

# PARADIGMS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN FRANCISCO DE QUEVEDO'S POETRY: LOS (DES)ENGAÑOS DE LA GRANDEZA

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*Para Bárbara-Ann Tuozzolo*

“... habemos de ser, déste hasta el último día de  
nuestra vida, verdaderos amigos.”

Miguel de Cervantes, *Rinconete y Cortadillo*

Francisco de Quevedo's vast poetic corpus has most often been examined for its moral, amorous, or satirical aspects, among others. One key aspect of his lyrical works which has to some degree remained less studied is Quevedo's stance on Spanish national identity. Existing scholarship on this topic often falls within the larger category of scholarship on satirical or political poetic works or on Quevedo's many prose writings.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which Quevedo explores Spanish national identity and to arrive at a conclusion as to what he had considered paradigmatic about being Spanish.

While an exhaustive account of Quevedo's beliefs regarding Spanish identity as seen in his poetry would be impossible for this study, several select poems of varying lengths demonstrate these beliefs in depth. A number of sonnets, many of which are encomiastic in nature and most of which come from the posthumously published *El Parnaso español* (1648) contain what can best be described as a generally traditionalist (and, in today's parlance, stereotyped) stance on *hispanidad*. At the same time, a longer poetic work, the *Epístola satírica y censoria contra las costumbres presentes de los castellanos*, evinces a far more critical and disenchanting outlook on Spanish identity while adding an element of wistful nostalgia for an unspecified past. What will emerge from this study is that Quevedo's portrayal of national identity cannot be reduced to a single paradigm and, as a result, is nuanced as it is often contradictory.<sup>2</sup> Quevedo's beliefs about Spanish identity are informed by a sense of *desengaño* pervasive in much of his work (including prose as well) which is rigidly hierarchical as it is reactionary.

In sum, there are two distinct paradigms of *hispanidad* throughout Quevedo's poetry. On the one hand, Quevedo crafts a notion of national identity based on noble and martial ideals, creating an image of Spain as a leader among nations for its warlike propensities and its sense of national honor. This occurs most notably in his sonnets, and is generally limited to a faith in the uppermost stratum of the social pyramid, as the Habsburg monarchs of Spain, as well as a number of key military notables, are seen to uphold these values. On the other hand, Quevedo at times reserves scorn for much of Spanish society, as he believes that Spain has become weaker, burdened by the vastness of its own empire, and has largely forsaken its ancient martial principles through corruption and vice. This characterization of Spain occurs in the aforementioned *Epístola* above all but also is vaguely alluded to in some of his sonnets. However, it is always assumed that Spain is in one basic respect superior to its European neighbors and rivals: when Spain's military glory is not apparent, the vices which originated in other lands affect an otherwise uncorrupted people. These two competing paradigms—the portrayal of a knightly and militant Spain and its descent into decadence—are what comprise Quevedo's construction of Spanish identity and will prove that being Spanish for the poet is, at best, a varying and often unstable proposition.

## The Sonnets

Several sonnets chosen for this study, as implied above, may often appear to be simple laudatory sonnets on the leaders and general grandeur of the nation; however, their value in examining Quevedo's paradigms of identity is significant. An early sonnet, "Escondida debajo de tu armada" (*Obra poética* I: 422-423), was composed in 1603 and later compiled in Pedro Espinosa's *Flores de poetas ilustres de España* (1605), and contains an exhortation to military victory for Philip III, who had then recently become king only several years prior, in 1598.<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that this sonnet was written during a time when Spain had already begun to lose some of its imperial hegemony, as the defeat of the Armada in 1588 had taken place not much earlier, though before the disastrous consequences of the Thirty Years War and the eventual loss of Spanish dominance in continental affairs.

Escondida debajo de tu armada,  
gime la mar, la vela llama al viento,  
y a las lunas del turco el firmamento  
eclipse les promete en tu jornada.

Quiere en las venas del inglés tu espada  
matar la sed al español sediento,

y en tus armas el sol desde su asiento  
mira su lumbre en rayos aumentada.

Por ventura la tierra de envidiosa  
contra ti arma ejércitos triunfantes,  
en sus monstruos soberbios poderosa.

Que viendo armar de rayos fulminantes,  
¡o Júpiter! tu diestra valerosa,  
pienso que han vuelto al mundo los gigantes.

Quevedo immediately establishes a tone of dominance with respect to Spain's relationship to the world. The first quatrain presents a heroic Spanish navy in action against the Ottoman Empire throughout the Mediterranean, of significance during a time in which the Ottoman fleet threatened Spanish commerce and naval power between the Iberian Peninsula and its crown holdings in southern Italy. This exhortation to maintain military dominance melds with an image of a heroic and warlike Spain in its struggle against England, its naval as well as religious enemy, in the second quatrain. The Spanish warrior craves the taste of conquest, graphically represented through the king's sword, in need of slaking his thirst for blood of Englishmen. Spanish superiority is not limited to theatres of operation among individual earthly kingdoms; indeed, Quevedo avails himself of the classical myth of Jupiter and the gods in likening Spain (and, more precisely, Philip III) to these deities in their own actions against mythological autochthonous giants. In the tercets Quevedo posits the notion that even if all the armies of the world should rise against Spain, much as the "gigantes" did according to myth, Spain alone—as seen through the godlike image of Philip III as Jupiter—would still be able to conquer them all. While this sonnet might suggest an apparently simplistic and stereotyped view of Spain and its reigning monarch, it also demonstrates Quevedo's erudition and classical knowledge in constructing an image of a strong and honorable redoubt. Though Quevedo in actuality is not arguing in favor of a global war against all foreign powers, Spanish strength is never called into question, and the paradigm of a valiant nation of *armas* is constructed.

A revised version of this sonnet was later made to honor the next Habsburg monarch, Philip IV, who ascended the throne in 1621 as Spain was mired, much like most of the Continent, in the Thirty Years War. With an initial verse nearly identical to the poem above, "Escondido debajo de tu armada" (I: 422-423) was later contained in *El Parnaso español* and focuses on Spanish might in much the same fashion. Quevedo demonstrates his classicism once more, though this time with a mythological figure other than Jupiter.

Escondido debajo de tu armada,  
gime el Ponto, la vela llama al viento,  
y a las lunas de Tracia con sangriento  
eclipse ya rubrica tu jornada.

En las venas sajónicas tu espada  
el acero calienta, y macilento  
te atiende el belga, habitador violento  
de poca tierra, al mar y a ti robada.

Pues tus vasallos son el Etna ardiente,  
y todos los incendios que a Vulcano  
hacen el metal rígido obediente,

arma de rayos la invencible mano:  
caiga roto y deshecho el insolente  
belga, el francés, el sueco y el germano.

The historical setting in which this poem was written distinguishes it from the preceding one. Spain's military actions against the Ottoman Empire are again evident, but now so are the campaigns waged against the Low Countries, rebelling against the Spanish crown as the United Provinces. Philip IV's "espada" craves Germanic blood while the Flemish, belittled as "habitador violento / de poca tierra," are introduced as an additional enemy. Quevedo's faith in his nation's leadership is seen in the first tercet, which uses the mythological figure of Vulcan this time instead of Jupiter. With hyperbole, the king's loyal servants are likened to the volcano of Mt. Etna in Sicily, whose fires forge Spain's collective sword. Quevedo's imperial argument against the uprising in the Low Countries (one which carried significant religious ramifications, as the Netherlands found itself in the ideological camp of the Protestant Reformation) is brought to a conclusion in the final strophe, in which Spain is seen once more as dominant among European powers. Both this sonnet and the preceding one construct a national identity as one based on warfare, valor, and perceived just cause against other rival powers.

More nuanced than these two sonnets in the crafting of national identity is a sonnet from *El Parnaso español* honoring the Duque de Osuna upon his death while imprisoned. "Faltar pudo su patria al grande Osuna" (I: 425) continues the paradigm of the heroic Spaniard but adds the unfortunate element of what might happen to heroic figures when they fall out of favor.<sup>4</sup> Though the monarchy itself is, of course, never once criticized, the reader is left to ponder the meaning of being valiant in combat if someone in the service of the state does not receive the respect that is merited. This time, Spain does not reciprocate with the honor Quevedo bestows upon him:

Faltar pudo su patria al grande Osuna,  
pero no a su defensa sus hazañas;  
diéronle muerte y cárcel las Españas,  
de quien él hizo esclava la Fortuna.

Lloraron sus envidias una a una  
con las propias naciones las extrañas;  
su tumba son de Flandes las campañas,  
y su epitafio la sangrienta luna.

En sus exequias encendió al Vesubio  
Parténope, y Trinacria al Mongibelo;  
el llanto militar creció en diluvio.

Dióle el mejor lugar Marte en su cielo;  
la Mosa, el Rhin, el Tajo y el Danubio  
murmuran con dolor su desconsuelo.

Pedro Téllez Girón, the Duque de Osuna, had been the viceroy in Sicily and then in Naples, in addition to the soldier whose exploits Quevedo details here. After losing royal favor in 1620, he was imprisoned and eventually died while in prison, in 1624.<sup>5</sup> The image of the honorable Spanish hero is as obvious as is his eventual fortune, as seen from the beginning of the sonnet. Osuna, an admired personal friend of the author, had performed “hazañas” in his country’s service as a man of arms and as a statesman, but only received “muerte y cárcel” from the land he served. The campaigns waged against other nations—further highlighting Spain’s constructed identity as a superior land—are referenced in the second stanza, in this instance campaigns in Flanders and in the Mediterranean Sea against the Turks (the “sangrienta luna” of the Islamic faith). Quevedo would have Osuna’s public memory be these martial accomplishments, even in spite of the fact that Osuna had lost courtly favor and died ignominiously. Hyperbole and classical references abound in the first tercet, as the ancient names for Naples (Parténope) and Sicily (Trinacria) are used to show how these areas honored Osuna at his funerary rites and how their volcanoes (“Vesubio” and “Mongibelo,” or Etna, respectively) erupted in homage. Finally, Spain’s dominance of other nations is seen as Mars offers Osuna a place of honor in his symbolic heaven and as the rivers of other European lands lament Osuna’s passing. This poem thus reads as a *desengaño* of what power can do to even the greatest national role models. While this sonnet shows that Osuna clearly “embodied Quevedo’s ideal of a strong imperialist leader” (Iffland 115), it also displays the irony of a hero not being appreciated as he should. The sonnet is a brief cautionary tale—told “sin morderse la lengua, aún a riesgo de ser castigado por ello” (Martínez Torrón 53)—

for those who believed in the fundamental nationalistic values held dear by Quevedo but for whom fortune and respect may be elusive.

Another sonnet from *El Parnaso español* also can be read as a cautionary tale about power, but in this case one involving the entire nation. “Un Godo, que una cueva en la montaña” (I: 218) rapidly recounts Spain’s most decisive victories and adds an epigrammatic ending describing what may happen once power and dominance are accumulated.

Un Godo, que una cueva en la montaña  
guardó, pudo cobrar las dos Castillas;  
del Betis y Genil las dos orillas,  
los herederos de tan grande hazaña.

A Navarra te dio justicia y maña;  
y un casamiento, en Aragón, las sillas  
con que a Sicilia y Nápoles humillas,  
y a quien Milán espléndida acompaña.

Muerte infeliz en Portugal arbola  
tus castillos; Colón pasó los godos  
al ignorado cerco de esta bola;

Y es más fácil, oh España, en muchos modos,  
que lo que a todos les quitaste sola,  
te puedan a ti sola quitar todos.

Spanish identity is clearly seen once more as valiant and warlike but is tempered by the warning which appears at the end. National consolidation, beginning with the earliest battles of the Reconquest, leads to eventual dominance of the Peninsula and then of other lands. In brief, Quevedo refers to the Visigothic leader Pelayo and his initial victory against the Moors at Covadonga<sup>6</sup>; the Conquest of Seville and Córdoba by Fernando III *el Santo* and the Moorish Kingdom of Granada by the Catholic Kings; the incorporation of the Kingdom of Navarre and eventually of crown holdings in Italy, the regions of Naples, Sicily, and the *Milanesado*; Philip II’s incorporation of Portugal into Spain, unifying the Peninsula; and, finally, Columbus’ explorations in the Americas and Spain’s acquisition of Latin American colonial territory. Spain’s power is evident from this poem and the imperial enterprise is seen as an extension of the initial Reconquest beginning in the Middle Ages; indeed, warfare had become “una mercancía de exportación” (Bennassar 63) for all of these regions. Spanish geographic identity extends to the Americas from its origins in Pelayo, as Quevedo constructs a continuum of conquest and warfare which is predestined to lead to a powerful empire.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, even with the power and territory Spain has acquired, Quevedo adds a precautionary word at the end of this sonnet which differentiates it from some of the sonnets initially presented in this study, notably the encomiastic ones dedicated to Philip III and Philip IV. Though the paradigm of a glorious and militant Spain remains in this poem, its tone is tempered by the sensible realization that it is easier for all of Spain's enemies to take away its conquered lands than it was for Spain to conquer those lands in the first place. This warning comes from Seneca, specifically from his *Epístolas morales*, carrying essentially the same meaning in the final stanza.<sup>8</sup> In sum, though the poet accords a select number of Spanish monarchs and military leaders their measure of honor, and although Spain itself maintains its territorial integrity, Quevedo also writes within the context of a time in which Spain was continually threatened by other rival powers and had already begun to see corrupt administration and unrest in certain areas, such as Cataluña and Portugal (Oliver 56n). The *desengaño* of national grandeur, though not pervasive in this poem as it has been in others, is beginning to slowly take shape.

The last sonnet in this study is a later sonnet by Quevedo, written during a time in which he had already begun to have significant misgivings regarding Spain's political situation. "Al bastón que le vistes en la mano" (I: 458-459), appearing in *El Parnaso español*, is dedicated to an admiral of the Spanish navy, don Fadrique de Toledo, an accomplished officer whose career included naval battles against the Dutch and whose honors included that of being the Knight Commander of the Order of Santiago, the same order to which Quevedo belonged. Yet, not unlike the Duque de Osuna, Toledo had also fallen out of favor with regal authorities and was eventually sent to prison, where he died. This sonnet was composed definitively after 1634, the year in which Toledo fell out of favor (specifically with respect to the Conde-Duque de Olivares, with whom Quevedo had by now begun to see as an adversary), and reads as the epitaph inscribed on his headstone:

Al bastón que le vistes en la mano  
con aspecto real y floreciente,  
obedeció pacífico el tridente  
del verde emperador del Océano.

Fueron oprobio al belga y al luterano  
sus órdenes, sus armas y su gente;  
y en su consejo y brazo, felizmente  
venció los hados el monarca hispano.

Lo que en otros perdió la cobardía,  
cobró armado y prudente su denuedo,  
que sin victorias no contó algún día.

Esto fue don Fadrique de Toledo.  
 Hoy nos da, desatado en sombra fría,  
 llanto a los ojos, y al discurso miedo.

Toledo apparently had lost favor from Olivares when he had asked the Conde-Duque to be allowed to remain in Spain. Fearing Toledo in large part due to his popularity among the people and the court as a war hero, Olivares had him imprisoned outside the capital city. Toledo died in prison after deliberately having been denied the medical attention he needed.<sup>9</sup> Not surprisingly, Quevedo writes a sonnet similar in certain respects to his sonnet on the Duque de Osuna to praise Toledo for his martial virtues, and alludes to the critical situation in which Spain now finds itself. All of the principal elements of Quevedo's nationalistic paradigm of identity are present in this sonnet, from the classical hyperbole of characterizing the god Neptune as obedient to Toledo, to Toledo's work defending Spanish interests against the Dutch and the Protestant cause. The characteristic of "cobardía" stands in clear distinction to Toledo's values and, by extension, to the values of the entire country which he serves. However, the last line provides an ominous reference to temper the nationalistic tone so pervasive in the poem, as Quevedo alludes not only to the sadness that one feels upon contemplating Toledo's death but also the fear of speaking openly. At this time in his literary career, Quevedo had already begun to question Olivares's control of the country and here refers to the climate of fear inspired by such a heavy-handed prime minister.<sup>10</sup> It stands to reason, then, that in this instance Quevedo still supports the familiar notion of a valiant nation as personified by its best military leaders, yet adds a very brief and veiled criticism of its highest civil authority to stand in contrast to what Quevedo believes is best about Spain. Being Spanish does not merely mean being heroic and martial; instead, it has come to mean adapting to a climate of "miedo," as the warlike valor seen so often in these sonnets is no longer a guarantee of stability or respect while one is alive. Though Quevedo's loyalty to the country and its constructed mission as imperial and religious defender would not be questioned, his opinion of certain members of its governing body is indeed mutable, demonstrating that one does not always need to equate country with government.

*The Epístola satírica y censoria contra las costumbres presentes de los castellanos*

This epistle (I: 294-301), written approximately in 1625<sup>11</sup>, was personally addressed to the Conde-Duque de Olivares, Gaspar de



Guzmán, several years after being named Philip IV's prime minister, and shows most plainly Quevedo's two general paradigms of national identity. This lengthy poem was written during a time in which Quevedo had made open attempts to curry favor with Olivares, and thus appeared some time before he had fallen out of favor with Philip IV's *valido*, as in the last sonnet above. Olivares was credited with having led the Spanish state from 1621 to 1643, a leadership often described as autocratic and despotic, before he finally lost favor with the king.<sup>12</sup> The *epístola* contains three general sections, the exordium (1-30), in which Quevedo states his intent; a lengthy descriptive section detailing ancient Spanish virtues (31-110) and presenting the state of what Spain has become (110-165); and the petition to Olivares to help restore Spain's previous grandeur and national traits (166-205).<sup>13</sup> It should also be added that this *epístola* was written with a political intent that was as self-serving as it was state-serving on Quevedo's own part as well, an intent which lay under his more obvious nationalist beliefs: "Quevedo took quite seriously the notion of a renewed, austere, and fundamentally war-oriented Spain. And to that end, he was willing to do the work the Conde-Duque has hired him to do—that is, as a propagandist and 'attack dog' of the type which still abounds in our own political world." (Iffland 115)<sup>14</sup>

After the exordium, where Quevedo expresses his sadness at what Spain has become (29-30), the poet begins to laud the past and to scorn contemporary affairs. Buried now in the earth lies "virtud" (32), a value which allowed Spaniards to once find an honorable death. Interestingly, this "honrada muerte" (35) actually refers to the notion of a preference for suicide over growing old ("nunca quiso tener más larga vida," 36), as Christopher Maurer has noted regarding Silio Itálico's observation of ancient Iberians (101). Quevedo, naturally, is not arguing in favor of committing a mortal sin; rather, he attempts to resurrect a constructed notion of an ancient autochthonous past in which the Spanish were seen as vigorous, militant, and free of vice, and would prefer to die than to live in slovenly fashion.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the same "virtud" mentioned above is repeated as it "sola dominaba al pueblo rudo" (47), as Quevedo builds further his belief in an uncorrupted and unspecified past. This paradigm of identity, which will soon prove Quevedo's posture to be quite reactionary, includes the notion of the honorable soldier whose sole aim is service to his country, not given to self-aggrandizement or luxury: "Multiplicó en escuadras un soldado / su honor precioso, su ánimo valiente, / de sola honesta obligación armado." (52-54) In addition to martial virtues, this paradigm of a romanticized Spain includes clearly-defined gender roles, as women were seen to serve

their soldier husbands, even to accompany them to battle, realizing the close proximity to death that they had:

Hilaba la mujer para su esposo  
 la mortaja primero que el vestido;  
 menos le vió galán que peligroso.  
 Acompañaba el lado del marido  
 más veces en la hueste que en la cama;  
 sano le aventuró, vengóle herido. (58-63)

Quevedo's nationalism also evinces contempt for money and specifically the riches plundered from Latin America, a scorn for avarice and especially the corrupting effects of this colonial wealth common to other notable contemporaries, especially Lope de Vega, as Walter Cohen has noted (273). The "rubias minas" (68) symbolizing Latin America's gold "usurparon la paz del pecho humano" (69); this description lends a construction of purity, along with bellicose tendencies, to Spaniards in the past.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, it is in the past where Quevedo "construye la idealizada figura del tipo humano español." (Vivar 32)

This paradigm of national identity carries further ramifications as well, as Quevedo alludes to the virtues of the *cristiano viejo* in following the call of *armas* instead of *letras*. Quevedo's military preferences are evident, as is his use of the northern Spaniard as a member of a Spanish "race" without Jewish or Arab ancestry: "No de la pluma dependió la lanza, / ni el cántabro con cajas y tinteros / hizo el campo heredad, sino matanza." (76-78) Spain's superiority to other nations is included in the following strophe, which also can be read as an acknowledgment of the costly nature of the religious wars which Spain needed to finance at the time, using Italian bankers: "Y España, con legítimos dineros, / no mendigando el crédito a Liguria, / más quiso los turbantes que los ceros." (79-81) The cause is not criticized, naturally, though the practice of usury clearly is, a practice associated here with northern Italian banking houses<sup>17</sup> but elsewhere most often with the Jews. In this unspecified past, wild animals such as deer and fowl were not hunted to near extinction, but died naturally (85-87), and people ate and drank as they needed but not to excess (88-96). Quevedo even constructs a completely unrealistic ideal of equality among inherently unequal castes in that no one experienced a lack of food in the same manner since, implicitly, no one was given to gluttony: "tan bien como el señor, comió el esclavo." (99) The Spanish would work honorably and not out of simple self-advancement, as "honra y provecho andaban en un saco." (105). Finally, Quevedo implies additional superiority over other

European societies, at the juncture in which he begins to launch into criticism of current affairs:

Pudo sin miedo un español velloso  
llamar a los tudescos bacanales,  
y al holandés hereje y alevoso.  
Pudo acusar los celos desiguales  
a la Italia, pero hoy de muchos modos  
somos copias, si son originales. (106-11)

The Germans are seen as given to the wanton abuse of alcohol, the Dutch as heretical and treacherous, and the Italians as jealous.

However, these same qualities now corrupt the Spanish in many respects, as Quevedo soon thereafter constructs his second paradigm of identity, that of a lax nation, and as he further develops his reactionary stance. It should be noted that never once does Quevedo state that these are inherent characteristics; rather, the norm of the past had been replaced by another norm in the present. Firstly, Quevedo implicitly criticizes the manner in which the Spanish adorn themselves, soldiers and civilians alike, in contrast with the primitive but “uncorrupted” society of the past. In this segment, the poet also inserts a misogynistic reference in scorning the vanity of presumptuous women, who in the past did not have difficulty with simple clothing:

Y quedaron las huestes españolas  
bien perfumadas, pero mal regidas,  
y alhajas las que fueron pieles solas.  
Estaban las hazañas mal vestidas,  
y aún no se hartaba de burriel y lana  
la vanidad de hembras presumidas. (118-23)

There was no need for silk to be worn, even in the hottest days of the summer (127-129); humble and simple adornments sufficed. Quevedo then implies that manual labor was in the past an honorable and dignified occupation—and subtly argues against the negative attitudes associated with it—whereas in his Spain it had come to be viewed as the opposite: “Hoy desprecia el honor al que trabaja, / y entonces fue el trabajo ejecutoria, / y el vicio graduó la gente baja.” (131-132) Afterwards, Quevedo enters into a lengthy criticism of bullfighting and *juegos de cañas*, defending the bull as an honorable beast of burden which has done nothing to merit its arbitrary death at the hands of men.<sup>18</sup> Instead of occupying themselves in games such as these, men should focus on neglected agricultural labor—something which, as history has shown, carried disastrous economic consequences:

“Pretende el alentado joven gloria / por dejar la vacada sin marido, / y de Ceres ofender la memoria.” (133-135) Horses, another beast of burden as well as a necessary accompaniment in the army, are also wasted on *juegos de cañas*, as Quevedo ridicules the figure of noblemen in these games, observing them “gastar un caballo en una caña” (147). It logically follows that Quevedo then advocates military service (further reinforcing the positive paradigm of national identity seen elsewhere in this *epístola* and in other works): “¡Con cuánta majestad llena la mano / la pica, y el mosquete carga el hombro / del que se atreve a ser buen castellano!” (157-159) Finally, Quevedo argues for a return to a more manageable spectacle involving horses, that of medieval jousting, again evincing a reactionary position regarding nationhood and *juegos de cañas*, which he characterizes as a “contagio moro” (163). That which is “purely Castilian” and *cristiano viejo* is lauded; that which is prone to extravagance or which may trace its roots to the Moors or, for that matter, other cultures mentioned throughout the epistle is scorned. Both competing paradigms find their way in Quevedo’s views of Spain.<sup>19</sup>

Quevedo ends the *epístola* by exhorting Olivares to take charge and restore Spain’s “original” identity. He underscores his unquestioning faith in Spain’s uppermost hierarchy, the monarchy and its prime ministers, in advocating a return to triumph: “Pasadnos vos de juegos a trofeos: / Que solo grande rey y buen privado / pueden ejecutar estos deseos.” (166-168) His romanticism of the past is mirrored in his belief that Olivares can help accomplish this, one which is heavily laden with flattery of the Conde-Duque’s lineage and sense of honor, and which evinces Quevedo’s “blend of idealism with self-interest” (Elliott 191) in the epistle. Quevedo also still advocates the Flemish wars, believing in Spain’s mission to root out Protestantism in its crown lands, and argues once more for a return to military discipline and an abandonment of extravagant clothing among its troops. However, in examining this segment it must be remembered that this *epístola* was written significantly prior to the Treaty of Westfalia in 1648, in which Spain recognized Holland’s independence and ceased hostilities there; hence, the tone of *desengaño* seen elsewhere in the poem is replaced by one of optimism:

Lograd, señor, edad tan venturosa;  
y cuando nuestras fuerzas examina  
persecución unida y belicosa,  
la militar valiente disciplina  
tenga más practicantes que la plaza:  
descansen tela falsa y tela fina. (190-95)

The reference to sartorial finery in the armed forces is of significance especially considering Quevedo's era, as Marcelin Defourneaux has noted: "In an epoch when armies had no regular 'uniform', the soldier, like the nobleman, sought to distinguish himself from the common man not only by the way he wore his sword but also by the richness, and sometimes the extravagance, of his costume." (204)<sup>20</sup> Quevedo's appeal to toughness carries another brief ethnocentric reference, as the Moorish long gown worn in popular festivals must be replaced by the metal breastplate: "Suceda a la Marlota la Coraza" (196). Quevedo concludes the missive by presenting Olivares himself as a new Pelayo and as an agent of divine justice:

Mandadlo así, que aseguraros puedo,  
que habéis de restaurar más que Pelayo;  
pues valdrá por ejércitos el miedo,  
y os verá el cielo administrar su rayo. (202-05)

The notion of a proud and warlike country is not lost in the end; however, it has been tempered by the sober realization that the same country can also cast aside its initial values and can replace them with opposite ones. Quevedo does not entirely lose faith in Spain in writing the *epístola*, but rather evinces a tone of disenchantment with the current state of affairs and counterbalances that with nostalgia for the past, optimism for the future, and faith in its leaders.<sup>21</sup>

It may appear that there are more questions than answers about Quevedo's inconsistencies regarding his beloved homeland. How can two very distinct views of Spain be maintained by the same author? I believe that in one sense, the positive paradigm is reinforced by the negative one, as throughout his poetry Quevedo illustrates the notion that certain admirable traits inhere in what is "fundamentally Spanish." The negative paradigm reflects what Spain can become, as he sees it, but is not something that cannot be overcome. In sum, Quevedo argues for a restoration of virtues and characteristics so frequent in his sonnets and, to some degree, in the *epístola*, as one paradigm can in theory replace another. In so doing the Spanish would remain superior to their neighbors and enemies, as implied in many of these poems. However, in order for this to happen, Quevedo advocates that a great national figure—whether it be a king, another political figure, or a military leader—must be the guardian of these virtues and an exemplar of incorruptibility. Quevedo still maintains the hierarchical order of his society along with his reactionary beliefs and a certain measure of national messianism (Jaramillo Cervilla 115), but is aware of how

improper behaviors (as he saw them) can affect nearly anybody, and how otherwise great leaders might not receive their deserved tribute after serving their country. Indeed, Quevedo criticizes what he sees in government and country for the purpose of achieving a “restauración de un gobierno de tipo señorial, que opera en el ejercicio de una justicia espontánea, basada en la práctica de virtudes cristianas.” (Schwartz Lerner 331) His paradigms of identity reflect each other, though as a result it becomes obvious that being Spanish in his day does not carry security; *hispanidad* does not imply *estabilidad*. Militancy and laziness, virtue and vice, humble lifestyles and avarice, optimism and *desengaño*, are all binary categories which underlie these paradigms of identity but which prove that at any one time, his people can tend towards either component.<sup>22</sup> Spain will be what Quevedo thinks it is at a given moment; the reader is reminded, in the end, that “the modern nation state is as fleeting a structure as any other product of the social life of human beings.” (Resina 301) It is hoped that further study will illuminate Quevedo’s beliefs regarding national identity in his lyrical works.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>One relatively recent study examines Quevedo with respect to images of Spain, Francisco Vivar’s *Quevedo y su España imaginada*. Vivar bases his analysis on the concept that a “nation” is a construct which changed for Quevedo between 1609 (the publication of his *España defendida*) and his death in 1645. Henry Ettinghausen’s study, “Ideología intergenérica: la obra circunstancial de Quevedo” is also valuable for issues of identity, mainly within the context of politics and related themes.

<sup>2</sup>Indeed, many since the Seventeenth Century have observed Quevedo as contradictory; see Mariscal 101.

<sup>3</sup>Quevedo, of course, is not the only Golden Age poet to have written laudatory sonnets about this or other Habsburg monarchs. His contemporary and friend, Lope de Vega, also wrote an encomiastic sonnet regarding Philip III—yet Lope’s example also contains a subtle appeal for good government during a time in which the political landscape was changing. For more on Lope’s sonnet, see Alexander McNair’s study, “Lope de Vega’s ‘Alcides nuevo’ and Satan’s Sect: A Case for Local Readings.”

<sup>4</sup>This is not the only sonnet in which Quevedo pays homage to the Duque de Osuna and constructs an image of an unrewarded hero. One later revision, written from the perspective of the headstone, reads as follows: “Memoria soy del más glorioso pecho / que España en su defensa vio triunfante; / en mí podrás, amigo caminante, / un rato descansar del largo trecho. // Lágrimas de soldados han deshecho / en mí las resistencias de diamante; / yo cierro al que el ocaso y el levante / a su victoria dio círculo estrecho. // Estas armas, viudas de su dueño, / que visten de funesta valentía / este, si humilde,

venturoso leño, // del grande Osuna son; él las vestía, / hasta que, apresurado el postrer sueño, / le ennegreció con noche el blanco día." (I: 445-446) Additionally, another sonnet treats the same military victories achieved by Osuna and his eventual demise—a "quiebro típicamente barroco" (Jauralde Pou 487), as death defeats Osuna: "De la Asia fue terror, de Europa espanto, / y de la África rayo fulminante; / los golfos y los puertos de Levante / con sangre calentó, creció con llanto. // Su nombre solo fue vitoria en cuanto / reina la luna en el mayor turbante; / pacificó motines en Brabante: / que su grandeza sola pudo tanto. // Divorcio fue del mar y de Venecia, / su desposorio dirimiendo el peso / de naves, que temblaron Chipre y Grecia. // ¡Y a tanto vencedor venció un proceso! / De su desdicha su valor se precia: / ¡murió en prisión, y muerto estuvo preso!" (I: 444) What emerges from these sonnets is a certain measure of contempt for bureaucracy as a phenomenon which stands in contrast to the far simpler nationalist values of Spaniards as honorable and valiant in battle, without openly questioning the governing bodies commanding them to fight.

<sup>5</sup>The reasons for Osuna's imprisonment remain somewhat unclear. Ludwig Pfandl characterized them as "ciertas irregularidades cometidas en el gobierno del Virreinato de Nápoles." (59) Pfandl's study is helpful in illuminating Philip IV's reign and especially the many arbitrary decisions he had made, including handling Osuna's case (59-61). For more on Quevedo's interactions with Osuna and international affairs, above all in Italy, see Rocamora 9-15 as well as Martínez Torrón.

<sup>6</sup>There are also numerous other instances in which the Goths are not seen in such a positive light, where the term "godo" is used pejoratively; see Lida 267n.

<sup>7</sup>Many scholars have noted Spain's national self-construction as rooted in conquest, both within and outside of the Peninsula. This overlapped greatly with honor and pride, both individual and collective, and was naturally a theme exploited by other Golden Age authors as well; see Defourneaux 32.

<sup>8</sup>Seneca's words, in the original Latin and with their Spanish translation as originally noted by Quevedo's publisher Josef González de Salas, are as follows: "Quod unus populus eripuerit omnibus, facilius uni ab omnibus eribi posse. (Lo que una sola nación arrebató a todas, más fácilmente puede ser arrebatado por las restantes naciones a ésa sola." (Oliver 54n) Simply put, Quevedo uses ancient wisdom in the service of contemporary national realities (Alonso and Laín Entralgo 594).

<sup>9</sup>James O. Crosby explains the significance of Toledo's life and work with respect to the regime of Philip IV under Olivares's stewardship in his anthology of Quevedo (1987: 200n, 201n). So strong was Olivares's dislike of Toledo that he was not even allowed the funerary honors normally given to so accomplished a military leader.

<sup>10</sup>Scholars have studied the growing limitations on expression as Olivares's regime progressed. Indeed, given Quevedo's temperament, such measures were bound to result in conflict: "The attempt by the Olivares regime to safeguard itself by exercising a tight control over public opinion could hardly fail in the long run to antagonize a man like Quevedo, who had neither the inclination nor the ability to curb his tongue." (Elliott 204)



<sup>11</sup>Scholars have not entirely agreed upon the actual date at which this poem was composed. Christopher Maurer cites 1625 as the year around which it had been written (94), in part based on previous research conducted by José Manuel Bleuca, who had cited 1624 as a possible initial date of composition and 1625 as a likely, though not definite, year of revision (“La <<Epístola satírica y censoria>>” 52). Bleuca also posits that a revision may not have come until after 1639, a fairly late date. In any event, Bleuca notes that the poem criticizes the situation in Spain generally between 1624 and 1626. Finally, the poem was eventually incorporated into the *Cancionero antequerano* between 1627 and 1628 by Ignacio de Toledo y Godoy, as Crosby has noted (1967: 168), making public Quevedo’s private correspondence with the Conde-Duque. This poem evinces a more critical attitude about national identity in a period which scholars years later have labeled a period of decadence.

<sup>12</sup>Some, however, have noted that Olivares was not alone among his European counterparts in terms of high ambition and heavy-handed governance; as Bennisar has observed, “no lo era más que la del cardenal Richelieu, su contemporáneo y rival.” (32)

<sup>13</sup>For a slightly different structuring, see Díaz Benítez and Díaz Armas 36. They indicate that this poem begins by leading the reader to discern a satirical intent before it melds elements of other genres, notably the moral, the burlesque, and the elegiac.

<sup>14</sup>Other scholars have, of course, studied Quevedo’s political intentions and beliefs. It is important to note as well that Quevedo’s political interactions were usually greater and broader than those of coetaneous authors. For further study, see Gutiérrez, “Quevedo desde la interacción: posibilidades ecdóticas y hermenéuticas;” and, for Quevedo’s relationships to aristocracy and government, see Marichal 149-162.

<sup>15</sup>This construction of national identity is not by itself an argument that the ancient past was necessarily *morally* superior. Rather, it should be considered an argument in favor of the willingness to live up to certain ideals and to avoid sliding into decay; see Maurer 94-95.

<sup>16</sup>For a more detailed study of Quevedo’s construction of Spain in the past, see Raimundo Lida, “Quevedo y su España antigua.”

<sup>17</sup>Interestingly, on other occasions, Quevedo admired Genoese bankers for their usefulness to Spanish efforts during the Thirty Years War, and attacked Britain and France for their commercial enterprises; see Maravall 70.

<sup>18</sup>For a thorough and nuanced understanding of other instances in which Quevedo had treated bullfighting and *juegos de cañas* in his poetry, particularly under Olivares, see Rafael Iglesias’ study, “Una posible nueva interpretación de los poemas de Quevedo de principios del Reinado de Felipe IV relativos a fiestas de toros y cañas.” Quevedo does not limit his criticism of these diversions to this one *epístola*, nor for that matter does he limit such treatment to his early relationship with the Conde-Duque. Iglesias’ study focuses on poetry written both during the early years of Philip IV’s regime and during the period of the late 1620’s, underscoring subtle differences in tone and in political content between the two periods. According to Iglesias, Quevedo’s poetry about these diversions would eventually show disenchantment and



skepticism regarding Spain's political situation. For a general survey of Quevedo's relationship to Olivares, see Elliott 189-209.

<sup>19</sup>Quevedo's ideas are in some ways not entirely original, and can be traced back to Antiquity, as Blecua observes in his anthology: "Todo el poema respira un anhelo de heroísmo nuevo, muy del barroco español, pero se enlaza perfectamente con las ideas de Juvenal y Persio sobre Roma y su decadencia." (1989: 24)

<sup>20</sup>Defourneaux also notes, however, that this had significant practical ramifications for the army, something which Quevedo does not openly treat in the poem but which he might well have easily observed, given his criticism of the superficial trappings of the military at the time: "This keen feeling of personal worth, however, of which the dress was only a reflection, made it difficult for the officers to exercise authority over the private soldiers." (205)

<sup>21</sup>It should be noted, however, that Olivares's attempts at reinvigorating Spain's armed forces, by trying to organize a standing army led by a broad cadre of nobles in the decade of the 1630's, eventually failed anyway (Sánchez Belén 295), after Quevedo wrote this *epístola* and after he fell out of favor with Olivares.

<sup>22</sup>These are not the only dualities in Quevedo's work, of course, though it has been suggested that Quevedo's apparent contradictions "quizás no sea[n] tanto el resultado de una dualidad irreconciliable como el anverso y el reverso de una sola actitud militante, comprometida, angustiosa e intrépida." (Ettinghausen, "La dualidad de Quevedo" 321) Such contradictions are best seen, therefore, as part of a larger and nuanced authorial whole.

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