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«JUSTA FUE MI PERDICIÓN»: THE CONTEXT, AUTHORSHIP AND ABIDING POPULARITY OF A COURTLY *CANCIÓN*

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«Justa fue mi perdición», the first line of which, like «Nunca fue pena mayor» (ID 0670), would appear to conceal a lady's name, was a fifteenth-century anonymous courtly *canción* that became enormously popular in the sixteenth century:

Justa fue mi perdición;
de mis males soy contento;
ya no espero galardón,
pues vuestro mereçimiento
satisfizo a mi pasión.

Es vitoria conoçida
quien de vos queda vençido,
qu'en perder por vos la vida
es ganado el qu'es perdido.
Pues lo consiente razón,
consiento mi perdimiento
sin esperar galardón,
pues vuestro mereçimiento
satisfizo a mi pasión.

Just was my perdition;
I am happy with my woes:
I expect no further favour
because your great worthiness
has fully repaid my passion.

To remain conquered by you
is a conquest well-known,
for in losing his life for you
he who is lost has been won.
Since reason consents to it,
I consent to my perdition
without hope of further favour,
because your great worthiness
has fully repaid my passion.

Text: ID 1955, MP4a-27 (*Cancionero musical de Palacio*, c. 1500) ¹

Rubric: *f de la torre*

Rhyme scheme: ABABA CDCDABABA

Glosses: 'Quando más por más perdido' (ID 1981), Costancio (Costana?)

¹ All ID numbers are from Dutton 1990-1991.

The text of this song is found in two major fifteenth-century musical manuscripts, the *Cancionero musical de Palacio* (MP4) and *Cancionero musical de la Catedral de Segovia* (SG1), and was frequently printed and glossed in the sixteenth century.² The version given here is from the Palace Songbook (MP4) compiled about 1500, with music by Francisco de la Torre, a cantor who was recruited to join the Royal Chapel on 1 July 1483. The earliest printed version is in the first edition of the *Cancionero general* (1511), where it is the only *canción* in a bloc of 156 *canciones* for which music has survived, which incidentally corroborates Jane Whetnall's contention that it was Hernando del Castillo's editorial policy to exclude songs from his collection (1989: 199). It was reprinted in all nine sixteenth-century editions of the *Cancionero general* (Romeu Figueras 1965, II: 268), and was included in at least ten sixteenth-century manuscripts (Labrador Herráiz & Difranco 1996: 388) when Jorge Manrique's *Coplas* on the death of his father had earned him great fame (Marino 2011).

On folio 125 of the first edition of the *Cancionero general* (11CG-329), it is placed between two *canciones* by «don jorge», with the rubric «Otra cancion». While it is true that, in such a case, one would expect the rubric «Del mismo», o «Otra suya», it may reasonably be assumed that Jorge Manrique (1440-1479) was its author. Víctor de Lama (1995: 534) points out that the *canción* «Con tantos males guerreo» (ID 6206, 11CG-282), which also occurs after a *canción* by Jorge Manrique and has the same rubric «Otra cancion», presents us with a similar problem with regard to attribution, and yet Manrique's editor José Manuel Alda Tesán did not believe that, in this other case, there were any grounds for doubt.³ «Justa fue mi perdición» was first formally attributed to Jorge Manrique in the *Segunda parte del Cancionero general*, published in Zaragoza in 1552.

2 Víctor de Lama (1995), many of whose opinions happen to coincide with mine, gives a full account of the whole the history of the text and its glosses. I am grateful to him for sending me a link to his article.

3 Following the same procedure, the Portuguese poet Duarte de Brito (c. 1466-1514) made «Con tantos males guerreo» the first line of a poem in seven stanzas (ID 5089, 16RE-148), illustrating the close links that existed between Castile and Portugal.

Costana's gloss of «Justa fue mi perdición» was added in the second edition of the *Cancionero general*, but in the accompanying rubric Costana is erroneously named «Constancio». This error was eventually corrected in the fifth edition of the *Cancionero general* (Toledo 1527) (Pérez Bosch 2009: 97-98). Victoriano Roncero López assumed that Costana was himself the author of the *canción* (Dutton & Roncero López 2004: 518). But the rubric does not give any indication of authorship: *Comiençan las obras de Constancio y esta primera es una glosa de Justa fue mi perdicion* (14CG-863). Costana can be identified as Francisco de la Costana (d. 1504), who was a cantor in the Castilian Royal Chapel from 1488 to 1503, with an annual salary of 30,000 and later 40,000 mrs. He was appointed chaplain to the royal court on 17 August 1502 (Knighton 2001: 105 y 194-195; Torre 1954: 31). By 1498 he held the title of Comendador de Biedma in the Order of Santiago (Salazar y Castro 1696-1697: 217; Beltran 2000: 362-363 y 2004: 42 y 44). By 15 July 1486 he was already married to Isabel Serrana y del Águila, known as *La Serrana*, when the queen gave them 4,000 mrs (Baeza 1955-1956, I: 132). Prince Juan gave Isabel Serrana some black velvet and money in Úbeda in 1489 (Baeza 1955-1956, I: 297). She is listed as a widow of the 'comendador Francisco de Costana' on 8 January 1505, when she received 40,000 mrs due to her deceased husband and her children (Morales 2004: nº 3712, 4962 y 5403).

Although «Justa fue mi perdición» was not included in any fifteenth-century citing poems, it was much admired by Gracián for its «artificioso ingenio» (1969, I: 253) and was glossed by at least ten poets: Costana (as mentioned above), Juan Fernández de Heredia (c. 1480-1549), Juan Boscán (c. 1491-1542), Gregorio Silvestre (1521-1569) (three times, once «a lo divino»), the anonymous Hieronymite friar who compiled the *Cancionero espiritual* (1549), Jorge Montemayor (1520-1561), Pedro de Andrade Caminha (1520-1589), Joaquín Romero Cepeda, Luis de Camões (1524-1580), and Francisco de Borja y Aragón (1581-1658), Prince of Esquilache (Michaëlis de Vasconcellos 1889-1890: 298; Romeu Figueras 1965, II: 268-269). Gracián considered it the work of Jorge Manrique, but Camões attributed it to Boscán, and Lope de

Vega, when citing the first two lines in *La Dorotea* (v, III), likewise attributed them to Boscán, «unaware of the fact that Boscán was elaborating on an earlier composition» (Macpherson 1998: 83).

The first line of the song originated as a *mote* by Frei João Manuel (c. 1416-1476), Bishop of Ceuta and Guarda, and may have circulated at courtly festivities before Jorge Manrique incorporated it into his *canção*. Since Jorge Manrique died on 24 April 1479, we can rule out the idea proposed by Michaëlis de Vasconcelos (1889) that the Bishop of Guarda's son João Manuel transmitted it to Castile in the 1490s. At this stage it is necessary to give a short account of the bishop's life. After studying at the Carmelite Monastery (1424-1432) under the tutelage of Nunho Alvares Pereira of Santa Maria, the former Constable of Portugal, he represented the Regent Pedro, Duke of Coimbra, as an ambassador, first in Hungary and then at the Vatican, where he was sent to negotiate with Pope Eugene IV to obtain a dispensation for Afonso V of Portugal to marry his cousin Isabel, the daughter of the Regent. In 1440, when the dispensation was granted, he was made Bishop of Ceuta and Guarda; in 1443 he became Afonso V's Chaplain and close adviser; and in 1444 he was made Primate of Africa, a position that he held until his death on 24 July 1476 (Pina 1790: 320; Caetano de Sousa 1745: 385).

The *mote* was originally addressed, I believe, to Frei João Manuel's mistress Justa Rodrigues Pereira (c. 1441-1514), a remarkable lady of the Portuguese court, by whom he had two sons who were legitimised by Afonso V of Portugal on 15 November 1475: the bilingual Portuguese-Castilian poet João Manuel (c. 1468-1500), Alcaide of Santarém, who became King Manuel's High Chamberlain (*camareiro mor*); and his younger brother Nunho Manuel (born c. 1469), Lord of Salvaterra de Magos. João Manuel married Isabel de Meneses, the daughter and heiress of Afonso Teles de Meneses, III Alcaide de Campo Maior, and Juana de Azevedo, whose uncle João de Azevedo was Bishop of Porto. His brother Nunho married Leonor de Milán y Aragón, daughter of Jaime de Milán y Borja, I Count of Albaida near Valencia, and Leonor de

Aragón, an illegitimate daughter of King Fernando's illegitimate half-brother Alfonso of Aragon, I Duke of Villahermosa, and Maria Junquers. It will be noted that Jorge Manrique's wife Guiomar de Meneses, whom he married in 1470, was herself half-Portuguese: she was the sister of Elvira de Castañeda, his father's third wife, and was the youngest daughter of Pedro López de Ayala (d. 1486), I Count of Fuensalida, and María de Silva Meneses (d. 1470) (Franco Silva 1994: 87).

Justa Rodrigues was the wet-nurse and then governess of Prince Manuel, who eventually succeeded to the Portuguese throne as King Manuel I (1469-1521), *el Afortunado*, upon the death of his uncle João II on 25 October 1495. She was later employed as the governess of Manuel's second son Prince Luis (1506-1555), V Duke of Beja, and when she died in 1514, she was buried in the Convent of Jesus de Setúbal, which she herself had founded in 1489, and which was the first in Portugal to follow the Rule of the Sisters of Saint Claire.

There is a mystery about the ancestry of both Frei João Manuel and Justa Rodrigues. It is generally agreed that Frei João Manuel was an illegitimate son of Duarte I (r. 1433-1438) and Joana Manuel de Vilhena, daughter of Fernando Manuel, Count of Sintra. If this is true, he was a cousin of Juan Manuel (c. 1447-1543), II Lord of Belmonte de Campos, and a descendant of Don Juan Manuel (1282-1347), Prince of Villena, the author of *El Conde Lucanor*. However, neither Damião de Góis (d. 1574), in his *Nobiliário*, a manuscript cited by Michaëlis de Vasconcelos (1923: 194-197), nor the chronicler Ruy de Pina (1790: 320), allude to Frei João's royal ancestry. Indeed, Damião de Góis states that the bishop's two sons, who had been brought up in the household of Fernando (1433-1470), Duke of Viseu, and his wife (and cousin) Beatriz de Portugal (1430-1506), had adopted the surname Manuel because their mother was Prince Manuel's wet-nurse.⁴ On the basis of this and other evidence, Braacamp Freire (1901: 179-229) rejected the theory that the Bishop of Guarda was King Duarte's son,

⁴ It would, however, be more logical to assume that they took their father's name. The epitaph on the Bishop of Guarda's tomb in the royal chapel in the Carmelite Monastery of Lisbon clearly states: *Aqui jaz D. Fr. João Manoel, Bispo que foy da Guarda, Religioso do Carmo.*

contending, furthermore, that his mistress Justa Rodrigues was also not of noble birth, but the daughter of a common labourer near Guarda.

According to the genealogist Caetano de Sousa, Justa had a sister named Maria Rodrigues Pereira, who was the second wife of Gonçalo Cardoso de Vasconcelos, Lord of Morgado da Taipa, Prince Fernando's Treasurer (*Vedor da Fazenda*), and a brother Fernão Rodrigues Pereira, or Fernando Roos, Alcaide de Ourém and Monforte, who had also been brought up in Prince Fernando's household, and later entered the service of Isabel, Prince Fernando's daughter, when she married Fernando (1430-1484), III Duke of Braganza. After the latter's execution, Fernão Rodrigues accompanied Isabel and her children into exile in Castile. On his return to Portugal, he was imprisoned for several years, then released and granted 40,000 *reis* in compensation. King Manuel appointed him to serve Jaime (1479-1532), IV Duke of Braganza, as Chief Steward. He became Alcaide de Borba and Monforte and Commendador de Parada in Santarém. It is said that his father, and thus Justa's father (or step-father), was Joaõ Pereira, also a *criado* in the household of Prince Fernando (Caetano de Sousa 1745: 388-389).

But it is most unlikely that João Pereira was Justa's true father because a letter by Gaspar de Barreyros on the lineage of the Manuels, addressed to Damião de Góis, offers evidence that Justa's surname was in fact Roos, suggesting that her father was in fact of Flemish origin (Michaëlis de Vasconcelos 1889-1890: 296; 1972: 55; Cayetano de Sousa 1745: 388-389). The mistake may have arisen if Rz or Roz was assumed to be a contraction of Rodríguez. «Roos» is the Dutch for «rose», which may explain why there is a rose-bush in stanza 38 of Pinar's *Juego trobado* addressed—I believe—to the court lady María Manuel de Villena, whose uncle was Frei João Manuel's namesake, the poet Juan Manuel, II Lord of Belmonte de Campos, author of the *romance* «Gritando va el caballero», which is the ballad assigned to María Manuel in this same stanza of the *Juego*.⁵

5 This question is discussed in more detail in my forthcoming book *Secrets of Pinar's Game: Court Ladies and Courtly Verse in Fifteenth-Century Spain* (Leiden, Brill, 2017).

King Manuel had such faith in Justa's wisdom and diplomacy that he sent her to Castile on more than one occasion to conduct secret talks with the Catholic Monarchs (Cayetano de Sousa 1745: 388). Alonso de Silva, the Castilian ambassador to Portugal, in a letter dated 29 July 1497, refers to a visit that Justa made to King Fernando in Tortosa, in Cataluña, which must have occurred between 4 January and 7 April 1496 (Rumeu de Armas 1974: 225). Her mission, it seems, was to negotiate the terms of King Manuel's planned marriage to Isabel, the eldest and recently widowed Infanta, and to arrange the marriage of Dom Jorge de Lencastre, III Duke of Coimbra, João II's illegitimate son, to Beatriz de Villena, or Brites de Vilhena (c. 1483-1535).⁶ It was probably as a reward for her services as a matchmaker that Justa received 500 gold ducats (187,500 mrs) on 9 March 1496.⁷ Beatriz de Villena was one of the four daughters of Álvaro de Braganza y Castro (1439-1504), President of the Castilian Royal Council, and Felipa de Melo-Vilhena y Menezes (d. 1518), Countess of Olivença. Álvaro de Braganza had fled from Portugal to join his brothers, Juan de Silva y Ribera, I Marquis of Montemayor, and Afonso de Braganza, Count of Faro do Alentejo, who had sought refuge in Castile after the death of their elder brother, Fernando II de Portugal,

6 Don Jorge had been declared heir to the Portuguese throne on 30 September 1495. The couple married on 31 May 1500 (Cayetano de Sousa 1743-1745, xi: 13). Dom Jorge was born in Abrantes on 12 August 1481 and died in Setúbal on 22 July 1550. At the age of three, his father had entrusted him to the care of his only sister Joanna of Portugal (1452-1490), Santa Joana Princesa, at the Convent of Jesus in Aveiro. When his aunt died in 1490, he was educated at court with his half-brother Prince Afonso, the queen's only son, and his cousin Dom Manuel, the future king, under the care of Queen Leonor. After the death of Prince Afonso in a riding accident, he was brought up in the household of the king's Guard, João de Almada, Count of Abrantes, and was a pupil of the celebrated Latin scholar Cataldo Parisio Sículo. On 12 April 1492, when he was only eleven years of age, his father made him Master of the Portuguese Order of Santiago and Commander of the Order of Avis. By a royal decree, issued by the Prince-Regent Pedro, Duke of Braganza, on 12 April 1502, he received the Duchy of Coimbra. João II of Portugal, before he died, had made it known that he wanted his cousin and royal successor Manuel to treat Dom Jorge as his own son and to marry him to his first-born daughter at the appropriate time. Since Manuel did not have a daughter of marriageable age, it was decided that he should marry one of the daughters of Álvaro de Braganza.

7 She is simply identified in the royal accounts prepared by Alonso de Morales as «Justa, ama del rey de Portugal» (Morales 2004: nº 239).

III Duke of Braganza. The latter was beheaded on a trumped up charge of treason in the main square of Évora on 29 June 1484.

In the same letter mentioned earlier, Alonso de Silva informs the King of Aragon that João Manuel is a musician and a person in whom the Portuguese king confides all his secrets and upon whose advice he relies. He warns the king that João Manuel is not well disposed to him, but he suggests that this gentleman would be mollified by the gift of a musical instrument because in the whole of Portugal he had only seen one harpsichord (*clavecymbalo*), and this was a small and wretched instrument in the king's chamber (Paz y Meliá 1914: 330-331).

In 1497 João Manuel visited Toledo, Valladolid and Medina del Campo, where on 15 August, in the name of the King of Portugal, he signed the marriage contract of the Infanta Isabel with King Manuel I of Portugal. Prince Afonso, the Infanta Isabel's first husband, had died in a tragic riding accident on 12 July 1491 as he rushed to join his father who was bathing in the river Tagus. In August 1498, João Manuel and several other Portuguese gentlemen attended festivities in Zaragoza while waiting for Isabel to go into labour.⁸ After Isabel's death in childbirth, his last diplomatic mission was to arrange King Manuel's second marriage to Isabel's younger sister María, but he died in 1499 or 1500 before completing this work (Botta 1981).

It is possible, but highly unlikely, that Jorge Manrique actually met Justa shortly before his death. Beatriz de Portugal, Duchess of Viseu and Braganza, Queen Isabel of Castile's aunt and the mother of the future King Manuel, met Queen Isabel at the castle of Alcántara, near Cáceres on the Portuguese frontier, on 20-22 March 1479 to discuss the terms of a future peace treaty between Castile and Portugal that would be cemented by two proposed marriages: that of Juana *la Beltraneja* with Prince Juan and that of Prince Afonso with the Infanta Isabel of Castile. Justa, who was then a widow, may have accompanied Beatriz de Portugal on this occasion, and certainly by then her name would have been known at the Castilian court.

⁸ He contributed to a series of humorous verses at the expense of Manuel de Noronha, a Portuguese courtier, who was wearing camel-hair breeches: 'Señor mío, ¿cómo estáys?' (ID 0799, LB1-112; cf. 16RE-786), with the rubric: *Don Juan Manuel Portuges [sic]* (see Macpherson 2002).

Macpherson attributes the popular success of «Justa fue mi perdición» to its capacity to operate simultaneously at multiple levels, at the courtly, the religious, and the erotic, with a first line containing a lady's name that can be read in three different ways: «My perdition was well-deserved», «Justa (the lady) was the cause of my downfall», or «Jousting was my downfall». Víctor de Lama (1995) concedes that jousting was used as an erotic metaphor in certain poems, such as Juan del Encina's «Justa de amores» (ID 4469) and Tristán de Estúñiga's «Soñava que vi justar» (ID 6752), but he rejects an explicitly erotic reading of this poem because its whole message is the lover's renunciation of the hope of any reward, and, moreover, he does not think that *Justa* as a proper noun can be used in the third person singular in the first line and in the second person singular in the remainder of the *canción*, nor does he believe that it is permissible for the word «justa» to function simultaneously as a noun and as an adjective. While I agree with his general reading, these last points about grammar are debatable because I doubt whether fifteenth-century poets were much troubled by the rules of grammar or syntactical coherence. It can be demonstrated, for example, that in the first line of the *canción* «Nunca fue pena mayor», the word «mayor» is deliberately ambivalent and can be read either as an adjective or as the name of a lady, and I believe that lady can be identified as Mayor de Toledo, the wife of García de Toledo, Lord of La Horcajada, the fifth son of García Álvarez de Toledo, I Duke of Alba.⁹

As Víctor de Lama says (1995: 539), «Justa fue mi perdición» is constructed phonetically and semantically around the verb *perder* and on the idea that, in the context of love, total submission, or voluntary surrender, is synonymous with victory. One finds this same paradox of victory in defeat expressed by Juan Tellez Girón (1456-1528), II Count of Urueña, one of the twin sons of Pedro Girón, Master of Calatrava, and his mistress Isabel de las Casas, when, on 22 May 1476, he married Leonor de la Vega y Velasco, the daughter of Pedro Fernández de Velasco (c. 1430-1492), II Count of Haro and the Constable of Castile (ID 0938, 11CG-534):

⁹ The historical context of this and several other *canciones* will be explained in my forthcoming book *Secrets of Pinar's Game*.

El conde d'Ureña sacó por cimera una guirnalda de laurel que dan por victoria quando alguno la gana:

Los otros por vencedores
l'han traído,
yo sólo por bien vencido.¹⁰

What this means is that others —be they winners in sport or war— may wear the laurel wreath as a symbol of victory, but only the Count of Urueña wears it as a symbol of one who can proudly boast that he has been vanquished by love. The *letra* is an admission that the count had been a supporter of the pro-Portuguese faction, defeated at the Battle of Peleagonzalo near Toro on 1 March 1476. The winners in that battle brought his wife Leonor to him: «Los otros por vencedores / l'an traído». The *laurel*, representing Leonor, is thus paradoxically both a symbol of defeat and the jousting's reward. It was perhaps within this same context of the defeat of Portuguese troops in 1476 that «Justa fue mi perdición» was composed.

«Justa fue mi perdición» became immensely popular more than a century later because it not only epitomised what became in the late fifteenth-century a fashionable cult of amorous despair, which sought to reconcile reason with faith and free will with a fatalistic sense of compulsion, but it also perfectly expressed the eternal belief in the altruistic nature of true love, a love that never seeks for any reward. In the words of Pedro Manuel de Urrea (1513: fol. 40^r), harking back nostalgically to the Provençal concept of *fin amors*, «El amor qu'es fino amor / ningún galardón procura».

10 The others as conquerors / have worn the laurel, / I alone [do so] as one well conquered.

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ABSTRACT

«Justa fue mi perdición»: The Context, Authorship and Abiding Popularity of a Courtly *Canción*

I explore the historical context of «Justa fue mi perdición» (ID 1955), a *canción* attributed to Jorge Manrique. I discuss the problem of authorship and its genesis from a *mote* by Frei João Manuel, Bishop of Guarda, addressed to his mistress Justa Rodrigues Pereira, and I attempt to explain why it became so popular in Spain during the sixteenth century.

KEYWORDS: Jorge Manrique, Justa Rodrigues Pereira, Frei João Manuel, Costana, courtly *canciones*.

RESUMEN

«Justa fue mi perdición»: contexto, autoría y popularidad perdurable de una canción cortés

Examino el contexto histórico de ‘Justa fue mi perdición’ (ID 1955), una canción atribuida a Jorge Manrique. Discuto el problema de autoría y su génesis desde un mote de Frei João Manuel, Obispo de Guarda, dirigida a su amiga Justa Rodrigues Pereira, y trato de explicar las razones por su fama en España durante el siglo xvi.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Jorge Manrique, Justa Rodrigues Pereira, Frei João Manuel, Costana, canciones cortesanas.