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Imperial Lyric

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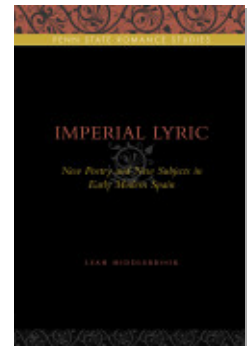
Published by Penn State University Press

Middlebrook, Leah.

Imperial Lyric: New Poetry and New Subjects in Early Modern Spain.

University Park: Penn State University Press, 2009.

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SONNETIZATION:

ACUÑA, BOSCÁN, CASTILLEJO, AND THE POLITICS OF FORM

THE KIND OF POETRY WE CATEGORIZE as lyric was only just becoming established as a genre during the early modern period. Despite the prevalence of Petrarchism as a compositional praxis, canzone, sonnets, and the other poetic forms that Spanish, French, and English poets adopted from Italy were viewed by many writers as *poemi piccoli*—poetry that was “small” both in length and in scope. It was often taken as poetry dedicated to the representation of trivial and frivolous themes instead of the great matters contained in epic and tragedy.¹ In this chapter I argue that the lyric rose to privilege within the context of the transformation of ideas about men as Spanish society shifted from a military to a courtierized culture—from a culture that celebrated its aristocratic warrior-heroes to one in which the agency and the physical prowess of the nobleman were suppressed, curtailed, and deflected into the courtliness associated with Italian *sprezzatura*. That is, I will be arguing for a reciprocal, mutually conditioning relationship between new ideals for poetry and for men in the early modern era. Moreover, I will speak for the essential modernity of this new poetry whose function was not to inscribe the present order within a continuum of culture (the function of ballad) or to recount Castilian greatness (the function of epic), but rather to rehearse and elaborate the image of the courtier as the new masculine ideal.

One of the Spanish writers whose work supports these claims most clearly is Hernando de Acuña (1514–1580). Born into a noble family in Valladolid, Hernando de Acuña understood courtierization. The younger brother of one celebrated fighter (Pedro de Acuña) and the precocious favorite of another (Antonio de Leiva, the Marquis of Vasto; after the marquis’s death Acuña remained on close terms with his son), he also knew of the

1. For an excellent discussion of the status of the lyric in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century treatises on poetry, see María José Vega, “La poética de la lírica.”

ambivalent rewards of prestige within the Hapsburg court. Successful both in fighting and in cultivating the right patrons, Acuña was singled out for favor when he was assigned the captaincy of a Milanese fort at the young age of twenty-four. He frequently traveled in the emperor's retinue during the 1540s and 1550s. Under Philip II in the 1550s, he carried out missions in France. But he also suffered periods of misfortune and disgrace, as when he was captured and imprisoned in France (three of his sonnets are headed "sonetos en prisión de franceses") and when he lost the fort in Milan in 1546. Furthermore, near the end of his life, he seems to have shared a fate common to captains and fighters throughout the European kingdoms: the *Memorial* of his life and service, from which much of our information about Acuña's life and career is drawn, was composed in order to convince Philip II to pay arrears for the years of service that he had provided to both the emperor and the king.²

Acuña is often mentioned in passing in discussion of Spain's generations of fighter poets, but his work is rarely read in any breadth or depth. Yet two of his sonnets, in particular, illustrate that the rules of poetic form can be analyzed for what they reveal about the changing ideologies within a culture. Poems 45 and 30 demonstrate that the "courtierization" of the warrior was imagined as a phenomenon that took place in poetry, as well as in politics. In Acuña we find the clearest representation of a trope that we will encounter repeatedly in this book; we might call it "sonnetization":

Sonnet 45

Atenta al gran rumor la musa mía
 del armígero son de Marte fiero,
 cesó el dulce estilo que primero
 en sujeto amoroso se extendía;
 mas hora, con la vuestra en compañía,
 me vuelve al sacro monte, donde espero
 levantarme más alto y, por grosero,
 dejar con nuevo canto el que solía.

2. Most biographers use Acuña's *Memorial*, a summary of his service to emperors Charles V and Philip II, written for Philip II in an attempt to receive greater acknowledgment of and compensation for his labors on behalf of the empire, as the basis for documenting his military career. The few biographical studies of Acuña's life and work are summarized and corrected by Díaz Laríos in the introduction to the 1982 edition of the *Varias poesías*. Short but comprehensive, this is the most up-to-date biographical sketch we have of Acuña.

Así sus horas con la espada a Marte,
 y los ratos del ocio con la pluma
 pienso, señor, enderezar a Apolo;
 dando a los dos de mí tan larga parte,
 y tomándola dellos tal, que en suma
 no me cause tristeza el verme sólo.

[My muse, attentive to the great rumor / of the warlike sounds of fierce Mars, / ceased the sweet style in which she at first / extended herself on the subject of love; / but now, in company with yours, / she returns me to the sacred mount, where I hope / to rise still higher and / with my new song abandon as crude that one I used to sing. / Thus to Mars his hours with the sword, / and in periods of leisure, with the pen / I plan, sir, to make right with Apollo; / giving of myself so large a part to each, / and taking so much from them, that, in summary, / to find myself alone will not cause me grief.]³

Most who study early modern literature think of sixteenth-century sonnets in terms of Petrarchism and evaluate them based on their success in representing an introspective self (generally masculine, generally courtly), whose utterances, whether they are perceived as allegories of political relationships, transactions in the social currency of patronage, or genuine expressions of love, should flow smoothly toward their object. The aesthetics of the sonnet dictate that it mimic the “artlessly artful” cadences of *sprezzatura*, but this poem does not appear to do that. On the contrary, Acuña’s workmanlike progress through the principal rules of the sonnet form makes for heavy sledding, particularly in lines 7 through 9, where an awkward use of the poetic technique of hyperbaton causes the word *grosero*, or “crude” seem to at first modify the speaker. The fact that a reader must pause to untangle line 9 and then double back to read the quatrain again to have it make sense makes this poem a good example of exactly the kinds of darkness and difficulty that scholars and humanists of Acuña’s day counseled poets to avoid. There are other rough spots, as well: the jerky accents of line 3 (“cesó el dulce estilo que primero,” where the accent on the “ó” of “cesó” forces a pause between it and the “e” of “el,” and thus disrupts the flow of the line) and wordiness in line 13 (“y tomándola dellos tal, que en

3. All poetry by Acuña quoted in this book is taken from the Díaz Laríos edition.

suma”). At the level of content, the poem contradicts our expectations of a Renaissance sonnet by framing neither a statement of love nor a readily apparent allegory of the court.

Sonnet 45 may fail to meet conventional expectations of what a *good* sonnet is, then; but it is nevertheless an interesting sonnet, and a useful one with which to begin to consider the ideologies that were attached to the new Italianate lyric forms adopted by Spanish courtiers in the sixteenth century. In the first place, the poem foregrounds the relationship between forms of poetry and forms of men. Its plot is the speaker’s trajectory from medieval lover to warrior hero to courtier, as each of these identities is conferred and described by lyric discourse: the epic and ballad that inscribe “armígero son” (lines 1–2), the courtly *dolce stil nuovo* (“el dulce estilo;” 3–4), and finally, the poetry of arms and letters, the cycle of “now the sword, now the pen” that is the ideal for the Renaissance courtier (9–14). Along the way, the poem stages a comprehensive statement of what Norbert Elias would call the “courtierization” of a Spanish knight. In his classic series of essays on “the civilizing process,” Elias described a late medieval European tendency in which formerly independent knights were induced and coerced into renouncing their rights to raise private armies and wage internal wars, handing the “monopoly on violence” over to the king (*Power and Civility*, 104–16, 258–69). In Acuña’s Sonnet 45, the speaker narrates a version of this process as a seemingly natural progression,⁴ the maturing of a rough-and-tumble man’s taste as it develops under the guidance of a thoughtful friend. However, closer examination of the poem reveals that his metamorphosis is not at all natural. On the contrary, it entails the self-conscious and deliberate *naturalization* of a set of discourses and practices that have been imposed from the outside and that are formed in response to the political structure and the ideologies of

4. This progression anticipates Elias’s narrative, in that it posits a tension in lines 2 and 3 between the *dolce stil nuovo* and the poetry of the unrestrained knight-warrior. Elias discusses the rise of the discourse of *fin amours* and chivalric service as a model of “pacifying conduct” whose purchase on the culture of knighthood in the eras leading up to the full flowering of European absolutism in the seventeenth century is a discontinuous process: “the web of interdependence into which the warrior enters at first is not yet very extensive or tight . . . At court, towards the mistress, he may deny himself violent acts and affective outbursts; but even the *courtois* knight is first and foremost still a warrior, and his life an almost uninterrupted chain of wars, feuds and violence” (*Power and Civility*, 260–61). Elias’s reading of the ideological function of court poetry stops at the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, with the “sweet” love song. What Acuña adds is the later stage of the courtier’s pacification, in which his embrace of a Stoicism that is modeled variously on Cicero and Seneca further refines his techniques of self-restraint. Acuña associates the complete interpellation of the modern courtier with the humanist sonnet.

the nascent modern court.⁵ These discourses and practices condition the speaker's status as "sólo" at the poem's close. Moreover, as we will begin to see shortly, they inflect his position with the types of double meanings that are generally attributed to the subject of modernity. In particular, he is attributed with a solitude that is not isolated and a self-sufficiency that is in fact radically dependent. The ingenuity with which this process has been framed (and masked) in Acuña's composition offers us a new way to evaluate Sonnet 45's relative success as a poem, although doing this requires shifting our expectations out of the conventions of Petrarchism to think a little more broadly about the ideological capacities of the sonnet form.

Courtly Subjects

Perhaps the best way to begin is by noticing the strong subtext of subjection and liberation that accompanies the speaker's self-reported narrative of his progress. His experience of medieval love and of war beats is described in terms of dependency. Writing in those forms, he follows the dictates of his muse, who is herself subject to the shifting attractions of different types of sound patterns, martial and sweet. Against this background, the sonnet is portrayed as the form that enables autonomy: from line 6, as the speaker begins writing sonnets, the verbs shift into the first person: "espero . . . levantarme . . . [espero] . . . dejar" (lines 6–7) and "pienso . . . enderezar" (11). This resituates agency from the muse to the speaker himself. Furthermore, the actions these lines convey portray him, first, as exercising mastery over his utterances and his labors and, second, doing so in a balanced way that we can associate with the judgment and sense of proportion that are a principal characteristics of the modern sixteenth-century courtier. The opening word of the poem's sestet, "así," or "thus" (9), establishes the reticent, moderate tone of the new ideal, and the second half of the poem continues to be marked as the voice of the quintessential Renaissance man, the stand-alone,

5. Among these discourses is that of perfect masculine friendship. As Ullrich Langer has discussed, sixteenth-century writers developed a rich discourse on the idealized relationship, more perfect even than Neo-Platonic heterosexual desire, "a relationship of good men with each other through their goodness" (*Perfect Friendship*, 20). Among the poetic conceits elaborated around perfect friendship is the play of presence and absence, solitude and accompaniment that we find represented in Acuña's "no me causa tristeza el verme sólo," for example. Friendship is central to the constitution of the subjectivity of the courtly speaker in Juan Boscán's lyric sequence as well. See my discussion in Chapter 2.

masculine-singular “I” represented by “sólo,” which is, we might notice, the poem’s last word.

On first pass, then, the orientation of the poem seems to be toward the production of the self-possessed modern courtier, the man “of arms and letters” idealized by Castiglione and adopted with particular fervor as a model by both traditional Spanish aristocrats and the new nobility made up of groups such as the *letrados*. However, several elements of the poem undercut such a reading. First of all, although the speaker lays claim to the position of a sovereign subject at the end of the poem, his autonomy is in fact entirely contingent upon the conventions of the sonnet form. If the poem had been composed as anything other than a sonnet—as a Provençal *cant*, a Castilian *romance*, a fragment of epic, or a last will and testament for that matter—the speaker might have been knocked from his position of “sólo” and swallowed up by the momentum of language as it proceeded on around him. It is the forced rule of sonnet closure, *in* syllable eleven, *of* line fourteen, *with* rhyme E, that positions him to have, and in fact, to *be*, the last word.

As a second point that undermines the speaker’s autonomy, Sonnet 45 reflects the humanist fashion for lyric composition based on researched and scholarly imitation of literary models (*imitatio*).⁶ Many of these models were ancient (Horace, Catullus, Ovid); others were more recent (Petrarch) and even roughly contemporary (Sannazaro, Bembo). But all of them were debated and subject to approval by scholarly authorities before they were admitted as legitimate sources for contemporary expression. Therefore, when Acuña’s speaker identifies with the formula “con la espada a Marte . . . con la pluma . . . a Apolo” (“with the sword to Mars . . . with the pen . . . to Apollo”) (9–11), this is an ambivalent act, a self-assertion that is enabled by a primary submission to linguistic, as well as political, authority. Sonnet 45 thus shifts the ground on which the poet stands, from traditions of poesis to discursivity, or the imperative that a man be legible within a given social order. Poesis implies the long continuum of the poetic creation of the world from its divine origins to the present, as that tradition is memorialized by *vates* and singers who preserve it in their songs.⁷ In Sonnet 45,

6. On *imitatio*, see the classic study by Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy*. On the applicability of Greene’s ideas in Spain, see Cruz, *Imitación y transformación*.

7. “The Greek word . . . *poiesis* . . . conveys two kinds of creation: the inspired creation that resembles a godlike power and the difficult material struggle, the . . . *techne*, of making forms out of the resources available. . . . Poetic form made of language relies on rhythm and musical effects that are known with our entire bodies, carried forward by poets working out of tradition and carried over by listeners receiving the work” (Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, 12).

the speaker presents himself as initially inhabiting this domain, as he and his muse are caught up in the martial beats of native Spanish war ballads and epic. But he breaks with it when he abandons song in the second quatrain to take up the modern poetic practice of *imitatio*.⁸ Furthermore, as I have been suggesting, this account is aligned with a radical and equally modernizing change in his identity, which he represents as being shifted from nature to culture, so to speak, and reconstituted along the lines of the subject of discourse. The change becomes especially clear when we take into account that, despite what he says about his condition at the end of the poem, from line 5 forward the speaker is in fact *not* alone. In lines 1 through 4, he has been isolated with his muse, in the monadic state of the man who maintains a one-to-one relationship with the divine. But in line 5 he is joined by his friend and drawn into a circle of courtly peers. From that point forward, their attitudes and practices induce him to change his behavior, and they go on to condition his actions and his desire whether they are present or not. That is, the speaker *states* that he is not lonely because of how he spends his time (i.e., in the cycle of service to Mars and Apollo). The reason that this is not experienced as solitary service, however, is that it is completely socialized, structured through the formula that unites all modern courtiers under their new rubric as men of the sword and the pen. Thus the speaker's emergence into his masculine identity of *sólo* is actually his statement of having been absorbed into their ranks.

The connection that Acuña assumes between kinds of poetry and kinds of men may take a bit of explanation. Sonnet 45 builds on a tension that critics have long noted, namely, that in Spain, “Petrarchan forms had acquired a near-hegemonic cultural status, but . . . the power of the heroic Spanish past, whose lyric forms were not at all Petrarchan in nature, remained also to be reckoned with.”⁹ In medieval Castilian

8. Sixteenth-century defenses of poetry read references to the muse as attributing of poetry to the order of the divine in an era “before” composing poems landed in human hands, and in human practices of fiction-making and *imitatio*. Encina, in the *Arte de poesía castellana*, refers to: “la dimidad de la poesía, que no en poca estima y veneración era tenuta entre los antiguos, pues el esordio e invención de ella fue referido a sus dioses, así como Apolo, Mercurio y Baco, y a las musas, según parece por las invocaciones de los antiguos poetas” (9) (“the dignity of poetry, which was held in no little esteem and veneration among the ancients, for the exordium and the invention of it was attributed to their gods, such as Apollo, Mercury, and Bacchus, and to the muses, or so it seems from the invocations of the ancient poets”).

9. Cascardi, *Ideologies of History*, 248. Cascardi addresses the conundrum of poetic authority in the cultural era of exorcising the heroic tradition from poetry. See especially pages 247–85, which focus on Garcilaso de la Vega.

poetry of the type that the speaker abandons in line 5, the identity of the great Spaniard is based on his sword fighting. He fights for the ultimate benefit of the king and Christianity, but in an independent and sovereign way, as in the following scene in the *Poema del Cid*, in which the Cid comes to the aid of his friend in a battle with the Moorish king:

Viólo Mio Çid, Ruy Díaz el castellano,
 acostóse a un aguazil que tenía buen caballo,
 dióle tal espada con el su diestro braço
 cortólo por la cintura, el medio echó en campo.
 A Minaya Álvar Fáñez íbalo a dar el caballo:
 “¡Cabalgad, Minaya, vós sois el mio diestro braço!
 Hoy en este día de vós abré grande bando;
 firmes son los moros, aún nos van del campo.”
 Cabalgó Minaya, el espada en la mano,
 por estas fuerzas fuertemente lidiando

(748–57)

[My Cid, Ruy Díaz the Castilian, saw this, / he seized a vizier who had a good horse, / he gave him such a blow with his right arm / that he cut him through the waist, he left half of him on the open field. / He went to give the horse to Minaya Álvar Fáñez: / “Gallop, Minaya, you are my right arm! / On this day, today, I have great need of you; / the Moors are strong, although they depart from the field.” / Minaya galloped, his sword in his hand, / fighting with strength through their forces]

After winning the battle, the Cid sends Minaya to deliver the customary tribute to the king, but the poem makes clear that the decision to respect this custom lies with the Cid and that his choice to do so accrues to his honor:

“¡Oíd, Minaya, sois mio diestro braço!
 De esta riqueza que el Criador nos ha dado
 a vuestra guisa prended con vuestra mano.
 Enviárvos quiero a Castilla con mandado
 de esta batalla que habemos arrancada,
 al rey Alfonso que me ha airado

quíerole enviar en don treinta caballos,
 todos con sillas y muy bien enfrenados”

(810–17)

[“Listen, Minaya, you are my right arm! / From this wealth the
 Creator has given us / take to your taste, with your own hand. /
 I want to send you to Castile with news / of this victory we have
 seized, / to the king Alfonso, who has affronted me / I wish to send
 him thirty horses as a gift, / all with saddles and very well bridled”]

In contrast to *diestro brazo*, “now the sword, now the pen” is an early modern aesthetic topos conditioned by the political and social strictures that were being levied on where, when, and how far the courtierized aristocrat could raise his arm. As Acuña frames clearly in Sonnet 45, to identify with the formula implied a primary subordination to power, both in the form of the dictates of humanist imitatio and in the form of the new courtly fashions and codes of behavior that had been formed in response to the consolidation of crown control over its formerly spirited and unruly noble subjects.¹⁰ Therefore, the courtier, generally, and the Spanish courtier, specifically, was a figure for the subjection of the aristocrat. It thus makes sense that his arm, the former symbol of his honor and his sovereignty, would be interpellated into an ever more stylized and ritualized formula in language. Nor is it surprising that the modern, sixteenth-century articulation of arms and letters would become a site for the emergence of symptoms of anxiety and ambivalence about the repositioning of the nobility within Spanish culture. In addition to Acuña’s deployment of the topos, there is another telling example at the head of Sonnet 21 by Diego Hurtado de Mendoza (1504–1575):

Ahora en la dulce ciencia embebecido,
 ahora en el uso de la ardiente espada,
 ahora con la mano y el sentido
 puesto en seguir la caza levantada

(1–4)

10. As we saw in Sonnet 45, to voice the term sealed a nobleman’s embrace of the mediated existence that was the condition of his acceptance into the society of the nascent modern court, a society that was organized, in great part, to strengthen the bonds of mutual interdependence among aristocrats and make violence an ever less appealing recourse. See Elias, *Power and Civility*, 263–65.

[Now absorbed in the sweet science, / now in the use of the shining sword, / now with the hand and the mind / set upon following the roused hunt]¹¹

Mendoza's phrasing represents the speaker as entirely absorbed (*embebecido*) into a poetic discourse that governs the cycle of his activities: fighting, hunting, and writing sweet poetry. His wording serves as a counterpoint to Acuña's Sonnet 45, in which the speaker recounts the process of his absorption into precisely the mode of being that Hurtado de Mendoza's speaker describes.

In Sonnet 45, then, the speaker's adoption of the discourses and practices that are associated with the early modern court, and with the "new" lyric compositional techniques of Renaissance *imitatio*, is attributed with two effects: first, it deracinates the speaker, cleaving him off from native traditions and from the archaic and divine origins of culture that are represented by poetry understood as *poiesis*; second, it reconstitutes him from a state I earlier referred to as monadic into the split, dissembling figure of the courtier, whose legible exterior (legible via the established phrase "man of arms and letters") masks an interior that is subject to contradictory, hidden operations of motivation and meaning. These motivations are only partially available to view, when they appear in details of his speech. For example, in lines 7 and 8, the speaker does not simply leave off composing his love and war songs; he abandons them as *grosero*, or "crude." This elaboration of opinions we can assume he has received from his friend (who has, after all, drawn him into sonnetting in the first place) demonstrates the depth of his identification with the new culture of courtiership.¹² In a similar vein, the evocative word *armígero* (line 2) invites attention, as the speaker recalls how his muse was "Atenta al gran rumor . . . del *armígero* son" (1–2). *Armígero*, or "martial," is, as a rippling tetrasyllable, both the most elegant word in the poem and, as Díaz Laríos tells us, a relatively new one in Castilian usage (*Varias poesías*, 263, n. 2). This makes it a good candidate for reading as a sign of the speaker's ambivalence about his new posture of moderation and courtierized self-restraint.

11. Hurtado de Mendoza, *Poesía*, 276.

12. The detail is especially telling because of what Cascardi has noted as the "particular authority of judgments of taste" in early modern Spain. Taste, he notes, "depends upon the internalization of forms of authority that once were located elsewhere in the social sphere" (*Ideologies of History*, 12). For the complete discussion, refer to pages 133–60.

All told, as we begin to examine the complexity of the figure of the speaker as it is presented in this poem, we see that he begins to respond more and more to the paradoxical logic of the subject of power, as described by Judith Butler: “We are used to thinking of power as what presses on the subject from the outside, as what subordinates, sets underneath, and relegates to a lower order. . . . But if, following Foucault, we understand power as *forming* the subject as well, as providing the very condition of its existence and conditioning the trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we harbor in the beings that we are” (2). In fact, the process that the speaker undergoes over the course of the poem tracks fairly systematically along the lines of post-structuralist accounts of the constitution and investiture of subjects, as this is theorized by writers such as Butler, Žižek, and, before them, Althusser and Foucault. In particular, the Althusserian scenario of interpellation—in which people are “hailed” by the law and “turn” to accept the terms of that hailing (Althusser’s famous “Hey you!”), thereby simultaneously identifying with a summoning authority and performing their submission to it—corresponds to the process by which the speaker in the sonnet is hailed by his courtly friend and drawn into the fellowship of modern courtiers. Like the Althusserian subject, Acuña’s speaker turns from a state of being that exists outside the social order (in that it is associated with the supernatural, asocial order of unmediated, one-to-one contact with the muse), accepting a new set of terms through which to define himself. And like the post-structuralist subject of discourse, once he has done this he inhabits a new mode of being, one that is profoundly mediated in that it is structured by the power relationships in the early modern court, as these relationships are disseminated through the fashionable discourses of arms and letters. Hence following Butler’s formulation of the paradox of the subject, we can say that Acuña’s speaker becomes “fundamentally dependent on a discourse . . . [he] never chose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains . . . [his] agency” (*The Psychic Life of Power*, 2). Furthermore, the Renaissance courtly imperative of sprezzatura dictates the graceful masking of the effort that it takes to participate in the life organized by these terms.¹³

Despite this dissembling, however, and despite the pressure that the speaker’s new subject position exerts on the view he takes of his past experience, reframing it, as we have seen, into a narrative of liberation and autonomy, Sonnet 45 portrays an independent knight’s subjection. This is

13. See the important rereading of sprezzatura in Berger, *The Absence of Grace*, 9–33.

thrown into relief by the condition of actual sovereignty he enjoyed in the first quatrain, the sovereignty of a poet who receives his inspiration from the muse and not from the select canon of writers whom his society deems appropriate for imitation in modern practice. By analogy, this is also his sovereignty as a warrior who fights when and where he wishes, and on his own behalf. In one respect, then, Sonnet 45 is an account of a poetic conversion that resembles the Italian trope of *vita nuova* that was popularized by Dante and Petrarch; however, the comparison extends only so far. In place of the metaphysics elaborated by the Italian humanists, Acuña inscribes a specifically worldly situation: the Spanish nobleman as he is caught up by two powerful and conflictive social orders, each of which bears a heavily freighted set of poetic conventions at its heart.

Rational Subjects

The structuring conceit that lies at the heart of Sonnet 45 is therefore the radical transformation of the identities of both the courtier and his poem as they are summoned into the dispositions of early modernity. Acuña aligns the disavowal of traditional song in favor of the short, discursive new lyric form with the nobleman's internalization of the notion of agency as "power on loan" from the authorities that surround him. Indeed, one additional signal of this internalization is his reduction of the diverse poetry traditional within Castilian culture to the single category of "armígero son." Another important poem, Sonnet 30, thematizes the intersection of the Renaissance rational mind and the sonnet form as the two act together to derive civilized and constant subjects out of a chaotic state of nature. At the start of the poem, the poetic order runs amok:

Sonnet 30

Quando era nuevo el mundo y producía
gentes, como salvajes, indiscretas,
y el cielo dio furor a los poetas
y el canto con que el vulgo los seguía,
fingieron dios a Amor, y que tenía
por armas fuego, red, arco y saetas,
porque las fieras gentes no sujetas
se allanasen al trato y compañía;

después, viniendo a más razón los hombres,
 los que fueron más sabios y constantes
 al Amor figuraron niño y ciego,
 para mostrar que dél y destos hombres
 les viene por herencia a los amantes
 simpleza, ceguedad, desasosiego.

[When the world was new and produced / a people like savages, indiscreet, / and the heavens gave furor to the poets / and the song for which the crowd followed them, / they pretended that Love was a god, and that he had / as his arms fire, a net, a bow and arrows, / so that those wild, unsubjected people / would distance themselves from his company, and from treating with him; / later, when men came to more reason, / those who were the wisest and the most steadfast / figured Love as a child, and blind, / to show that from him, and from those other men, / descends, as an inheritance, to lovers / simplemindedness, blindness, restlessness.]

This poem builds on the tension between the sonnet and the poetic traditions of song that also appeared in Sonnet 45. A simple paraphrase might run: “In the old days when the world was new, people were in thrall to their poets and their passions, but later, men came to reason and understood that love is infantile and makes one blind and restless.” Reason schools the “wisest and most constant” men to a new image of Love, cutting him down to size so that the formerly powerful god is recast as a blind child. But reason is supported in this action by the principal structuring feature of the sonnet form, the *volta*, or “turn” a sonnet takes conventionally (in Italianate sonnets), at line 9, which is to say, after the quatrains and before the tercets.¹⁴ The word *razón* appears at line 9, as the poem takes its turn: “Después, viniendo a más *razón* los hombres.” Thus, both reason and the *volta* secure the civilized order that reigns in the second half of the poem.¹⁵

14. The rules of the sonnet, including comments on the variations in the location of the *volta*, are given below.

15. It is probably unintentional that one effect of the civilizing process as it is worked in Sonnet 30 is the transformation of a society of ungendered “peoples” into one governed by men (“*viniendo a más razón los hombres, / los que fueron más sabios,*” lines 9–10). On the other hand, while humanists of the stamp of Castiglione and Boscán took public feminist positions, both in their writings (the perfect courtier is ultimately a woman) and their lives (Boscán seems to have had a genuine intellectual partnership with his wife, who edited his poetry and supervised its publication

In its essence, Sonnet 30 expands upon an element left undeveloped in Sonnet 45, namely, the trade-off of the supernatural inspirational force of the muse for the new poetry whose composition is based in *imitatio*, not inspiration. While he is captivated by his muse and her taste for martial beats, the speaker in Sonnet 45 is subject to the forces that are associated with a mythic order of creation whose point of reference exists outside of the contemporary social order, in the province of the divine that is the terrain of the muse. By the end of the sonnet, he has embraced a poetics that is based on man-made social conventions. In Sonnet 30, the scenario unfolds on similar grounds, but the scene of divine poetic inspiration is more fully elaborated. The quatrains are charged with powerful energies—passions, gods, furor. Traditional song is thus figured not only as “crude,” but as overwhelming and maddening. In this light, the poem indicates that the containing pressures of reason, of constancy, and of the sonnet form rescue and secure a population previously cast as poetry’s victims. The quatrains are held in check by the volta, by reason, and by the curtailing force of the tercets, but they loom and threaten from their position “above” the circle of order that has been established by the wise and steadfast men inhabiting the smaller space of the poem’s second half. Therefore, whereas Sonnet 45 presents interpellation in the guise of the pleasures of fellowship and participation, Sonnet 30 offers interpellation’s other face, a scene of chaos and threat that can be escaped only through the subjection of “wild,” “indecent” peoples to the forces of reason and civilization.¹⁶

But in the same manner in which ambivalence is inscribed in the staging of the perfect courtier in Sonnet 45, as his *sólo* position is exposed as anything but solitary, Sonnet 30 injects a destabilizing note by means of its final word. “Desasosiego” (“restlessness”), even as it seemingly puts paid to the powers that the uncivilized peoples of the quatrains formerly ascribed to Eros, also subverts this containment, first by means of the rhythmic propulsion of its assonance as it is extended over five syllables; second, because restlessness is a shifty idea, and not a good one to introduce when the aim is closure. The advantage to the modern order, in which meaning

after his death), Acuña’s poetic persona was that of a man’s man. It seems entirely in keeping with the rest of his poetic opus that he would view the well-ordered society to be governed, not only by “constant” Senecan Stoics, but, specifically, by men.

16. The New World subtext that is suggested in Sonnet 30 only highlights the fact that this poem is treating the topos of “then and now” / “state of nature, civilized” as ideological. A New World subtext plays beneath references to savage and indecent peoples tamed by the civilizing forces that topple their gods and instill a new order that must remain watchful for threats of rebellion.

is determined by the wisest and most constant men, is that people are no longer driven wild by their poets and their frenzied, divinely inspired *canto*. But the disadvantage is that there is no more dancing. The restless final feet of Sonnet 30 return us once again to a vision of the sonnet as a constraining form, one that delivers peace and equanimity on its own terms, which impose an uneasy fit.¹⁷

Form and Politics

Sonnets 45 and 30 offer an unusual display of Renaissance wit. Composed with clear attention to the tonal and intellectual as well as formal conventions of the new courtly lyric (which was not very new by the time that

17. Another set of concerns arose around the issue of “song” in the sixteenth century, and while it is not specifically relevant to Sonnet 45, which is clearly referring to war ballads and perhaps to epics, it bears mentioning here. The rise of the *jongleur*, or the court singer, coincided historically with early phases of courtierization (for example, see Elias, *Power and Civility*, 77, on the Minnesänger). The discussion by Jeffrey Kittay and Wlad Godzich indicates how this figure participated in the shift I am tracking in this book between the poetics of Homer and those of Horace: “the *jongleur*, by means of his trained memory and what it stored, represented an important cultural institution. The texts, epic and otherwise, that were his stock-in-trade constituted the cultural patrimony of the collectivity. . . . His function, particularly at the beginning, was not to innovate or add to his patrimony but to preserve it. . . . the audience of a performed *chanson de geste* was looking not for novelty but for something it already knew, presented in an effective and entertaining manner. The *jongleur* was judged not on the content of his recitations and songs, which in any case the audience was familiar with, but on the style of his presentations. . . . He had to be a master at the complex task of performing a narrative, as well as of reciting other forms of discourse. . . . the way in which he fulfilled these expectations. . . . showed him to be a keeper of tradition. . . . a person worthy of credit and, therefore, one whose authority is not put into question” (*The Emergence of Prose*, xvi). In this formulation, the singer/*jongleur* is an individual who has assumed the responsibility for assuring that the structuring customs, laws, and truths continue to circulate and be disseminated within a given culture. With the coalescence of incipiently modern formations in European society, however, the authority of this type of singer erodes, and we begin to see the kind of transfer of poetic privilege that Grossman has identified with Horace. Kittay and Godzich continue: “as soon as the earlier collectivities become stratified in a new order of estates and even emergent classes, there is no longer a locus that is universally agreed-upon for the *jongleur* to occupy. In this new social order, the *jongleur* is increasingly dependent on members of the seigneurial class, and he soon finds himself sought after by embryonic bourgeois communities as well. No longer able to function as the depository of the entire collectivity, he will be called upon by powerful private or municipal patrons. . . . In other words he sells his authority. . . . [to] individuals who use for their own ends the fact that the *jongleur’s* discourse had not up to that point been subject to question on the grounds of truth” (*ibid.*, xvi). The erosion of the poet’s authority and the impact of that erosion on poetry was a significant preoccupation for writers such as Sánchez de Lima, who will be discussed later in this chapter. Boscán and Acuña appear to have been more preoccupied with the rival claims of various poetic forms on the social imaginary, but all told, anxieties about the power and the prestige of song were overdetermined in the sixteenth century.

Acuña was writing it), these poems also show Acuña's clear insight with respect to the elaboration and the dissemination of modernizing ideologies through the vehicle of poetry. On the one hand, they thematize the derivation of the sonnet as a distinct poetic kind among the genres (Sonnet 30). On the other, they highlight the discursive production of the courtier on the threshold of political and cultural modernity (Sonnet 45). We can attribute Acuña's sensitivity to the politics of form, to a general attentiveness of highly placed courtiers of his era to the discursive nature of culture, and to the ideological capacities of form and of language to establish the terms by which men (especially) were "read" by their peers, by their monarch, and by his ministers. However, it is also the case that Acuña's career kept him close to the seats of power, both in Spain and in Italy. In addition, Acuña was a nuanced reader and writer of poetry. Across the spectrum of his work we find that he was familiar with the rules and the implicit meanings of form—meanings both political and poetic. Moreover, he appears to have been interested in experimenting with the suitability and the adaptability of the various poetic genres to the ingenious linguistic effects that were expected from a court favorite of his standing. His best-known work is his paean to imperial power, Sonnet 94, "Ya se acerca Señor, o ya es llegada" ("Now approaches, Sire, or now has arrived"). In this poem, written to commemorate the victory of the forces of Philip II at Lepanto (1571), Acuña deployed the compacting pressure of the sonnet form and a stately pattern of repetition to frame a statement of the fulfillment of earthly and divine will under the just Christian sway of "un Monarca, un Imperio y una Espada":

Sonnet 94

Ya se acerca Señor, o ya es llegada
 la edad gloriosa en que promete el cielo
 una grey y un pastor sólo en el suelo,
 por suerte a vuestros tiempos reservada.
 Ya tan alto principio, en tal jornada,
 os muestra el fin de vuestro santo celo
 y anuncia al mundo, para más consuelo,
 un Monarca, un Imperio y una Espada;
 ya el orbe de la tierra siente en parte
 y espera en todo vuestra monarquía
 conquistada por vos en justa guerra

que, a quien ha dado Cristo su estandarte,
 dará el segundo mas dichoso día
 en que, vencido el mar, venza la tierra.

[Now approaches, Sire, or now has arrived / that glorious age
 promised by heaven / in which there is one will and one shepherd
 alone on the earth, / this was reserved for your age. / Now this
 great beginning, on this day, / sets out for you the end of your
 blessed desire / and announces to the world, to its consolation, /
 one Monarch, one Empire and one Sword; / now the orb of the
 earth feels in part, / and awaits to experience wholly, your monar-
 chy / conquered by you through just war; / for to him to whom
 Christ has given his standard / will also be given that second, more
 fortunate day / on which, having conquered the sea, he conquers
 the earth.]

Whereas in Sonnet 45 the figure of the unified subject is presented in order to be called into question, in this sonnet Acuña capitalizes on the blocklike, compact nature of sonnet structure and on the links between the sonnet form and Renaissance rhetoric to frame something akin to a well-ordered paragraph. The portentous, prophetic tone of the “ya” (“now”) that opens each quatrain and the first tercet sets the progress of the poem at a stately pace as it leads up to the climax of line 8’s “un Monarca, un Imperio y una Espada” and beyond, creating a monument to imperial universalism.¹⁸ In its alpha-omega totality, the short poem is impregnable.

There are other works that provide evidence of Acuña’s sensitivity to both poetic and political registers of meaning and to how they intersected at court. During his travels with the emperor, in the late 1540s or early 1550s, he was invited to versify the Castilian prose version of Olivier de la Marche’s *Le Chévalier Délibéré* (The Steadfast Knight) (1480). This poem was a Burgundian favorite, and the emperor himself had translated it into Castilian prose. Acuña combined scholarship, his skills in the various verse forms, and courtly perspicuity in composing his version, *El caballero determinado*, completed in 1551. He added stanzas that praised the Catholic kings, Philip the

18. As detailed by Díaz Laríos in *Varias poesías*, critics and historians have argued over whether this poem was dedicated to Charles (he cites Cossio and Morelli), or to Philip II after Lepanto (he cites Elliott and Rivers) (328). The theme of “just Christian war,” a discourse developed by Philip II and his propagandists promoting universal monarchy, suggests the latter.

Fair, and Charles himself. Moreover, in choosing the verse form in which to set the text, he selected native Castilian *coplas*, and the reasons he gave for choosing to do so reveal an interest in comparative Romance poetics:

Hizo se esta traducción en coplas castellanas, antes que en otro genero de verso, lo uno por ser este mas usado y conocido en nuestra España, para quien principalmente se tradujo este libro. Y lo otro porque la rima Francesa, en que el fue compuesto, es tan corta, que no pudiera traducirse en otro mayor sin confundir en parte la traducion (40)

[This translation was done in Castilian coplas, and not in another kind of verse, first, because this is more used and known in Spain, for which this book is principally translated. And, second, because French rhyme, in which this was composed, is so short that it was impossible to translate it into longer rhyme without confusing the translation]

In other poems, Acuña showed himself to be a witty critic. His “lira de Garcilaso contrahecha” (“the lyre of Garcilaso, unstrung”) takes a poet to task for his lack of skill with the Italianate style.¹⁹ The lyric he writes does not correspond to the structures of authority that govern the practice of imitatio, but “mueve el discreto a ira / y a descontentimiento, / y vos sólo, señor, quedáis contento” (3–5) (“moves the discerning man to anger / and to discontent, / and you alone, sir, remain contented”). Interestingly, Acuña is taking this “bad poet” to task for his failure to write appropriate heroic song:

el fiero Marte airado,
mirándoos, se ha reído
de veros tras Apolo andar perdido.
¡Ay de los capitanes
en las sublimes ruedas colocados,
aunque sean alemanes,
si para ser loados

19. Díaz Laríos (*Varias poesías*) suggests that the poet in question is Jerónimo de Urrea, who had also published a version of *El caballero determinado* in addition to a Castilian version of *Orlando Furioso* set in hendecasyllables. Díaz Laríos suggests that in light of Acuña’s comments in the preface of his own version of de la Marche’s text, he might have considered Urrea’s work to be an abuse of the Italian style, 40–41.

fuera a vuestra musa encomendados!

.

Que vuestra musa sola
 basta a secar del campo la verdura,
 y al lirio y la viola,
 do hay tanta hermosura,
 estragar la color y la frescura.

(13–20; 26–30)

[fierce and spirited Mars, / gazing on you, has laughed to himself / to see you wander lost after Apollo. / Ay! for the captains / who inhabit the celestial gyres, / even if they are Germans, / if they have been entrusted to your muse / for their praise! / . . . / For your muse is enough / to dry up the green from the field, / and to strip from the lily and the violet, / where there is such beauty, / the color and the freshness.]

As a writer and as a subject of the new Spanish court, then, Acuña was a man who thought carefully about the various types of political significance that could be attached to form. This makes him worth attending to when he frames statements about the sonnet. In poems such as Sonnets 45, 30, and 94, the principle is clear: Sonnets *formally* interpellate courtly subjects. The structure of the sonnet itself shapes and disciplines utterance into abbreviated and self-reflexive confessions of dependency and circumscribed agency, above and beyond a poem's particular content. For this reason, sonneteering, in Acuña's view, might better be termed sonnetization. More than a witty conceit, this notion has a formal logic. In order to see it, we need to recall some aspects of the sonnet in its origins.

Little Songs

When Giacomo da Lentino and his circle in the thirteenth-century Sicilian court of Frederick II developed their new "little songs," they did so by superimposing the short and pointed *sirma* over the limitless Provençal canzone.²⁰ Their combination had the effect of abbreviating the long form into

20. Oppenheimer objects to the attribution of the word *sonnet* to a derivative of *song*, pointing out that the Latin word employed by Dante for the form was *sonitus* (179–83). However, if we follow the more general history of the rise to prominence of the *poemi brevi* tracked by María José

a single-stanza poem, and this act of curtailing in turn had an immediate impact on how the resulting poem would achieve its effects of meaning. Court poetry commonly had, up to this point, run for numerous stanzas, in forms such as the *arte mayor*, *quintillas*, *octavas*, or *terza rima*, all of which are identified by means of the patterns of recurrence (assonance, beat) inscribed through their fixed schemes of rhyme and meter. But sonnets are primarily *short*: their characteristic rectangular shape is their most recognizable feature. Thus the new poem that was the sonnet in the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries was to one degree or another “about” the necessity of ending. We have already seen two examples of the inventiveness with which a good sonneteer could draw the fixed number of syllables allotted to the poem into the service of its capacities of signification. In Acuña’s Sonnet 45, the word *sólo*, by virtue of its position at the poem’s end, represents both the declaration of the sovereign subject and the exposure of the illusory nature of that sovereignty. In Sonnet 30, *desasosiego* similarly calls the constancy of the subject of reason into question. In other well-known poems from the Spanish sixteenth-century canon, the ruled closure of the form is deployed to achieve other sorts of ingenious effects. Consider the baroque statement of the total annihilation of the body in death in Luis de Góngora’s famous “Mientras por competir con tu cabello” (“While, in competing with your hair”): “en tierra, en humo, en polvo, en sombra, en nada” (14) (“in dirt, in smoke, in dust, in shadow, in nothing”).

Equally important, the sonnet was, and remains to the present day, about reflexivity. The form is derived from the forced intersection of two slightly unequal statements. The first eight lines are allowed to gain momentum through the unfolding of two complete units of its rhyme pattern before being cut off by the last six lines, and this structure establishes the rhetorical template for a poetic utterance that breaks and turns on itself.²¹ As we saw

Vega (“Poética de la lírica”), the specifics of one writer’s terminology matter less than the broader constellation of qualities that became associated with the “new poetry” over time. Both Sonnet 45 and Sonnet 30 by Acuña reveal a preoccupation with the relationship of sonnet to song. Furthermore, as we will see in Chapter 2, his view had an anchor in the terms through which Juan Boscán introduced the Italianate new poetry into Castilian letters. On the history and evolution of the early sonnet, see Spiller (*The Development of the Sonnet*, 1–27), and also the informative and nuanced essay on the sonnet as genre, “Some Species of the Sonnet as Genre,” by Elías L. Rivers (*Muses and Masks*, 33–61). The argument here is indebted to each of these thoughtful discussions.

21. Historians of the genre tend to agree that da Lentino made the 8 + 6 stanza a complete poem, but that Guittone d’Arezzo (1235–1294) established the ABBA ABBA rhyme scheme of the quatrains (the scheme did not hold as consistently in the English tradition). As many readers are aware, the rhyme scheme of the tercets of a sonnet vary from the Petrarchan CDE CDE through the English tendency to finish with a couplet.

in Sonnet 30, this break and turn, volta, changes the poem's direction and/or tone. Present in all sonnets, either at line 9 (i.e., after the quatrains and before the tercets) or, less frequently, at line 13 (if the sonnet is composed in terms of 12 + 2, instead of 8 + 6), the volta introduces a comment on what has come before, in the manner of proposition-conclusion or figure-gloss.²² Because the volta is so central to the sonnet, Michael R. G. Spiller can summarize: "To announce a theme, to change it, and to close it: these features are essentially part of the sonnet and, though they can be rearranged, they cannot be eluded. So a tripartite structure of discourse—statement, development and conclusion—belonging to a speaker whose *eloquentia* is the outgrowth of wisdom begins to appear on top of the binary structure of the octave and sestet" (*The Development of the Sonnet*, 17). Paul Oppenheimer makes a similar point and adds an important observation, namely, that the reflexivity and the argumentative nature of the sonnet are framed within a conceit of the self, and that this feature distinguishes the new type of poem from conventional court songs. Unlike other forms of poetry that presented suffering, pleasure, contradiction, and doubt in extended narratives that did or did not, beyond simply ending, reach closure, the sonnet form trained lament to dialectics and hence produced a discourse in which emotions were resolved by logic:

When we consider that a good deal more music for other types of poetry has survived from Giacomo's time we are forced to question

22. Romance writers tend to set it between lines 8 and 9 (although this is not what happens in Francisco de Aldana's Sonnet 30, read in the Introduction); English writers tend to "turn" between lines 12 and 13, although both Wyatt and Sidney wrote their sonnets in the Italian style and placed the volta between the quatrains and the tercets. Critics have offered a number of explanations for the asymmetrical nature of the sonnet stanza and for the ratio of 8 + 6 that was its most common rule in the premodern and early modern era. Most of them agree that da Lentino and his circle were influenced by the intellectual culture of the Sicilian court, in which the study and practice of the arts of logic, music, and mathematics were actively encouraged. Most also point to the legalistic bent of da Lentino's circle (Spiller, *The Development of the Sonnet*, 17–18). Spiller links the asymmetry of the sonnet to the musical harmonies that da Lentino and his fellows were trying to import into written language. The eight : six proportions of the form imitated the lyric units favored by medieval singers (15–16). Oppenheimer underscores the connection of the sonnet to the *Timaeus* and to recent discoveries in mathematics (*The Birth of the Modern Mind*, 171–90). In his *Manual de versificación española*, however, Baehr observes that to identify the precise origins of the sonnet form in Italy is less important to scholars of the Spanish sonnet, since the form was brought into Castilian poetry in the sixteenth century (or in the fifteenth, if we take the *versos fechos al itálico modo* of Santillana into account). What matters most is how Spanish writers themselves understood the form, and in the case of Acuña, we can see clearly that it is circumscribed, rationalized song. He is working with Italian notions and also with the ideals for the form set out by Juan Boscán, as I will detail in Chapter 2.

whether the earliest sonnets were ever intended for music or public performance . . . the sonnet, as it was originally conceived, may have been intended less for public displays (in the sense of performance) than for private encounters between reader and poem. . . . Giacomo's earliest sonnets, while revealing an enormous debt to certain troubadour attitudes toward love, break sharply from troubadour poetry in their insertion of a "turn" within a stanza; their dialectical resolution of emotional problems within a single stanza . . . their indifference to a mass audience, or even to an audience of more than one; their reduction of the two personae of troubadour love lyrics to one . . . herald . . . a departure from the tradition of lyrics as performed poems and introduces a new, introspective mode. (186–87)

Oppenheimer's identification of the fundamentally private nature of the sonnet form is helpful in understanding the early modern trope of sonnetization. However, we need to qualify it somewhat, since to identify the form with an introspective poetic persona and with intimate communications between poem and reader is not to remove it from the sphere of politics. On the contrary, the two sonnets we have read by Acuña are ruminative pieces about the modern subject's dependency on discourse, and most of the writers discussed in this book share similar insight into the structuring effects of language. Furthermore, as I noted earlier, one of the principal ingenious flashes of wit (*agudezas*) in Sonnet 45 is the exposure of the speaker's claim to solitude and self-sufficiency as false consciousness, a misrecognition of the status of his conventions of speech. Sonnet 30 turns on the tendency of rational discourse to confine "peoples" into gendered "subjects of knowledge": consider the lines "viniendo a más razón los hombres, / los que fueron más sabios y constantes" (9–10) ("when men came to more reason, / those who were the wisest and most constant"). Both poems foreground the courtly subject's interpellation by the discourse of the private individual, an interpellation that imposes an artificial, artful, and even "artlessly artful" regulating form over states of being variously associated with unsubjected and natural states.

The difference between the view that Oppenheimer seems to be positing and what we find in early modern Spanish poetry is perhaps best understood within a historical context. In the first half of the sixteenth century, the humanist investment in reason as the means by which men could master their passions and "civilize" themselves shifted the orientation of the sonnet from

a medieval-scholastic mode to the modern system of thought that granted increasing power to the idea that the self could be mastered and contained by the operations of reason. While the form maintained a connection to scholastic argument, it also became associated with constraint. Thus, when Juan Boscán introduced his new poetry to Spanish readers, he praised it as capable of framing “any type of material whatsoever.” A number of years later, Fernando de Herrera would expand on Boscán’s words:

Es el Soneto la más hermosa composición, de mayor artificio y gracia de cuantas tiene la poesía italiana y española. Sirve en lugar de los epigramas y odas griegas y latinas, y responde a las elegías antiguas en algún modo, pero es tan extendida y capaz de todo argumento, que recoge en sí sola todo lo que pueden abrazar estas partes de poesía, sin hacer violencia alguna a los preceptos y religión de la arte, porque resplandecen en ella con maravillosa claridad y lumbre de figuras y exornaciones poéticas la cultura y propiedad, la festividad y agudeza, la magnificencia y espíritu, la dulzura y jocundidad. (263)

[The sonnet is the most beautiful composition, and of the greatest artifice and grace of all of those in Italian and Spanish poetry. It serves in place of epigrams and the Greek and Latin odes, and responds to the ancient elegies in a certain way, but it is so extensive and capable of any argument that it gathers into itself all that these other kinds of poetry can embrace, without doing a single violence to the precepts and the doctrine of the art, because in it shine forth with marvelous clarity and light of figures and poetic adornments, culture and propriety, festivity and wit, magnificence and spirit, sweetness and humor.]²³

As Gary J. Brown noted some time ago, the association between the epigram and the sonnet was particularly marked in Spain. We should bear in mind that while the Italianate new lyric was introduced into Spain in a manner similar to what took place in England and France—that is to say, in conjunction with Petrarchism, and with prescriptions for reformed practices of writing through scholarly research and *imitatio*—many Spanish writers

23. Quotations from the *Anotaciones* are taken from the Pepe and Reyes edition, although I have modernized the spelling.

did not engage with the sonnet as a building block in the construction of a Petrarchan lyric sequence, but rather foregrounded its formal tendencies toward regularization and its association with emergent discourses of reason. Thus early modern defenses such as the ones shown above claimed for the sonnet—and for the new lyric, or *poemi brevi*, generally—the status of a new poetic genre: a short poem whose excellence and suitability to adoption by the elite was based on its capacities to contain the principal elements of poetry within an abbreviated space.

This idea marked a significant shift from earlier arguments that had identified the nobility of a poetic form as residing in its capacities to represent the whole of poetic tradition. In *De vulgari eloquentia*, Dante had argued that of the vernacular forms, the canzone was the noblest, because

in artificiatis illud est nobilissimum quod totam comprehendit artem; cum igitur ea que cantantur artificiata existant, et in solis cantionibus ars tota comprehendatur, cantiones nobilissime sunt, et sic modus earum nobilissimus aliorum. Quod autem tota comprehendatur in cantionibus ars cantandi poetice, in hoc palatur, quod quicquid artis reperitur in omnibus aliis, et in cantionibus reperitur; sed non convertitur hoc. Signum autem horum que dicimus promptum in conspectu habetur; nam quicquid de cacuminibus illustrium capitum poetantium profluxit ad labia, in solis cantionibus invenitur. (2.3.32–41)

[among things made according to an art the most noble is that which embraces the whole art. Therefore, since things which are sung are made according to an art and since only in *canzoni* is the whole art embraced, *canzoni* are the noblest, and thus their form is the noblest of all. And that the whole art of singing in poetry is embraced in *canzoni* is evident from this, that whatever of art is found in all others is found also in *canzoni*, but not vice versa. And there is clear evidence before our eyes for these things which I say: for whatever from the pinnacle of illustrious poetizing minds has flowed to the lips, is to be found only in *canzoni*.] (Botterill, 97–99)

The difference between Dante's view and the words of Boscán and Herrera is marked. Dante's remarks address a poetry that is still conceived in terms of the plenitude and a sense of connectedness to origins, sources, and

the whole art that is implicit in the idea of poiesis. Boscán and Herrera draw Spanish poetry over a threshold of modernity when they locate wholeness within a self-contained fragment and base poetic excellence on a given form's ability to *replace* originals with representations. Herrera's passage, especially, displays the double edge of fantasies of poetic containment.²⁴ The new poetry functions as a container in that it gathers in, but it is also a container that cuts the sonnet off from the processes encapsulated in the idea of poiesis: the new poem "serves in place of" (*sirve en lugar de*) other poetic genres, whereas Dante sought a poem form that could comprehensively include them.²⁵ This is a radical shift, albeit one that is admittedly harder to see from the perspective of our present-day culture, in which poetry occupies a less central place than it did in the sixteenth century. It entails, as Acuña has shown, the disavowal of an entire category (armígero son) and is tenable only within the greater social transformation in which displacement and representation, generally, are valued over nature. From the perspective of the new view, it is acceptable to displace the long tradition of native culture preserved and transmitted in "the whole art" of the illustrious poets (i.e., the heroic tradition) in favor of Herrera's graceful, festive, witty, spirited fragments. That is to say, the success of the sonnet as a poetic form was contingent on a wider cultural context of courtierization, as well as on a nobility that was willing to accept not only subordination within court hierarchies of dependency and service, but also the burden of disguising subjection in the continuous exercise of an effort to please (the discourse of sprezzatura). How suitable, then, that the principal source text for Herrera's passages on the sonnet form was penned by that early self-fashioned prince, Lorenzo de' Medici. In his *Comento de' miei sonetti* (1490?), Lorenzo openly declared himself to be resituating virtù from the domain of greatness to that of "difficulty." He thereby shifted the grounds upon which both poetry and men should be judged, clearing the way for future elaborations of the overlap between the sonnet and the courtier: "mi s'forzerò mostrare, tra gli altri modi delli stili vulgari

24. The contemporary critic and poet Juan Barja has written compellingly on the powers of the sonnet form to include, exclude, and generate. See "El destino de Si: El soneto como forma material."

25. It is difficult to determine whether or not Boscán's swerve from Dante was intentional; however, Alicia Colombí-Monguió has argued convincingly that Boscán's knowledge of most Italian humanism was likely received secondhand, from friends such as Navagero and Castiglione ("Boscán frente a Navagero"). What can be said of Boscán's formulation and of the "Letter" overall is that he successfully positions the new lyric as the ideal poetic solution to modern Spanish courtiership, as it was governed intellectually by the discourses of sprezzatura and imitatio, and politically by the imperative to contain the power of the *diestro brazo*.

e consueti per chi ha scritto in questa lingua, lo stile del sonetto non essere inferiore o al ternario o alla canzona o ad altra generazione di stile vulgare, arguendo dalla difficulta: perchè la virtù, secondo e filiosofi, consiste circa el difficile” (585) (“I will try to show that among the verse forms usually available to those who have written in Italian, the style of the sonnet is not inferior to terza rima, the canzone, or other vernacular genres. I will base my argument on the difficulty of composing the sonnet, for *virtù*, according to the philosophers, entails that which is difficult”) (*A Commentary*, 112). Later in the same text he asserted that “il verso vulgare essere molto difficile, e, tra gli altri versi, lo stile del sonetto difficillimo, é per questo degno d’essere in prezzo quanto alcuno degli altri stili vulgari” (587) (“verse in the vernacular is difficult, and that among the other verse forms, the composition of the sonnet is the most difficult, and because of this, it is as worthy of being esteemed as any other genre in the vernacular”) (*ibid.*, 113).

Critics have discussed Lorenzo’s counter to Dante as signaling a new and cosmopolitan attitude about classical rules of decorum as he elevates the virtues of complexity over those of expansive length (“new” in the sense that the sonnet, a form that did not exist in the time of the ancients, can assume pride of place within a hierarchy of poetry that is weighted significantly in favor of the lyric). What has not been pursued fully is the significance of shifting *virtù* from the domain of greatness to that of difficulty, but with this move Lorenzo was courtierizing poetry in a manner equivalent to the displacement of the hero by the complexified, interiorized courtly subject. The substitution is emphasized throughout Herrera’s elaboration of Lorenzo’s comments, however. For example, in the passage quoted above, Herrera elaborates on the festive and graceful characteristics of the sonnet in order to invite comparison with the qualities of the ideal courtier. But the passage in which he expands on Lorenzo’s endorsement of the virtues of brevity is also telling:

Y en ninguno otro género se requiere más pureza y cuidado de lengua, más templanza y decoro, donde es grande culpa cualquier error pequeño; y donde no se permite licencia alguna, ni se consiente algo, que ofenda las orejas, y por la brevedad suya no sufre, que sea ociosa, o vana una palabra sola. Y por esta causa su verdadero sujeto y materia debe ser principalmente alguna sentencia ingeniosa y aguda, o grave, y que merezca bien ocupar aquel lugar todo; descrita de suerte que parezca propia y nacida en aquella parte, huyendo de la oscuridad y dureza, mas de suerte que no

descienda a tanta facilidad, que pierda los números y la dignidad conveniente. (266)

[And in no other genre is there required more purity and caution of tongue, more moderation and decorum, where whatever small error is a great fault; and where no license whatsoever is permitted, nor is anything condoned that offends the ears, and for its brevity it does not suffer a single vain or idle word. And for this reason its true subject and material should be principally an ingenious and witty sentence, or a grave one, and let it well deserve to occupy its whole space; described in a manner that appears proper and born to that place, fleeing darkness and difficulty, but in a way that it does not descend to such facility that it loses the measures and dignity suitable to it.]

With the advent of modern systems of thought and of government in Spain, the gravitas, the authority, and the physical agency of the old-style nobleman—the knight—are displaced by new ideals of noble masculinity, ideals whose source is, overwhelmingly, the mind, with its capacities of nimble thought and rational self-subjection. The new virtues are gracefulness and judicious speech that cover over any persistent war-making desires that play beneath the courtier's civilized and contained surface. In this passage, and in other passages on the sonnet quoted earlier, Herrera describes the form as allegorizing not only the courtly subject, but also the *tension* between the two identities that the sonnet form emblemizes and calls into question, namely, the nobleman as abject hero and the nobleman as he is validated in his new festive and graceful form of the courtier.

As will be developed in Chapter 4, the complexity and the ambivalence with which Herrera viewed the sonnet form were informed by his view of the stakes of poetry in modern Spanish culture. A significant portion of his lyric and his writing on the lyric were aimed at testing the capacities of modern discourse to frame Castilian heroism in the new era that was celebrated in the wake of the so-called second Reconquest that was the victory at Lepanto (1571). It is also the case, however, that both Herrera's decision to use Lorenzo as a model and, it seems, the ways in which he enhanced his precursor's language were also informed by the juncture of historical and poetic circumstances with which the new lyric had been associated by Boscán. This context informed the ways that the poetry would be received and discussed through most of the century.

Caballeros and Cortesanos

Courtier, humanist, and admirer of Castiglione, Juan Boscaín (1487–1542) introduced his new art of poetry as Spain was transforming itself from the newly minted and relatively insulated peninsular kingdom it had been under the Catholic kings to the seat of a trans-European and global empire. In a letter published posthumously in 1543—the famous “Carta a la duquesa de Soma,” or “Letter to the Duchess of Soma”—Boscaín claimed that the inspiration to compose a new style of poetry had come to him in 1526, during conversations held with a celebrated fellow courtier and humanist Andrea Navagero. Whether factual or not, his assertion positioned the new art on the threshold of old and new Spanish culture in two ways. The festivities held in Granada in 1526 marked a ceremonial endpoint to the struggles between the emperor and his Spanish subjects after a difficult period following his accession to the throne. Upon coming to power in Spain, the interventionist policies of Charles’s Burgundian and Italian councilors had interfered with established networks of power and clientage on the peninsula. This infuriated members of some noble houses and the local ruling parliaments, the *cortes*. In addition to the clash of political cultures, the new monarch’s eagerness to assume the positions of Spanish king and Holy Roman Emperor was viewed by many of his subjects as a sign of his relative disregard for Spain itself. These factors contributed to the rebellions of 1520–22, generally referred to as the *comuneros* revolts.²⁶ Open struggles and battles were followed by a period of alternating negotiation, repressions and placation, and the celebrations marking the emperor’s 1526 marriage to Isabel of Portugal served as a useful ceremonial point of departure for a new era of peace between the ruler and his subjects: the bride had been chosen

26. On the revolts of the *comuneros* and the *germanías*, see Lynch, *Spain Under the Hapsburgs*. The insurrections of the nobility were probably also fostered by the loosening of crown control during the years preceding Charles’s arrival in Spain. Between the death of Isabel the Catholic in 1504 and the coronation of her grandson, Charles V of Hapsburg and late of Mechlen (famously, on his arrival in Spain, he did not speak Castilian, although he later remedied this and made Spain his final home), warring factions of nobles promoted the causes of various rulers: the possibly “mad” Queen Juana of Castile (Charles’s mother), Ferdinand of Aragon (who exercised intermittent powers as regent, both on Juana’s behalf and on his own), and grandees such as the Duke of Nájera (Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 91–136). This patchwork of authority led to factionalization, but also to the strengthening overall of the local authority of the nobility, and the early years of Charles’s rule were troubled by insurrections such as the revolts of the *comuneros* in Castile and of the *germanías* in Aragon. Aram’s discussion of this period is detailed and especially useful.

by the *cortes*, which had stipulated as a condition of their pacification that they be permitted to choose their queen.²⁷

As a point of reference, the wedding was useful to Boscán because it linked the new poetry to the spirit of new beginnings, more generally. Furthermore, since Boscán most likely composed the “Letter” in 1540 or 1541 (as he was preparing the text of the *Obras completas*, where the “Letter” appears in the preface to the Second Book), he was aware of the favorable view that his countrymen and peers now held of the emperor and his reign. It seems likely that Boscán hoped that his innovations in letters would be received with less suspicion if they were undertaken in a context of wider social and political change. But the *location* Boscán chose to assign to his inspiration was important as well. As a symbolic site, Granada was charged with a particular power. From the declaration of the successful Christian “Reconquest,” in 1492, the city served as an icon of Spain and Spanishness. Boscán drew on Granada’s historical significance as the linchpin of unified Christian Spain as he attempted to naturalize Italian poetics into Spanish culture. This rhetorical task was all the more important because of the mutual imbrication of poetry and identity in Castilian letters. From 1492, the Catholic kings had endorsed the view that Castilian political and military hegemony on the peninsula would receive important support from the establishment of a common language and a common culture of letters. Thus, famously, Isabella sponsored the first European vernacular grammar, Antonio de Nebrija’s *Gramática de la lengua castellana* (1492), and an accompanying dictionary.²⁸ These projects reflected her ideals as a Christian humanist, but they also flowed into the gap torn into the cultural fabric of the peninsula with the expulsion of the Jews, the forced conversion of Spain’s remaining Muslims, and the efforts to erase, wholesale, the vibrant poetic and linguistic traditions of multicultural Al-Andalus.²⁹ Indeed, the very term Reconquest indicates the importance of this ideological project to Spain’s incipiently modern, postmedieval identity. While the victory of Christian forces over the remains of the Islamic empire in Granada in 1492 was indisputably a *conquest*—the final subjection of a culture that

27. Final pardons for the rebellions were issued in 1522 (Lynch, *Spain Under the Hapsburgs*), but the emperor and his councilors chose to capitalize on the ceremonial moment.

28. On Nebrija and notions of *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii*, see Navarrete, *Orphans of Petrarch*, 18–24.

29. On the ideological nature of post-1492 “Spain,” see Resina, “The Role of Discontinuity.” See also Fuchs, *Mimesis and Empire*. On the poetic repercussions of the expulsion of the Jews and the forced conversions of the peninsular Muslims, see Menocal, *Shards of Love*, 1–53.

had flourished on the Peninsula for more than seven hundred years—the term *Reconquest*, or *Reconquista*, served the patently ideological function of inscribing the new Castilian hegemony within the terms of a universalist Christian “always-already.”³⁰ Epics and *romances*, or ballads, that recounted key events and battles from the centuries of struggle reinforced this new view of an essentially Christian and European Spanish identity, and Boscán himself participated in disseminating it in his remarks on the new poetic style. Comparing native Castilian forms to Petrarchan ones, he wrote: “Vi que este verso que usan los castellanos, si un poco asentadamente queremos mirar en ello, no hay quien sepa de dónde tuvo principio. Y si él fuese tan bueno que se pudiese aprovar de suyo, como los otros que hay buenos, no habría necesidad de escudriñar quiénes fueron los inventores dél” (*Obra completa*, 118–19) (“I saw that this verse that is employed by Castilians, if we want to sit down and look at it, there is no one who knows where it came from. And if it were so good that it could be approved on its own terms, as is the case with other ones that are good, there would be no necessity of scrutinizing who were its inventors”). In point of fact, the origins of Castilian verse were *not* hard to trace. In the *Diálogo de la lengua* (1533), Juan de Valdés engaged in an extended discussion of the origins of the Castilian language, touching on poetry and acknowledging the impact of Arabic on Castilian vocabulary.³¹ But Boscán’s statements are emblematic of the ambivalent process of acknowledgment and erasure by which

30. Resina has argued that Isabella and Ferdinand achieved the “integration of state and territory,” but their military successes were made mythic by the discourse of Reconquest, which cast them as “giving second birth to a community legitimated by its alleged existence prior to the . . . scattering of national essence” (“The Role of Discontinuity,” 284).

31. In 1575 Argote y Molina demonstrated little reservation about referencing the diverse cultures that informed the poetry of the present day. In his “Discurso sobre la poesía castellana” he invoked French, Catalan, Italian, Muslim, Morisco, and Turkish traditions of coplas and “great verse,” as he discussed Castilian poetics. While his sense of license to do so was most likely influenced by the triumphalism that followed in the wake of the “Second Reconquest,” the contrast between his representation of Castilian poetry and that presented by Boscán is notable. As one example of the *verso grande* (great, or long-lined, verse), he cites a Morisco lament over the fall of Granada: “desta cantidad son algunos cantares lastimeros que oímos a los Moriscos sobre la pérdida de su tierra a manera de endechas, como son: Alhambra hanina gualcozor taphqui / alamayarali, ia Muley Vuabdeli”) (229–34) (“from this group are some songs of lamentation that we have heard from the Moors about the loss of their land, written in the form of endechas, as in: Beloved and loving Alhambra, your fortresses weep, / O Muley Vuabdeli, they find themselves lost”). My translation of the lament is in fact a translation of the Castilian version of the poem provided by Argote (“Discurso sobre”) in lines 249–50: “Alhambra amorosa, lloran tus castillos / O Muley Vuabdeli, que se ven perdidos.” I discuss the impact of Lepanto on ideas about poetics in Chapter 4.

repressed histories are raised, aired, and subsumed into the foundational myths of a state.³²

Yet while Boscán tapped into the fifteenth-century wellspring of Spanish identity in the “Letter,” he also sought to use Granada and the ceremonial events of 1526 to legitimate new ideals for members of the Spanish nobility (and perhaps especially for Spanish noblemen) by setting the era of the Reconquest firmly in the past, and replacing old-style militaristic values with new codes of self-restraint and mental—as opposed to physical—prowess. A section in which Boscán describes the critics who attacked him for working in the new lyric style draws a distinction between garrulous Spanish knights and the men and women of his circle who enjoy a sophisticated and understated urbanity:

poniendo las manos en esto, me topé con hombres que me cansaron. Y en cosa que toda ella consiste en ingenio y en juicio, no teniendo estas dos cosas más vida de cuanto tienen gusto, pues cansándome había de disgustarme, después de disgustado, no tenía donde pasar más adelante. Los unos se quejaban que en las trovas de esta arte los consonantes no andaban tan descubiertos ni sonaban tanto como en las castellanas; otros decían que este verso no sabían si era verso, o si era prosa, otros arguían diciendo que esto principalmente había de ser para mujeres y que ellas no curaban de cosas de sustancia sino del son de las palabras y de la dulzura del consonante . . . ¿quién ha de responder a hombres que no se mueven sino al son de los consonantes? ¿Y quién se ha de poner en pláticas con gente que no sabe qué cosa es verso, sino aquél que calzado y vestido con el consonante os entra de un golpe por el un oído y os sale por el otro? . . . Si a éstos mis obras les parecieren duras y tuvieren soledad de la multitud de los consonantes, ahí tienen un cancionero, que acordó de llamarse general para que todos ellos vivan y descansan con él generalmente. (116–17)

32. Notably, Charles V, Isabel, and their promoters also made use of the symbolic power of Granada. Royal biographers insisted that Philip II was conceived in the city, during the royal honeymoon. In addition, during the same stay, Charles ordered that the remains of his father, Philip the Fair of Burgundy, be removed from his mother’s castle at Tordesillas for reburial by the tomb of Isabel and Ferdinand. His order reflected his desire to enhance his subjects’ consciousness of his relationship to the Catholic kings, although in point of fact he was related to them through his still-living mother and not through his long-deceased father. On the politics of the reburial, see Aram, *Juana the Mad*, 97–101 and 132.

[setting my hands to this, I ran into men who tired me. And in a practice that depends entirely on wit and on judgment, neither of which have life apart from pleasure, once I became tired, I necessarily became displeased, and once displeased, I had no way of proceeding. Some complained that in the songs of this art the consonance did not proceed as openly, nor did it sound out in the manner of the Castilian songs; others said that they did not know if this verse was verse or prose, others argued, saying that this must be principally for women, who cared nothing for matters of substance but only for the sound of the words and the sweetness of the rhyme . . . who needs to respond to men who are not moved but by the soundings of consonance? And who needs to engage in conversation with people who do not know what verse is unless it be that which, shod and saddled with its consonantal rhyme, enters you with one blow to the ear, and departs with another? . . . If my works seem rough to these men, and they feel lonesome for a multitude of rhymes, they have a *cancionero* that kindly called itself “general” so that all men of that sort might live and take repose with it generally.]³³

The metaphor here relies on the fact that the *copla* forms favored by members of the nobility and contained in volumes such as the 1511 *Cancionero General* were composed in relatively short, accentual-syllabic lines that were governed by a close rhyme scheme. In contrast, the new Italianate poetry employed the more flexible rhyme schemes of the sonnet and the *canzone*. Furthermore, the hendecasyllabics in which they were composed were longer and did not rely on fixed rules of accent. On the one hand, Boscán’s words frame a distaste for verse versus poetry that was shared by fellow humanists and writers throughout Europe. On the other, the trope maintains a specificity to its Spanish context. The galloping meters bring to mind *caballeros*, or old-style Castilian aristocrats: the highly

33. Translating this passage has posed a challenge, because of differences in English and Spanish vocabularies of rhyme and meter and also because questions of beat, rhyme, and measure were the subject of serious debate among sixteenth-century humanists. Navarrete has translated *consonantes* as “rhyme,” but Spanish consonantal rhyme is based on whole syllables. This inscribes a rule of beat that is absent from the contemporary English understanding of the word. David Darst uses the rather awkward “consonantal rhyme” in his translation. I have decided to use the terms “consonance,” “rhyme,” and, in one case, when it is unavoidable, “consonantal rhyme,” as I think they are indicated by the overall sense of Boscán’s text.

regular, accentual-syllabic rhymed couplets and quatrains of the traditional Castilian coplas and *arte mayor* ride roughshod through the mind like war-ring knights; they strike the ear with blows (*golpes*) before slamming off and away. In this passage, the traditional poetry and its loutish defenders are bested by the tasteful, arch Boscán, by the duchess to whom he writes, and by their circle—a group whose identity is fashioned “entirely” of judgment and wit. But when this group pokes fun at the old verse and its champions, their motivation is not simply aesthetic. Rather, it is informed by the history of rebellions such as the *comuneros* revolts and the processes of subjection and courtierization of the traditional nobility that were ongoing during the sixteenth century.³⁴ Evidence for the importance of this context appears in a debate that was being carried on about the Italianate hendecasyllable and the traditional, twelve-syllable line of the great medieval Castilian verse, the *arte mayor*. The Castilian courtier and poet Cristobal de Castillejo (1480?–1550), for example, dismissed Boscán’s claims that he was introducing a new poetry to Spain by asserting that Spain’s traditional poets had been writing in this ostensibly new line form all along. In his *Repreñión contra los poetas que escriben en metro italiano* (Reproof Against Poets Who Write in Italian Meters), Castillejo imagines the famous poet Juan de Mena, author of the celebrated medieval poem *El laberinto de la fortuna* (The Labyrinth of Fortune), returning from the dead to turn up his nose at claims on behalf of the new art:

Juan de Mena, como oyó
 la nueva trova polida,
 contentamiento se mostró,
 caso que se sonrió
 como de cosa sabida,
 y dijo: “Según la prueba,

34. Boscán’s relationship to Castilian hegemony seems to have been ambivalent. A page in the court of Ferdinand of Aragon, he was a supporter of the emperor and a proponent of the Castilian language. His interest in social reform, however, seems to have been directed primarily at reinscribing the nobility as a humanist and cultured elite, as opposed to an elite whose membership derived from title and traditional rank. A subtler plane of reference in the “Letter” suggests some identification with his Aragonese heritage, however. Boscán writes of “nuestra España” at one point, and it seems likely that here he is suggesting that with the rise of modern culture in Spain, Castilian pride would give way to an idea of Spain that encompassed all the Christian kingdoms in a homogenous totality. Critics have also wondered if Boscán’s praise of Ausiàs March was intended to remind his readers of the important role played by a subject of the Crown of Aragon in transmitting Provençal song into Spain.

once sílabas por pie
 yo hallo causa por qué
 se tenga por cosa nueva,
 pues yo mismo las usé”

(157–65)

[Juan de Mena, when he heard / the new, polished song, / showed contentment, / such that he smiled, / as in recognition, / and said, “According to the example, / eleven syllables a foot / I find cause to wonder / why it is taken for a new thing, / for I myself used them”]

Actually, two features separate the *arte mayor* from the hendecasyllable. First, the *arte mayor* line has prescribed patterns of stress—classically, an emphasis on syllables five, eight, and eleven—whereas the new hendecasyllable was *suelto*, or free of those restrictions.³⁵ Second, defenders of vernacular lyric tradition linked the *arte mayor* to “heroic” Greek hexameter, whereas Boscán’s aim for the new lyric was that it be, precisely, *not* heroic, but rather prudent and circumspect in the manner of the chastened Hapsburg courtier. Thus, unlike many of his contemporaries, Boscán did not defend his new line on the basis of its connections to hexameter, and he made only the vaguest and most general reference to the Greeks when he provided the conventional humanist genealogy of the worthy provenance of the new poetic forms. Rather, in the manner that would be picked up on

35. In his *Epístola Séptima*, López Pinciano has Fadrique praise the *arte mayor* as having more charm than the hendecasyllable because of its stress pattern: “hay un poco más primor, porque no sólo ha de tener sus sílabas, que son doce, mas ha de quebrar con el acento en ciertas partes y, no quebrando, no es metro” (289) (“it has more charm, because it does not only have to have its syllables, which are twelve, but must also break the accents in various parts, and with no break there is no meter”). “Torno, pues, al metro castellano de doce sílabas; a éstos diría yo verso o metro heroico de mejor gana, y con más justa razón, que no al italiano endecasílabo suelto, que se ha alzado con nombre de verso heroico. Entre los italianos que lo sea en hora buena, pues que ellos no tienen verso mayor y de más sonido; mas nosotros que (de más sonido y más correspondiente al exámetro) razón será que no quitemos a la nuestra el nombre de heroico, por le dar a la nación extranjera italiana, a la cual confieso mucho primor en todo y en la poética mucho estudio; mas no mayoridad en este género de poesía” (290) (“Now I turn to Castilian meter of twelve syllables; I would call those heroic verse or meter more willingly, and with more reason, than I would the free Italian hendecasyllable, which has been raised to the name of heroic verse. Among the Italians, may they benefit from that, since they do not have a greater verse with more sonority; but for us [there being more sonority and more correspondence with the hexameter], we should not take the name heroic away from our line, to give it to that foreign Italian nation, of whom I will confess much charm in everything and much study in their poetry; but not superiority in this kind of poetry”).

by later writers (such as Acuña and Herrera, for example), Boscán presented the Italianate hendecasyllable as an appropriate, tasteful, and restrained substitute for the crude and boisterous heroic line. Implicitly, then, the difference between the new line and the old one was the difference between the warrior and the cosmopolitan, the stubborn knight and the flexible courtier. It was the difference between the “new” man and the caricature described in an anecdote offered by Ludovico in *The Book of the Courtier*:

a worthy lady once remarked jokingly, in polite company, to a certain man . . . whom she honored by asking him to dance and who . . . refused . . . protesting that such frivolities were not his business. And when at length the lady asked what his business was, he answered with a scowl, “Fighting. . . .” “Well then,” the lady retorted, “I should think that since you aren’t at war at the moment and you are not engaged in fighting, it would be a good thing if you were to have yourself well-greased and stowed away in a cupboard with all your fighting equipment so that you avoid getting rustier than you are already.” (58)

Not all sixteenth-century poets engaged with the nuances of the new poetics. Obviously, some were interested in the aesthetic possibilities presented by the Italian style, some participated in sonnetting as courtly social exchange, and some enjoyed the play of rhetoric and wit foregrounded in the new art. However, Boscán’s arguments fixed the specificities of poetics into the ideological networks by which the nobleman and his psyche were being remapped in the early modern social imaginary, and the link he forged between the legitimation of a new poetry and the new Spanish subject met with remarkable success.

It bears underscoring, however, that this link was founded in *form*. Reading Spanish writers for what they reveal about the new lyric as form yields a significantly different picture from the one we gain when we read for discussions of content. Sánchez de Lima’s *El arte poética en romance castellano* (The Art of Poetry in Vernacular Castilian) (c. 1580), opens with the skeptical Silviano addressing his friend Calidonio:

SILVIANO: . . . sepamos (si se puede saber) en que veniades ahora imaginando: porque mirando en ello, de rato en rato os veíamos diferentes señales en el rostro, cuando de triste, y cuando de alegre: unas veces muy confiado, y otras como de hombre que quiere

desesperar: y parecióme que veniades entre vos ruminando algunas palabras, que por estar lejos no pude entender.

CALIDONIO: venia trazando entre mi un soneto, aunque me parece que en octava cuadrada quedara mejor, por ser más breve.

(16–17)

[SILVIANO: . . . let us find out (if it is possible to know) what it was you came along just now imagining: because looking at you, from time to time we saw different signs in your face, now sad, now happy: a few times very confident, and others, in the manner of a desperate man; and it seemed to me that you came ruminating with some words to yourself, but because I was distant, I could not hear them.

CALIDONIO: I came sketching a sonnet to myself, although it seems to me that it would fit better within an octave, since that is shorter.]

Set pieces such as this one treat the sonnet as trivial, and often end with its dismissal: in the passage quoted above, Calidonio ponders setting his thoughts in *octavas cuadradas*. In another well-known example, Aretino, in *The Book of the Courtier*, suggests that he and his fellow courtiers spend the evening in sonneteering, but his idea is politely rejected in favor of a colloquy—“So then, everyone having applauded happily and praised Aretino’s sonnet, after a moment’s conversation signor Ottaviano Fregoso, whose turn it was to speak, began laughingly as follows” (49). The conversation moves off in a different direction. If the sonnet is not treated as frivolous, it is often associated with madness. In Sánchez de Lima’s dialogue, after Calidonio tells Silviano that he has been thinking of a sonnet, Silviano replies, “Os tengo lastima a todos los Poetas: porque todo el día os andáis con mas sobra de locura que de dinero” (17) (“I pity all poets: because you wander all the day long with a greater surfeit of madness than of money”).

When these statements are read alongside the poetry of Acuña and the remarks of Boscán, Lorenzo, and others, they allow us to grasp the two seemingly contradictory discourses that the sonnet form inspires. Earlier, we encountered a group of writers who focused on the form *as* a form and who observed, with a range of responses, its capacities to abbreviate and complexify song, effecting alterations in the nature and purpose of poetry and of men. In contrast, Castiglione, Sánchez de Lima, and like-minded

writers dismissed the sonnet as so much distracting fluff.³⁶ Given the close association I have been tracking between the rise of the sonnet and the process of courtierization, it may come as little surprise that I propose that the discourses through which the form is deemed inconsequential themselves invite closer scrutiny. Sonnets 45 and 30 raise a question about whether the discourse that associates the sonnet form with shallow and frivolous content is not in part a sleight-of-hand that distracts from what is truly ideological and coercive about the new lyric. Using Acuña's perspective to guide our own, we can find evidence in Sánchez de Lima's dialogue, in particular, of the ideological nature of associations of the sonnet with the trivial and the frivolous. As the two interlocutors warm to their theme, Calidonio responds to Silviano's assertion that all poets are mad by distinguishing between old and new poets:

Engañado vives en eso, porque antes no hay mayor delicadeza de ingenio, que es la de un Poeta, si es verdaderamente Poeta: que los que son de a quince en libra, no merecen este nombre, pues está claro que no le merece, sino él que ha rompido su lanza, y muchas lanzas en el campo, o campos de los buenos ingenios, que son las academias, y universidades: y también en otros tiempos lo solían ser los cortes de los Reyes, y Principes, y se tenía en tanto un hombre de buen juicio y claro entendimiento, como era razón: que se sabe del excelentissimo poeta Garcilaso de la Vega, don Jorge Manrique . . . y otros muchos grandes, que nunca por la pluma dejaron la lanza, ni por la lanza la pluma: antes lo uno con lo otro les adornaba tanto, que por esto y por la afabilidad con que trataban a los inferiores, fueron tan amados, queridos y acatados de todos, que no lo son tanto deste nuestro. Y es la causa, el desdeñarse hoy día los Principes, y grandes de las ciencias: porque han tomado en caso de honra, que un señor sea buen escribano, buen aritmético, buen músico, o tenga otra alguna gracia, las cuales querían que tuviesen sus criados. (18–19)

[You are living deceived by this view, because there is no greater delicacy of mind than that of the poet, if he is truly a poet: for fifteen in a pound do not deserve this name, since it is clear that one does not deserve it if he has not broken his lance, and many

36. They were also thinking of the court lyrics of the jongleur. See note 17.

lances, on the battlefield, or on the battlefields of the great minds, which is to say, the academies and the universities; in other times, they were also the courts of the kings and princes, and a man of good judgment and clear understanding was much esteemed, as was right; this is known from the most excellent poet Garcilaso de la Vega, from don Jorge Manrique . . . and many others who never set down the lance for the pen, nor the pen for the lance; instead, they were so adorned first by one and then by the other, that for this and for the affability with which they treated their inferiors, they were so loved, desired, and welcomed by all, as those of our time are not. And the reason is that nowadays, the princes and the great men disdain the fields of knowledge; because they have made it a point of honor that a man who wishes a good writer, a good mathematician, a good musician, or another talent, wishes his servants to possess those talents.]

What stands out about these passages when we are reading for sonnetization is how this dialogue, which initially seems so dismissive of the sonnet—and of short and “mad” lyric forms more generally—manages to make a point very similar to the one made by Sonnet 45, that is, the embrace of sonnet-teering marks a watershed for the nobleman’s inclusion in a modern social order at the expense of his virility and agency. The dialogue singles out the sonnet as the form that gives poetry its reputation for madness and foolishness and then presents a series of metaphors that are structured around the cultural eclipse of Spain’s “real men,” those who did their own fighting and writing, instead of outsourcing it to their servants, or social inferiors (the reference is to the lettered commoners, or the *letrados* who occupied increasingly important political positions with the rise of the modern and bureaucratized court). A principal effect of the dialogue, when it comes to the sonnet, at least, is the representation of the form as symbolic of the decadence and the laziness of the modern nobility. But we can make two points here. First, repeating the message about the uselessness and the lack of substance of the contemporary nobleman only reinforces the politicized discourse of a superfluous nobility, a discourse that will be elaborated in seventeenth-century drama, especially. Second, poems such as Acuña’s Sonnet 45, as well as many of the other works we will encounter in this book, suggest that attributing the emasculating and enervating properties of the sonnet to its content is misleading, since what matters most about the form *is* its form, the fact that it elevates abbreviation and self-reflexivity

not only to the status of art, but to the status of a noble art—even as, in order to take up the pen, Spain’s sonneteers must momentarily set down their swords.

Its Italian origins in abbreviated song, its Spanish origins in the sixteenth-century culture of humanist Renaissance and Hapsburg courtierization, the Spanish sonnet developed an identity based on the victory of the civilizing forces of reason over archaic and traditional modes of being. This identity, in turn, became further elaborated as the policies and the mechanisms of Hapsburg absolutism were consolidated. Within the context of the new court, the war songs of old were no longer legible, but, rather, looked crude when compared to the gracious new lyric, which seemed to accommodate all the old forms within its abbreviated, constrained, but infinitely complex space. Because of this, and because of the complex codes of self-repression, dissembling, and the self-consciously artless postures of *sprezzatura*, the sonnet appears as an increasingly suitable allegory of the tension between the nobleman’s double identity as a knight and as a subject.

The “Reproof”

Once we understand that politics structured not only the debate on the sonnet form, but, in a real way, the abbreviation of song into the sonnet itself, we can better place the vituperative attacks and the wry satires levied against the form. Such invectives inspired Baltasar de Alcázar (1530–1606) to pen his humorous poem (a sonnet) “contra un mal soneto” (“against a bad sonnet”), which begins with the rousing call:

“Al soneto, vecinos, al malvado
al sacrilego, al loco, al sedicioso,
revolvedor de caldos, mentiroso,
afrentoso al señor que lo ha criado”

(1–4)³⁷

[“After that sonnet, good neighbors, after that terrible / that sacrilegious, that mad, that seditious, / stirrer up of the cauldron, that deceitful, / offender of the man who created it”]

37. The poem is reproduced in *La poesía de la edad de oro*, vol. 1, 220.

Alcázar was lampooning the violent reactions that courtiers allowed themselves in their quarrels on poetry, responses along the lines of Acuña's lambasting of the "good knight and bad poet" we saw above, for example. The best known of these attacks is probably the courtier-poet Cristobal de Castillejo's midcentury "Reproñsion contra los poetas que escriben en metro italiano" (Reproof Against Poets Who Write in Italian Meters), which we began to examine above. Composed with a decided emphasis on content, as opposed to form, the poem is useful to this discussion, not only because Castillejo dismisses the distinction between Italian hendecasyllables and heroic meter, but also because of the relationship he figures between the new poetry and the new Spanish nobleman. The "Reproof" is in many ways the companion piece to Boscán's "Letter."

Written probably around the same time as the "Letter" and Acuña's "sonnetizing" sonnets, the "Reproof" is a long poem composed in native quintilla stanzas punctuated by three fourteen-line poems that are ostensibly sonnets. The piece is a comical but pointed invective against poets who betray their native poetry and take up the new art. Its flavor can be gleaned from its opening lines, in which the poem's speaker calls down the Inquisition on the two poets whom he refers to as poetic Anabaptists:

Pues la sancta Inquisición
suele ser tan diligente
en castigar con razón
cualquier secta y opinión
levantada nuevamente,
resucítese Lucero,
a corregir en España
una tan nueva y extraña,
como aquella de Lutero.

(1-9)

[Since the sainted Inquisition / is accustomed to being so diligent / in punishing, rightly, / whatever sect and opinion / that is newly risen up, / let Lucero be revived, / to correct in Spain / one as new and strange, / as that of Luther.]

Castillejo calls the infamous Cordoban inquisitor Diego Rodriguez Lucero to rise from the dead in order to take on the poetic heresy of poets who are Lutherans, or even Anabaptists: "pues por ley particular / se tornan a bautizar /

y se llaman petrarquistas” (13–15) (“since by their own law / they turn and baptize themselves / and call themselves Petrarchans”). The conceit is both ingenious and unintentionally telling, since a subtext of the poem overall is anxiety about the invisibility of the transformations affecting “gentiles españoles caballeros” (Spain’s gentle knights).³⁸ These transformations divide them into two groups, one traditional and one traitorously, heretically modern.³⁹ Castillejo expands his conceit of a poetic inquisition by summoning the famous poets of Castile to comment on Boscán and Garcilaso’s folly:

aquella musa cristiana
 del famoso Juan de Mena,
 sintiendo desto gran pena,
 por infieles los acusa
 y de alevos los condena.
 “Recuerde el alma dormida”
 dice don Jorge Manrique;
 muéstrase muy sentida
 de cosa tan atrevida,
 Garci-Sánchez respondió . . .

(26–36)

[the Christian muse / of the famous Juan de Mena, / greatly pained
 by this, / accuses them as infidels / and condemns them as fickle.
 / “Recall the slumbering soul”⁴⁰ / says don Jorge Manrique; /
 he shows himself quite affected / by something so outrageous, /
 Garci-Sánchez responded . . .⁴¹]

38. Along these lines, this poem is also topical, as Castillejo spent much of his mature career in the Viennese court, during the period in which Ferdinand, king of the Romans, and the emperor, his brother, were working to maintain a mutual tolerance between Catholics and Protestants in the region. See Reyes Cano, *Estudios sobre Cristóbal de Castillejo*.

39. Castillejo probably did not consider how beginning his poem in the vein of religion, faith, and the Inquisition establishes a medieval religious worldview that is overcome, as the poem proceeds, by the politics that constitute the interiority of a modern man. The poem accidentally reproduces the phenomenon that is troubling it.

40. The first line of Jorge Manrique’s most famous poem, the “Coplas por la muerte de su padre” (Verses on the Death of His Father), a poem composed around 1476.

41. Juan de Mena and Jorge Manrique (1440–1479), composer of the equally famous “Coplas por la muerte de su padre,” written in the seven- and five-syllable “broken foot” or *pie quebrado* form, may be the best known of the poets Castillejo lists here. Garcí Sánchez de Bajadóz (1460–1526?) was a poet well-known for his cancionero poetry.

Throughout the poem, these writers, accompanied by Bartolomé Torres Naharro (1450–1520?) and Alfonso de Cartagena (1386–1456) will submit the new lyric to scrutiny for national and poetic (although not religious) heresy.

The “Reproof” is primarily composed in a traditional Castilian form, but three apparent sonnets are intercalated in the work. The first is the best known; it stages an encounter between Boscán, Garcilaso, and the distinguished poets of Castilian tradition:

Garcilaso y Boscán, siendo llegados
 al lugar donde están los trovadores
 que en esta nuestra lengua y sus primores
 fueron en este siglo señalados,
 los unos a los otros alterados
 se miran, con mudanza de colores,
 temiéndose que fuesen corredores
 espías o enemigos desmandados;
 y juzgando primero por el traje,
 parecióronles ser, como debía,
 gentiles españoles caballeros;
 y oyéndoles hablar nuevo lenguaje
 mezclado de extranjera poesía,
 con ojos los miraban de extranjeros.

(61–74)

[Garcilaso and Boscán, having arrived / at that place where the troubadours are found / who in this our language and its charms / were distinguished in this age, / each group gazes upon the other, shocked, / coloring, / fearing that they might be scouts, / spies, or lawless enemies; / and judging first by their outfits, / they seemed to be, as they should be, / gentle Spanish knights; / and listening to them speak a new language / mixed with strange poetry, / they looked at them with the eyes of strangers.]

If above I referred to Castillejo’s “apparent” sonnets, it is because both this poem and the later ones that appear in lines 135–48, “Si las penas que dais son verdaderas” (If the Pains You Give Are Real)—a weak imitation of a sonnet by Boscán—and lines 217–30, “Musas italianas y Latinas” (Italian

and Latin Muses), are fourteen-line, hendecasyllabic lyrics that follow the conventional rhyme scheme of ABBA, ABBA, CDE, CDE. Beyond that, however, they show little of the internal logic or the art of the sonnet form. In “Garcilaso y Boscán, siendo llegados,” for example, the volta is signaled with a semicolon at the end of line 8, but there is no marked “turn” of thought or point of view, and there is only the weakest shift in the action as the parties move from staring (“miran”) to judging and listening (“juzgan,” “oyéndoles”). Whether or not he could do better with the form, the jocular tone of the work overall, added to the fact that he had studied under Erasmus, the author of the satirical *In Praise of Folly* (1511), suggests that this flat-footedness was pointed and meant to exaggerate the vapidness of the new art.⁴²

Castillejo’s “sonnet” presents a different perspective on the phenomenon we have been tracking in this chapter, the suspicions and fears about the implication of poetry in the changes that were taking place among the ranks of gentle Spanish knights. Like Acuña (and like Lorenzo), Castillejo assumes an implicit alliance between sonnet form and the complexified and cosmopolitan existence that yields the subject. Once again, we encounter the pairing of new poetry, and new man, the latter endowed with an interiority that is both hidden from view and subject to hidden operations of meaning deriving from the political, ideological world. The dilution of the ranks of the aristocracy at court by the increased numbers of the letrados, and the suddenly expanded, heterogeneous amalgamation of kingdoms, duchies, cities, and hemispheres that constituted the holdings of Charles V and of Spain during Castillejo’s lifetime—changes such as these meant that even men such as Castillejo, Boscán, and Garcilaso, all noblemen, all courtiers from esteemed houses, all lifelong members of the highest circles of the court, found themselves divided and routed into factions, alliances, and even distant territories in which they became alien, or “hard to read,” to one

42. Erasmus was the tutor of Charles V’s brother Ferdinand from 1518. Building on their connection, Rogelio Reyes Cano, one of Castillejo’s most thoughtful readers, has suggested that the true target of the “Reproof” was not Italianate lyric, specifically, but bad poetry of all types, inasmuch as it dishonored the Castilian tongue (17–19 and 85–105). This reading helps to undermine the problematic critical opposition Boscán–Castillejo, and it also fits better with the portrait of the urbane and Europeanized figure that Castillejo seems to have been. Bearing in mind the cosmopolitan makeup of the Viennese court during Castillejo’s residence there, Reyes’s interpretation carries weight. Attacks on bad Petrarchans were common in the writings of the courtly and the lettered elites, throughout Europe (see Reyes Cano, *Estudios sobre Cristóbal de Castillejo*).

another.⁴³ It was thus impossible to trust contemporary Spanish courtiers because of the radical differences that might mark them beneath the surface, “under their garments,” according to the words of the poem, “juzgando primero por el traje / parecieronles ser como debía” (70), but also on their “insides,” where their language was formed and where internalized attitudes and ideologies shape their speech: “oyéndoles hablar nuevo lenguaje . . . con ojos los miraban de extranjeros” (73–75). But whereas Acuña understood the production of his lyric subject to take place through the twinned operations of the rational mind and the sonnet form, as each was enhanced and reinforced by the workings of the other, Castillejo was unable to engage or was uninterested in engaging with the structuring effects of poetry on identity and attributed the difference in the two types of courtiers to what Cascardi has referred to as the “the authority of taste” (*Ideologies*, 12).

The Ideology of Form

The introduction and the defense of the sonnet in the sixteenth century coincided with the rise of a new way of thinking about poetry. The nature and purpose of poetic discourse were transformed from the creation and the imitation of greatness to the containment of the voice within the human (and humanist) contours of a new kind of self. We might understand this watershed as the lyricization of poetry; but it took place as the aristocrat adopted the persona of the courtierized nobleman and acceded to the demand that he alternate his grasp of two implements, the sword and the pen, instead of the one great *ardiente espada*. Along with this embrace of subjection came a renewed emphasis on what we would now term the subjective. As the modern courtier internalized contemporary political ideologies of circumscribed agency, he elaborated on them in lyrics shaped by the particular inflections of his personal voice.

43. Castillejo's own biographical situation was notable in this regard. Castillejo and Boscán had both been pages in the court of Ferdinand the Catholic before Castillejo was attached to the household of Prince Ferdinand and Boscán entered into service of the Dukes of Alba. Castillejo witnessed at close hand the rough and tumble of the transition from the political culture under the regencies of Cisneros and King Ferdinand and the new Burgundian-style order that was imposed during the early years of Charles's reign. When Prince Ferdinand was dispatched to the Low Countries and then to Vienna, Castillejo stayed behind; however, it has been suggested that he was associated with the losing side of the *comuneros* revolts and that this was one of the reasons that it was deemed expedient to eventually send him to Vienna to rejoin his Prince (Reyes Cano, 17–21).

Another element that we have observed here is that the sonnet is more than a neutral vehicle for content in the sixteenth century. It is not trivial as a form. Nor, to take on another dismissive convention, is it the kind of poem one writes when one is not of sufficient caliber and talent to write an epic. Or, rather, the sonnet *is* what one writes when one is unable to compose an epic; however, we need to understand that the epic and its close relative, the traditional Castilian song, could not achieve their traditional sorts of meaning in the sixteenth century, not because a given poet was insufficient to the task, but rather because the cultural framework that supported this poetry had been eclipsed.⁴⁴ There will be more to say on this matter in Chapter 4. For the present, it is sufficient to observe how the poems of Acuña that treat the phenomenon of sonnetization foreground the form's poetic mandate to summon and frame its subjects. Moreover, the readings offered above have shown that close-reading practices and reading lyric texts *as lyric*—as poetry, specifically—are worthwhile tasks. The evidence for this view will only mount over the course of the remaining chapters.

44. Such are the social and political conditions “fatal to epic,” according to David Quint, quoting Joseph Schumpeter in *Epic and Empire* (10).