelling of French words occurs in the *Auto da Fama*. It has been noticed that his description of Lucifer as *maioral do inferno* corresponds to the *procureur des enfers* of French *mystères*, that the whole conception of his trilogy of *Barças* is probably derived from the *Danse Maca-*

¹ *Auto da Alma*.

² *Lamêtacã aa morte dell rrey dom Johan que santa gloria aja* (1495).

³ *Auto de S. Martinho* (1504).

⁴ *Auto das Fadas*.

This spelling recalls the interpretation suggested for the line of Dante: *Inf. vii. i. Pape Satan aleppe*.

(*Pas paix, Satan, pas paix, Satan, á l'épée*).

bre, that passages of the *Testamento* of Maria Parda recall the *Testament de Pathelin* (a mule in the *Cancioneiro Geral* makes an equally elaborate *testamento*). The plays which he and his son Luis describe as *moralidades* no doubt owed something to French mediaeval plays. The debt was probably not very great, but intercourse with France was frequent, as references not only in the *Cancioneiro Geral* but in Gil Vicente's plays themselves show. It was the cruellest criticism of a poet to say that his verses were made in Morocco not in France:

quem sua troua fez
nam em França mas em Fez ¹.

But at heart Vicente did not belong to the cosmopolitan Court though he might flatter its taste for what was foreign and *peregrino* by introducing at one swoop into a play a son of the King of Hungary, a Prince of Great Greece and a Consul of Venice, *de alta genealogia*; ² or an *enselada* from France. The sources from which more than from any other he sought his inspiration, — and herein he showed his greatness and true originality — were three, all sources of un-failing inspiration: the book of Nature, the book of popular traditions ³ and the Bible, intimate knowledge of which was more common in Portugal before the 16th century than after ⁴. Vicente invented little or nothing, but he was

¹ Dom Françyseo Byueyro in the *Cancioneiro Geral*.

² *Floresta de Enganos* (1536).

³ In the case of Mofina Mendes he apparently adopted a popular tradition personifying misfortune. It is tempting, though wrong, to see in the surname the patronymic of the Basque *Mendi*, mountain: Misfortune old as the hills. More probably it = *mesma*.

⁴ The scene in the *Templo d'Apollo* in which Apollo mounts the altar and begins *Estos son mis mandamientos: Amarás á las mujeres*, etc. is probably a reminiscence of the mediaeval parodies of Church services, common in Portugal as elsewhere.

no mere echo in the valley (to use his own phrase): he gathered from all sides and his genius was justified of all his gatherings. Even as a dramatist he did not pretend to any other originality than that of introducing a new thing into Portugal from Spain. The good-natured Garcia de Resende, sometimes woefully misrepresented as a malicious depreciator of Vicente, tells us (in his *Miscellania*) that Encina was the inventor. The acting of some kind of play at the Portuguese Court was, moreover, no new thing. Alvaro Barreto in the *Cancioneiro Geral* mentions Ruy de Sousa who was

tal fazedor de momos
qual ante nos se nam sabe;

Duarte de Brito refers to the

autos
nas festas da Imperatriz;

Duarte da Gama says that

Nõ ha hy mays antremeses
no mundo onyuersal
do que ha em Portugal
nos Portugueses.

Cf. also the *copia de momos*, the *galantes momos*, and *antremezes infindos* in 1490.

But the pomp and show of these entertainments i.e. the *antremes* proper, in which the Portuguese thus excelled, threw into shade the literary part, the *breue*, even when written by so well known a poet as the Conde do Vimioso. It was Gil Vicente's lifelike portrayal of scenes and characters that enabled the literary part to triumph over the mechanical display.

Vicente, who had so evenly distributed his satire, himself suffered from *detractores* and *lingoas damnosas*, the eternal complaint of Portuguese writers. ¹ One of their criticisms was no doubt that he used rustic language unworthy of a polished writer. Modern critics have said that Vicente wrote a great part of his plays in a kind of jargon, *aravia* ² or *algarabia*. But a close examination of his plays reveals the fact that he, like Cervantes, apportions his different styles and dialects not at random but with extreme nicety. When he wishes he can write the best and purest Portuguese both in verse and prose, clear, restrained, ³ idiomatic ⁴.

But he has no intention of placing such a style in the mouth of his peasants. It would be totally out of the picture. His object is to be natural. His peasants do not mince or choose their words, they are no porcelain Phylises and Corydons, they are really what he calls them, *rusticos pastores*, and speak as plain Bras or João. They transpose their consonants, clip their words, *fallão cercado*, utter provincial, archaic words and phrases. The word *cenreira* ⁵ which is included a little later by Duarte Nunes de Leão in his chapter *De algũs vocabulos que os homẽs polidos não deuem vsar* ⁶ is used by Vicente's peasants as well as by Ines Pereira, the flighty daughter of a Lisbon woman *de baixa sorte*. His *beirões* use words

¹ To quote but one, Duarte Pacheco Pereira in his *Esmeraldo de situ Orbis* (1505) inveighs with considerable bitterness against the *mordedores maldizentes mormoradores*.

² Cf. *mill aravias*. (*Cancioneiro Geral*).

³ You will scarcely find half a dozen superlatives in *-issimo* in his works.

⁴ His Spanish, on the other hand, is always liable to *lusitanismos*.

⁵ It occurs more than once in the *Cancioneiro Geral* and is common in modern Galician.

⁶ *Origem da Lingoa Portuguesa* Lisboa. 1606. Cap. 25.

known to belong peculiarly to Beira; his negroes chatter in broken Guinea-Portuguese (*a mi falla Guiné*); his Italian must needs speak Italian and his Frenchman French; the fortune-tellers from Greece and the Greek goddesses slur all their S's into Z's. (Cf. João de Barros. *Compilação* (1785), p. 218: *o çeçear çijano de Seuilha*). When he does employ gibberish he does so for a definite purpose, on the lips of a priest, *hum clerigo nigromante* conjuring up devils: *Zet zeberet zerregud zebet*¹; or of the *Diabo* himself, the purity of whose «Picardese» we may suspect, although Gil Vicente may conceivably have learnt a word or two from Diogo Zeymoto, a poet of the *Cancioneiro Geral* who had travelled in

a Picardia
& a terra do Dalfym,
França & Lombardya.

In his mingling of Spanish and Portuguese Vicente is never indiscriminate as were many Portuguese writers, Simão Machado, for instance, who in his plays makes one peasant speak Spanish and another Portuguese in the same scene for no apparent reason, or Sor Violante do Ceo who composed a short piebald *vilancete*, beginning in the one language and ending in the other. Vicente always has a purpose in this matter of language and usually it is to be true to life. As a general rule his peasants speak Portuguese, his courtiers and educated persons Spanish. The judge, who

¹ *Ezhortação da Guerra* (1513). *Zerregud* = *Very good*? The man in the *Romagem de Aggravados* (1536) who knows the Bible by heart and cannot say an *Ave Maria* and who pronounces *senhora sinoga* is evidently a foreigner, probably English or German. Gil Vicente, who often mingled with the crowd, *no chão como outro desmazelado*, would certainly have picked up a few words of English from passing sailors, if in no other way.

had taken his degree at Paris, speaks Spanish, the *moça* Portuguese in the *Floresta de Enganos* (1536); Cupid in the same play speaks Spanish, the *pastor rustico* answers him in Portuguese; the philosopher speaks Spanish, the merchant Portuguese. In the *Fragoa d'Amor* (1525) the *serranas* speak Spanish, but they *figurão planetas*, are not shepherdesses but planets. In the *Comedia sobre a divisa da cidade de Coimbra* (1527) the *lavrador* who speaks Spanish is *o muito nobre Lavrador*. In the *Auto da Fé* the peasants speak Spanish, but they do so in order to increase the contrast between them and Faith who must naturally speak Portuguese. In the later plays where *fidalgos* speak Portuguese, as in the *Farça dos Almocreves* (1526) and *Nao d'Amores* (1527), and the courtier priest speaks Portuguese (*Romagem de Aggravados*, 1533) we may perhaps see a sign of a change of taste at the Portuguese Court after the death of King Manoel.

In any case it is safe to say that Gil Vicente never employs either language carelessly. He has a fine ear, moreover, for style and evidently takes pleasure in the sound of some of the words he uses and perhaps coins, words that would have delighted the heart of Lear: *escarnefuchar*, *sandivarrão*, *demenesteco*, *manguispanado*, *balcarriadas*.

Since Gil Vicente was rediscovered, in the 19th century, there has perhaps been a tendency to exaggerate his influence. His popularity in Portugal was short-lived. In his life-time he became known to *o vulgo* in *folhas volantes*. His occasional pieces went from hand to hand and many were lost before the first collected edition of his plays appeared in 1562. King Sebastian, we know, read his plays with pleasure. A number of dramatists followed in his wake. Simão Machado wrote a few peasant scenes which for naturalness fall not so very far short of Vicente. In the plays of Antonio Prestes there are many signs of direct imitation. The *escudeiro's moço* in Gil Vi-

cente sleeps *sobre hũa arca*. In Prestes' *Auto dos Cantarinhos*

a moço de escudeiro
Por cama lhe é dada arca.

Que má cousa são villãos! exclaims Gil Vicente, and Prestes inserts the line in his *Auto do Mouro Encantado*. Here evidently is a writer who had read or heard Vicente's plays. Camões too had read and delighted in them. He may have had in his mind a passage in *O Juiz da Beira* when far from Portugal he wrote his verses *a huma cativa*:

amores de Mouro,
Ja sabeis o fogo vivo,
Ella captiva eu captivo;

and his pun *embarcado desembargado*, may be derived from the *Auto da Barca do Purgatorio*¹. But Vicente's vogue died with the 16th century. Partly changing taste and the 17th and 18th century love of the polished and elegant, of anything rather than the genuinely rustic or popular, accounted for this; partly the fact that he was included in the *Cathalogo de los Auctores damnados por la Iglesia*². The Inquisition, which came in in Portugal as Vicente went out, could not be expected to tolerate some of his outspoken criticisms in an age in which doubts and suspicions of heresy had become rife. But Vicente was out of fashion. He represented the olden gaiety of the Portuguese people in their dance and song. He had him-

¹ The conversation between Marta and the Devil runs:

M. Embarcade lá esta figa.
D. Passará esta fadiga
Seremos desembargados

² This is the expression used by Antonio de Sousa de Macedo in his *Flores de España, Excelencias de Portugal*, Lisboa. 1631.

self witnessed a change come over the land, and instead of joyous peasant-songs heard ditties sung so doleful that they had evidently been written, he says, by some Jew of Aveiro on the death of his grandfather¹. And now at the beginning of the 17th century Duarte Nunes de Leão can say that it is the mark of the plebeian to care for a cheerful kind of music: «Porq̃ hũ homem plebeio ou rustico mais se contentaraa de ouvir hũa chacota ou cantiga villanesca que hũa canção de artificiosa compostura & de toada mui lamentavel». Evidently men of good education were of the opinion of Amandria in *Dom Duardos* that

La musica debe ser
La madre de la tristeza.

So Vicente with the scenes of natural mirth that he portrayed became antiquated and despised. In the time of Manoel de Faria e Sousa (1590-1649) his plays are considered *poquissima cosa* and at best to contain pearls on a rubbish heap. Enough to say that the third edition of his works bears date not 1590 or 1600 but 1834. In Spain Lope de Vega (1562-1635) is believed to have derived the idea of his *El Viaje del Alma* from Gil Vicente's splendid trilogy of *Barcas*, and it may be so. But that Calderon (1600-1681) imitated him in his *auto El Lirio y la Azucena* is extremely improbable. It is at least strange that Calderon's contemporary, Nicolás Antonio (1617-1684), only knew of the plays of Gil Vicente as printed separately (*seorsim*) and believed that they were written in prose (*prosaicas*). The unknown author of *Lazarillo de Tormes* had probably read Vicente's plays, and so perhaps had Cervantes: in fact Vicente was read in Spain as in Portugal till the end of the 16th century. A passage in the 31st

¹ *Triumpho do Inverno* (1529).

chapter of the *First Part* of *Don Quixote* may conceivably be a reminiscence of a passage in the *Farça dos Fisicos*. In Vicente's play the following dialogue occurs between the *clerigo* and the *moço* he had sent with a letter to his lady-love.

CLER. Que hacia?

MOÇO. Ensavoava.

CLER. Y la carta desdichada?

MOÇO. Rompeo-a de barra a barra:

Ei-la aquy esmigalhada.

«*Y que hacia*», asks Don Quixote, «*aquella reina de la hermosura?...*» No la hallé, respondió Sancho, sino ahechando dos hanegas de trigo en un corral de su casa... la carta... la rasgó y la hizo menudas piezas». It has even been hinted, perhaps on the strength of the legend¹ that Vicente's gifted daughter Paula wrote an English grammar for the use of English readers, that Shakespeare was influenced by Gil Vicente. It is a tempting theory, all the more so that the magnificent assurance of the *fidalgo* in the *Farça dos Almocreves* is a real foretaste of Falstaff, and the repeated *Hão de matar frei Martinho* of the mad friar in *Nao d'Amores* at once recalls the «poor Tom's acold» of *King Lear*. But to say that Shakespeare was influenced by Vicente is as fantastic as to suggest that he had read Antonio Prestes because in the latter's play *Auto dos Dois Irmãos* two sons treat their father in precisely the same way as Regan and Goneril treat King Lear. Nor need the genius of Goethe have read the *Auto da Alma* of Vicente in order to know that the soul of woman may be tempted by jewels. It was Ducarme,

¹ Since the book, as D. Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcellos says, has never been seen.

in an article published in *Le Muséon* in 1885, who first compared passages in *Faust* with passages in the *divin and éthéré Auto da Alma*,¹ especially the passage — *ach nein! das geht jetzt noch nicht an* — with that beginning *Não me detenhais aqui*. It is rather with the whole spirit of Vicente's plays than with individual passages that parts of *Faust* have much in common:

Juchhe! juchhe!
 Juchheisa! Heisa! He!
 Geschrei und Fiedelbogen.

The fact is that all these writers probed deep into the heart of human nature and they meet in the depths, or rather on the heights. One must add Molière: some Vicentian scenes of pure farce, that in the *Floresta de Enganos* in which the Judge, *doctor hecho em Sena*, is discovered taking the place of the old negress servant and kneading bread *em fraldas de panadeira*, or that which introduces the incompetent doctors with their set phrases, or Frei Paço giving the country-girl a lesson in Court manners

¹ Conceivably Gil Vicente had derived the idea of his play from King Alfonso's *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. In no. 445 angels and devils contend for the soul of a rich and noble knight, and the angels finally rescue it:

Estad' estade
 Ca non quer Santa Maria
 que a uos assi leuedes.

In no. 75 devils

muit'espantosos e feos
 e negros mui mas ca mora

take the soul of a very rich and haughty usurer:

E a alm'assi dizia:
 que será de mim, cativa,
 etc.

(*Cantigas de Santa Maria*. Madrid, 1889. 2 vol.
 Vol I).

and the dance, might have come out of *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, *Le Malade Imaginaire* or *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. Since 1834 the critics have been busy over Vicente, and his natural, unliterary scenes, smacking less of the study than of field and hill and street, appeal strongly to the taste of the 20th century. He is in the able hands of Senhora Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcellos ¹, Dr. Theophilo Braga, ² General Brito Rebello ³, Senhor Anselmo Braamcamp Freire ⁴, Dr. Leite de Vasconcellos ⁵, Senhor Affonso Lopes Vieira ⁶, and we may confidently hope that he will emerge, like his Justice from the *Fragoa d'Amor*, freed from many misprints, corruptions and errors which unhappily still cling about him, and enriched by the explanation of many allusions that puzzle in his plays. It has been said of Camões that he is in himself a literature. Vicente is a nation. He represents the Portuguese people expanding along natural, national lines. He interests many and various readers. Some are attracted by the exquisiteness of his lyricism, others by his mirthprovoking satire, or by his lifelike sketches, the light thrown on the Middle Ages, on the history of the 16th century, on the Court life; others again through interest in philology, folklore, or the earliest poetry of Portugal ⁷. He belongs to Sainte-Beuve's «petit nombre d'écrivains qui ont un

¹ *Notas Vicentinas*. i. Coimbra 1912.

² *Gil Vicente e a criação do teatro nacional* in *Hist. da Litt. Portug.* II. *Renascença* (Porto, 1914). p. 36-102.

³ *Gil Vicente*. (*Grandes Vultos Portugêses*. no. 2) Lisboa, 1912.

⁴ *Gil Vicente, poeta e ourives*. Coimbra 1914.

⁵ *Gil Vicente e a linguagem popular*. Lisboa. 1902.

⁶ *A Campanha Vicentina*. Lisboa, 1914.

⁷ His plays add probability to the theory that the parallel-strophed refrain songs (the *cozzantes*) with which Portuguese literature opens were dance songs, the repeated (*leixapren*) lines and the pause (or refrain) answering to the evolutions of the dance.

privilège: ils ont peint l'homme dans leurs oeuvres ou plutôt ils sont l'homme, l'humanité même, et, comme elle, ils deviennent un sujet inépuisable, éternel d'observations et d'études.» But, although the appeal of Gil Vicente's plays is universal, he remains the most national of poets: indeed it is because his plays are thoroughly indigenous that their interest is universal.



