

“¡QUÉ BIEN SABÉIS PERSUADIR!”: PETRARCH, DON JUAN, AND ANA CARO

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Don Leonardo, bastan ya
las lisonjas, que imagino
que el ruiseñor imitáis,
que no canta enamorado
de sus celos al compás,
porque siente o porque quiere,
sino por querer cantar. (Caro 1046-55)

I

In Part One of *Garcilaso de la Vega and the Italian Renaissance*, Daniel L. Heiple addresses a modern inclination to applaud Garcilaso's lyric for its sincerity. Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, Rafael Lapesa, Dámaso Alonso and others find that such poems as the *Egloga I* convey a sense of naturalness and truth, an impression encouraged by a "rhetoric of sincerity" and the conviction that the poetry refers to Garcilaso's love for Isabel Freire (1-9).

What Heiple calls "sincerity," Paul Julian Smith refers to as "presence" (see also Rivers, "Garcilaso de la Vega" 102). Smith has observed that we generally locate the verse of Luis de Góngora at the opposite pole from Garcilaso's in sincerity or presence, with Fernando de Herrera's lyric and theory occupying an inconsistently intermediate position. Herrera writes more often in favor of plain poetic speech than of ornamentation. An example is this criticism of apostrophe, "cuando revocamos y volvemos nuestra habla al ausente, aunque esté presente, torciéndola de su derecho y natural curso a otro alguno." However, at times Herrera sees the object as benefitting from the supplementation of persuasive language, as in his approval of repetition: "Usamos de ella en los grandes efectos, porque significa la perpetuidad de la representación."¹ Culminating the process of verbal complication advanced by Herrera, according to Smith, Góngora's "linguistic excess" draws attention away from the sentiment and toward the spectacle of the language itself, his love poetry paradoxically promoting a sense of personal absence or distance from the emotion. This effect is one of the reasons for the poet's contro-

verted reputation, among his contemporaries as well as more recent readers (Smith, 232, 238-39).

Smith asserts that while early modern theorists esteemed Garcilaso's transparency and his ability to stir emotions in the reader, it is the reader in a modern post-romantic setting who is so inclined to impute feeling in the other direction, to the poet, erring by imposing sentimental biography on the task of analysis.² It must be acknowledged, however, that the tradition of a biographical interpretation of European lyric boasts impeccably venerable bloodlines. Rivers ("*Garcilaso de la Vega*" 102) cites the Renaissance practice of reading pastoral characters as historical personages. Speculation about the writer's life also figures prominently in some early-modern approaches to the poems of the most important model for Renaissance love poetry, Francesco Petrarca. Many of his *Rime sparse* (Scattered Rhymes) detail or pretend to detail the psychological vicissitudes over time of the poet's unrequited love for Laura. The verses' first-person narrator languishes in a perpetual state of desire, pining for his mistress, who is beautiful yet inaccessible, cold and distant. The lover suffers from her cruelty. Often he describes Laura physically by comparing or equating her body and its parts with natural objects. For example, she is "whiter and colder than snow" ("più bianca et più fredda che neve," Song 30); her eyes are two suns (Sonnet 173); hair is gold (Sonnet 90); her fingers are "the color of five oriental pearls" ("di cinque perle oriental colore," Sonnet 199). Indeed, Robert Durling notes that sixteenth-century scholars "imagined a biographical basis for each poem" (4), and academics have always speculated over Laura's exact identity.

Still, there is little evidence—beyond Petrarch's writing itself—of Laura's existence. And even though he names Laura and refers to her in many poems, the verses are not really about *her*. They center on the poet's persona: on his emotional self, the effects of unrequited love on his own psyche, rather than on the ineffable object of desire. When Laura dies, he apostrophizes, "I go . . . not weeping for you but for my loss" ("di te piangendo no, ma de' miei danni," Sonnet 282). Thus, and as John Freccero points out, Petrarch's is "a poetry whose real subject matter is its own act and whose creation is its own author" (44).

In this sense, Petrarch's (narrator's) intense self-analysis in the poetry creates such a powerful impression of personal experience that it helps pave the way for reading love lyric—correctly or not—as biography. It has also not incidentally been considered to help usher in the era of modern subjectivity.³ Moreover, Petrarch's anxiety of influence, his sense of cultural belatedness with respect to classical Greek and Roman culture,⁴ is seen to be replicated in reactions to his own work by later generations, so that European love lyric after Petrarch (whether we call it "sincere" or "excessive") aims not ultimately to persuade a distant lady

to yield, but rather to show that the poet can match and supersede his very real literary models and rivals (see Bloom). In other words, to engage other male writers and readers in homosocial communion, competition, and the discourses of nationalistic pride.

To students of Spanish Renaissance and Baroque lyric, the rhetorical strategies and psychological subject position of the Petrarchan poet/lover are familiar, if style and content in Garcilaso, Lope, Góngora, Quevedo, *et al.* evolve in different and often prodigious ways (influenced by *cancionero* and other native genres). Anne J. Cruz, Ignacio Navarrete, and Heiple, among others, have examined the shadow that Petrarch cast on Golden Age poets, the enormous impact of the model whom each writer in his own way strove to emulate and surpass.

Turning to female-authored poetry we find that women writers faced special challenges. Because the "founding fiction" of the Petrarchan "narrative" (see R. Greene, Ch. 1) presupposes a male subject and a female object, the female poet in early modern Spain and Europe, like the female writer in other genres, had to negotiate a subject-position in a field already well laden with anxieties of influence. "The amorous discourses available to [women] (Roman elegy, pastoral, Neoplatonism, Petrarchism)," notes Ann Rosalind Jones, "had been constructed by male writers, who represented women as the silent objects of love rather than its active, articulate pursuers" (*Currency* 1). Claudine Hermann states that female writers were perceived as "thieves of language," for daring to tread on forbidden turf.⁵ In general, the small number of women educated beyond the domestic arts had to confront the interdiction against their venture into the public sphere, including public expression. An honorable woman was to be silent and shun fame.

Despite such cultural attitudes, under certain social and economic conditions, a number of women in France and Italy were able to write and publish sometimes explicit love poetry. That of the Lyonnaise Louise Labé and the Venetian Veronica Franco is quite bold in erotic content. Labé describes a man's "handsome eyes, brown eyes" ("beaus yeus bruns," Sonnet 2), "fair head" ("blond chef," Sonnet 10), and openly expresses a desire for consummation (Sonnet 13; see Jones, *Currency* 166-67). Labé was both welcomed into local literary circles and ostracized with public insults. In Venice Veronica Franco could produce graphically sexual verse because she was an elite courtesan, belonging to a class in which erudition was prized, although she, too, was censured for her outspokenness.⁶ During the High Renaissance, respectable ladies like Vittoria Colonna and Veronica Gàmbara "addressed pious love lyrics to their dead husbands," and developed other distinctive variations on Petrarchan love poetry (Emck 14a). In fact, Italian women writers across the social spectrum enjoyed the most literary autonomy in Europe. Numerous antholo-

gies of their poetry were published, beginning in 1559 with the tellingly titled *Rime diverse d'alcune nobilissime et virtuossissime donne*, edited by Ludovico Domenichi (Stortoni xvi).

If Italian women writers had greater freedom, Spanish had less. Julián Olivares and Elizabeth Boyce describe in the substantial introduction to their anthology of Golden Age women's poetry, *Tras el espejo la musa escribe*, some of the strategies developed by the female writers of verse within early modern Spanish culture's particular constraints, which were more onerous than elsewhere in Europe. A Spanish woman who wrote for fame "pregonaba su deshonorra y desvergüenza" (7). Additionally, male writers of love lyric, who regularly availed themselves of physical description of the beloved, often were also less than subtle about expressing a wish for consummation. In Spain, for a woman to take such a "masculine" subject-position when writing amorous verse about a man would have been unthinkable. Secular female poets eschewed sensuality, almost never referring to men's body parts.⁷ "Con referencia a la poesía amorosa," Olivares and Boyce write, "las expresiones masculinas de deseo erótico se leían retóricamente; las de una mujer se arriesgaban a una lectura al pie de la letra" (7). That is, while early modern men's verse was ordinarily read as an exercise employing a rhetoric of presence but taken as devoid of autobiography, a different standard would have applied to women's amorous lyric. Had a Spanish female written openly erotic secular verse, a more "modern" way of reading (in Smith's formulation) would have perceived autobiography, inviting criticism of her character, as Labé was harassed in France. The expression of sensuality would imply previous experience of it.

Indeed, women who did write in the Golden Age were highly circumspect in their love poetry. Like the narrators of male-authored verse, female poets' voices often refer to their own feelings of sadness, jealousy, or hope in love (Olivares and Boyce 24), and as with the male narrative construct, narcissism may have played a part in the self-contemplation. But again, with the exception of religious mystical verse, which had its own vocabulary and experience of desire at times employing "gynocentric" imagery (Olivares "In Her Image"), Spanish women's writing almost never insinuated a female's wish for physical intimacy with a man.⁸ Focusing on her own emotional experience was certainly safer and more respectable than dwelling at any length on the object of desire, much less expressing admiration for a man's physical parts.

Olivares and Boyce observe that one of the rhetorical tactics of Spanish female love lyric was to adopt a male or indeterminately-gendered narrative voice, which helped authorize physical descriptions in praise of a female. They suggest that in some cases such a device may also have been a way for the poet to celebrate herself or show solidarity with other

women, as in doña Leonor de la Cueva y Silva's *octavas* about Narcisca (25-26; 125-27). In some poems, a woman comforts a sister or female friend experiencing difficulties in love, reassuring her of her worth with encomia of character and appearance, the Petrarchan rhetoric entirely stripped of an erotic subtext. The speaker's presence is a sympathetic companion rather than a desiring suitor.

II

In 1958, Bruce W. Wardropper advocated a return to the classical roots of drama criticism by considering the *comedia* as dramatic poetry, so that it "might be studied in much the same way as one studies lyric poetry" (3). Indeed, since the genre is composed in verse, Golden Age playwrights were by definition poets (many of whom are known today for their lyric as well as for dramaturgy). Furthermore, in Golden Age theater a romantic relationship is nearly always central. I would therefore like to propose that certain types of *comedias* dramatize Petrarchism, or at least operate in some ways analogous to Petrarchan love poetry. Elsewhere I have discussed the Calderonian honor drama as a literalization of the Petrarchan lover's figurative dismemberment of the love object.⁹ On this occasion I intend to touch upon several respects in which a female-authored *comedia*, Ana Caro's *Valor, agravio y mujer*, responds to the challenge of inheriting a male-centered dramatic discourse embedded with Petrarchan rhetoric and subjectivity. I suggest that Caro is fully aware of and concerned with manipulations of presence in poetic speech, and that *Valor* recognizes, indulges in, and deconstructs linguistic excesses of Golden Age Petrarchan verse and drama.

As a female poet writing a *comedia*, Ana Caro contended with the collected traditions and anxieties of her patriarchal forbears and contemporaries, as well as proscriptions against female self-expression—let alone in such a public medium as the theater. Nevertheless, we have evidence that Caro was accepted into Sevillian literary circles, and records show that she was paid for writing *autos sacramentales* for performance in that city.¹⁰ Lola Luna maintains that Caro's participation in the literary life of Seville would have been facilitated by the city's role as point of embarkation for the New World ("Ana Caro" 17), which, as Mary Elizabeth Perry shows, left early modern Seville, relatively speaking, "in the hands of women" (Ch. 1). Caro's fame extended also to Madrid, and recently Mercedes Maroto Camino has argued that the fact of her close friendship with María de Zayas may have opened up a space for both of them in male-dominated literary spheres. Additionally, as "Tenth Muses," they were like "oddities who did not belong to either of the two known genders; they were 'neutral things' which thus inhabited an indeterminate,

'neutral domain' as women and poets" (13).¹¹ Marginalized figures whose talents and solidarity with each other defied binarism, they were able to enjoy an anomalous freedom of public self-expression. Although we know very little else about Caro's personal circumstances,¹² her work itself offers some interesting commentary on the role of the female writer in a culture that typically strove to contain such efforts by women.

Just as the techniques and tactics of Renaissance love lyric can be found in male-authored *comedias*, they also inform Caro's *Valor, agravio y mujer*, written probably in the 1630s or 1640s. Luna, who published the first modern critical edition of the play, details many instances of its intertextuality, its debts to Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Góngora, Juan de Salinas, and Calderón ("Introducción," 10, 14, 23). Most specifically, Luna notes *Valor's* direct dialogue with *El burlador de Sevilla*—published in the 1620s—in terms of both plot and style of discourse (16-17), which are of their epoch in baroque ingenuity and linguistic complexity. The female protagonist's wayward love interest is a don Juan, and Luna cites several passages that specifically respond to Tirso's play.¹³

The don Juan in *El burlador* is a master at using the rhetoric of sincerity against his victims, both female and male. The character's promises (to wed) consistently exceed his intentions (to seduce), and his attempts to distance himself from his own identity by withholding his name or impersonating another further vacate the words of "natural" expression (see Mandrell 60, 74). Don Juan speaks the Petrarchan language of persuasion; he praises, for example, Aminta's fingers, which, encircled by rings, seem like "transparentes perlas finas" (3:296); he swears "a esta mano, señora, / infierno de nieve fría" (3:273-74), that he will keep his word to marry her. His victims make the mistake of believing in a presence behind the words, or "reading" don Juan post-romantically. As the meta-textual readers or spectators, we are privileged to behold the scaffolding of the linguistic edifice, the "poet" at work behind the scenes as he designs, erects, and refines his strategies of erotic persuasion (Mandrell, 64-67), and we know not to believe in don Juan's empty suits.

In the first scene of the play the trickster masquerades as the duque Octavio, who for much of the drama must bear the guilt for the protagonist's seduction of the duquesa Isabela. She has been so anxious to marry that she has made a bargain with the faux Octavio, acceding to the seduction in exchange for a promise of marriage. Until this point, the Duke has been the classic courtly lover forever deferring satisfaction; he deifies the beloved and relishes the exquisite hardship of continence.¹⁴ Ripio suggests that since Octavio and Isabel love each other, "¿hay más dificultad / de que luego os desposéis?" (1:229-30), to which his master disdainfully replies, "Eso fuera, necio, a ser / de lacayo o lavandera / la boda" (1:231-33). Unlike don Juan, however, Octavio is persuaded by his

own propaganda. This poet/lover, like don Juan's female victims and like some modern readers of Garcilaso, believes in a sincere biographical presence behind his own words. He considers his sentiments too lofty to be fouled with talk of marriage. In effect, Octavio seduces himself and leaves no room in the boudoir for Isabel. His lack of authorial distance (or irony) from his Petrarchism creates the conditions—frustrating Isabel—for don Juan to usurp the Duke's voice and insert himself temporarily into the relationship. Don Juan's pleasure terminates Octavio's otherwise endlessly pleasurable reverie of Petrarchan travail, and the *burlador's* escape leaves Octavio to pay the consequences in don Juan's place.

If the Duke and don Juan in their own ways seek to perform masculine fantasies by infinitely perpetuating or renewing desire, the play sets up a common fisherwoman, Tisbea, to caricature the cruel lady of Petrarchan verse. "De cuantos pescadores," she boasts,

desprecio soy, [y] encanto;
a sus suspiros, sorda;
a sus ruegos, terrible;
a sus promesas, roca. (1:427, 431-34)

Tisbea, whose "manos de nieve fría" Catalinón remarks (1:564), is adored by all men, yet "todo no me importa, / porque en tirano imperio / vivo, de amor señora" (1:454-56). The humble and devoted Anfriso, who dedicates songs to her (1:451-53), is an avatar of Petrarch's poet/lover. However, not only is Tisbea stone to his verses; she takes pleasure in causing him, finest and most "gallardo" of the fishermen, pain:

. . . hallo gusto en sus penas
y en sus infiernos gloria.
Todas por él se mueren,
y yo, todas las horas,
le mato con desdenes (. . .)
[E]n tan alegre día
segura de lisonjas,
mis juveniles años
amor no los malogra (1:457-61, 467-70)

The *esquiva's* exaggerated pride (see McKendrick, esp. 158-59), emotional sadism, and social dereliction (by excepting herself from patriarchal demands on young women to marry), shape her into the perfect target for a masculine revenge fantasy. By the end of her encounter with don Juan, the haughty object of desire has been disgraced. And like the other female dupes of don Juan's rhetoric, Tisbea eschews silence, com-

pulsively and improbably publishing her own dishonor. She emerges from her cabin crying out to the entire community for his capture, but still thoughtful enough to acknowledge the aptness of this turn of events:

¡Fuego, fuego, que me quemó,
que mi cabaña se abrasa! [...]
Yo soy la que hacía siempre
de los hombres burla tanta;
que siempre las que hacen burla,
vienen a quedar burladas.
Engañóme el caballero
debajo de fe y palabra
de marido, y profanó
mi honestidad y mi cama.
Gozóme al fin, y yo propia
le di a su rigor las alas
en dos yeguas que crié,
con que me burló y se escapa.
Seguidle todos, seguidle. (1:985-86, 1013-1025)

The female has been transformed from a hyperbolically threatening and controlling pseudo-subject, into a voice of self-condemnation. The excess in the rhetoric of female power before don Juan's arrival—at the expense of authenticity or "presence"—is counterbalanced by the equally excessive verbal self-flagellation afterward. The result is poetic justice and show-stopping exuberance, as Tisbea, having narrated her tale of misreading don Juan, finally rushes off to throw herself into the sea. The energy and decibel-level of Tisbea's despair constitute a paeon to don Juan's persuasive power and propel attention forward toward the next seduction and the eventual spectacular retribution for (and celebration of) the protagonist's exploits. Ultimately, Mandrell posits, don Juan personifies Eros: he is a Cupid who elicits and exploits the accumulation of errors of the other characters. As both the fall guy and the agent of patriarchy, don Juan constitutes "the means by which Tirso's all too human souls are led to a sacramental union" (82).

III

If Tirso's play presents a series of interlocked masculine fantasies concluded by the adulatory scapegoating of the quintessential seducer, Ana Caro's *Valor, agravio y mujer* responds with its own gendered, wish-fulfillment fantasy. This *comedia* takes up the terms and conditions presented by a genre so infused with Petrarchism, in order to expose and manipulate its rhetoric of presence. In the process, it refers repeatedly to *El burlador de Sevilla*. It is also highly self-conscious, from comparisons of

the action to a Cervantine interlude (ll. 131-36) and a *comedia* (561-63), to a conversation between two male *graciosos* about the novelty of female playwrights in Madrid:

RIBETE	Ya es todo muy viejo allá; sólo en esto de poetas hay notable novedad por innumerables, tanto, que aun quieren poetizar las mujeres, y se atreven a hacer comedias ya.
TOMILLO	¡Válgame Dios! Pues ¿no fuera mejor coser e hilar? ¿Mujeres poetas?

Ribete's slightly garbled reply places this development into a larger historical, religious, and European context, legitimizing his own author's endeavor:

RIBETE	Sí; mas no es nuevo, pues están Argentaria, Sofoareta, Blesilla, ¹⁵ y más de un millar de modernas, que hoy a Italia lustre soberano dan, disculpando la osadía de su nueva vanidad. (1164-80)
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In Italy, modern women writers are a credit to their land. The brilliance of their work contributes to the nation-building project, which provides ample justification for their daring to write.

For her part, Ana Caro writes a don Juan who has survived and escaped the consequences of his many seductions. At the beginning of *Valor, agravio y mujer*, don Juan de Córdoba has deceived doña Leonor in Seville and withdrawn to Flanders. Upon his arrival, in a stormy baroque setting (see Maroto 9-10), the seducer rescues two women from rapists, then sets his lover's sights on one of them, the Countess Estela. Soon after, doña Leonor appears in masculine disguise; in the words of Ribete, who is her lackey and a party to the deception, she could be "el Dios de amor" (466). As is typical in *comedias* with cross-dressing women, her goal is either to marry or to kill the man who had falsely promised his hand to her. All action now repairs to the court,¹⁶ where in a series of complex impersonations and other deceptions, doña Leonor (here known as "don Leonardo") becomes don Juan's rival, pretending to pursue Estela. Leonor/Leonardo is so adept at acting the adoring, suffering lover, that

"his" smooth talk trumps don Juan's heroism: the new impersonator succeeds in displacing don Juan in Estela's affections. "Don Leonardo" is the in-trickster, and by the end of the play the original one has been reduced to utter confusion: Caro's riff on the *comedia's* popular device of the *mujer vestida de hombre* turns into a shell game of disguises. Leonor not only conceives the new character; she incites Prince Ludovico to impersonate this character in the dark, and herself plays Estela to don Juan. The hectic invention and theft of identities constantly destabilizes and shifts—among characters and across genders—the locus of the amorous declaration. Leonor's tactics cause don Juan unwittingly to inform Estela of his past betrayal of the Sevillian lady. Eventually, he is made to condemn himself for his mistreatment of doña Leonor (2219-20);¹⁷ concedes to himself that he is conquered by love for her (2257-58);¹⁸ is so anguished that he wants to die (2482-83; 2512-2516; 2525-26); and is too ashamed to face Leonor's brother (2644-45).¹⁹ In the end, don Juan's past betrayal and doña Leonor's true identity are publicly disclosed. The manipulator of language par excellence is now virtually speechless: in the final 58 lines of the play, four marriages are arranged and eighteen exclamations and other utterances are shared among eight characters. To Leonor belongs the lion's share of this dialogue, and don Juan emits only a stunned "Te adoraré" (2725).

The *graciosos* are heavily implicated in these developments. When don Juan's "pícarón" (2392) Tomillo acquires a purse of *escudos* for informing on his master, Estela's wily servant Flora drugs and robs him. In the final flurry of engagements, only Tomillo, Flora, and Ribete remain without partners. "Flora," Ribete suggests,

tú quedas para los dos
y entrambos te dejaremos
para que te coman lobos,
borrico de muchos dueños (2740, 2742-45)

Tomillo and Ribete will share Flora and then cast her off to the wolves. However, once the Condesa offers Flora a handsome dowry, doña Leonor's man quickly agrees to marry the *pícaro*, leaving don Juan's with the empty shell: "Sólo yo todo lo pierdo; / Flora, bolsillo y escudos" (2751-52). The female servant's larceny of the male's assets brings her not correction but compounded prosperity.

Caro is clearly highly sensitized to and adept at maneuvering the standard plot conventions of the *comedia*. She also works to maximum advantage her novel position as female *poeta*; the play's attention to the singularity of female-authored verse and theater extends to astute interrogations of the rhetoric of presence so central to Petrarchan / male-authored poetic subjectivity. The style of noble characters' discourse, as

in many *comedias* of the epoch, is highly ornate, or "excessive." For example, in Act Two, "don Leonardo" is in a *tete-a-tete* with Estela, attempting to win the Condesa's heart away from don Juan. The bogus suitor at great length showers Estela, "deidad," with canonical Petrarchan flattery, although without the specific mention of body parts common in male-authored verse—except for "esos ojos" (963),²⁰

soles que imperiosamente
de luz ostentando están
entre rayos y entre flechas,
bonanza y serenidad,
en el engaño, dulzura,
extrañeza en la beldad,
valentía en el donaire
y donaire en el mirar. (965-72)

Leonardo proceeds to complain about the cruelty in the lady's eyes, and to describe his own humility and suffering (997-1012), followed by further flattery couched in the contradictory terms so characteristic of the Petrarchan love lyric.²¹ Finally he petitions to court her.

Interestingly, Caro supplements this scene of feigned sincerity, in which one female woos another, with a male witness and commentator. Leonor's servant draws the audience's attention to the skill of the rhetoric, his appraisal all the more authoritative because of his gender. Ribete exclaims in an admiring aside,

... ¡Qué difícil asonante
buscó Leonor! No hizo mal;
déle versos en agudo,
pues que no le puede dar
otros agudos en prosa. (1041-45)

In this metacritical intrusion, the (implied) author—speaking through a male character—momentarily eclipses her cross-dressed heroine's attempt falsely to seduce: Caro directs the focus away from the "sentiment" (and the machinations that produce it), nudging us to admire the spectacle of the language itself, and the skill of the poet. She exposes the female poet/lover/playwright in competition with her very real literary models and rivals, on and in their own terms.

Estela—like many a sought-after female in the Golden Age *comedia*—seems at first no easy prey to Leonardo's persuasion. However, this beloved's doubts are framed in a statement recognizing the rhetoric of presence in amorous verse:

Don Leonardo, bastan ya
 las lisonjas, que imagino
 que el ruiseñor imitáis,
 que no canta enamorado
 de sus celos al compás,
 porque siente o porque quiere,
 sino por querer cantar. (1046-55)

That is, the Condesa imagines that the poet sings not for love, but for esthetic gratification. As Menéndez y Pelayo complained that Góngora's verse lacks "interiority" (Smith 239), so Estela asserts that her suitor's rhetoric is hollow. Leonardo nevertheless continues to heap *asonantes* on the object of desire. "He" appreciates Estela's nightingale analogy and takes it up both further to flatter her (in Petrarchan terms) and to justify his song:

... no
 habéis comparado mal
 al canto del ruiseñor
 de mi afecto la verdad,
 pues si dulcemente grave
 sobre el jazmín o rosal
 hace facistol, adonde
 suele contrapuntear
 bienvenidas a la aurora,
 aurora sois celestial,
 dos soles son vuestros ojos,
 un cielo es vuestra beldad.

"¿Qué mucho que el ruiseñor / amante quiera engañar," he concludes, "en la gloria de miraros, / de no veros el penar?" (1057-72). This nightingale will beguile the pain he feels during the beloved's absence by monumentalizing her presence. His words will supplement the object, ensuring its duration into the future.²² Estela is so taken with the lover's linguistic mastery that she finally invites him to come see her this night through the garden gate, exclaiming, "¡Qué bien sabéis persuadir!" (1073).

And why indeed should not doña Leonor have mastered the art of persuasion, considering who her tutor has been? Here, the play tacitly acknowledges the heroine's rhetorical debt to don Juan. She has employed the seducer's tactic in the service of her immediate aim, that is, false seduction, a persuasion without any intention or possibility of complying with implied obligations. Therefore, this "¡Qué bien sabéis persuadir!" acknowledges that doña Leonor has learned to use language effectively, from the agent of patriarchy—just as her author has learned to use language from the various patriarchs of the *comedia* and of amorous verse,

going all the way back to Petrarch. Considering the extra-textual circumstances of *Valor's* creation that can be deduced not from the little we know about the writer's particular biography, but from the fact that Caro is a female participating in an activity traditionally defined as masculine—writing—and writing in genres conceived with gender-specific roles—that is, love poetry and the *comedia*—her characters' admiring declarations about doña Leonor's linguistic facility must be placed in the category of self-reference. In this passage, throughout the scene, and throughout the play, the dramatist transforms anxieties of authorship into persistent clever auto-referentiality, capitalizing on her own tricky position as female dramatist. Her own characters monumentalize Ana Caro: the splendor of her verses are a credit to Spain, justifying "la osadía / de su nueva vanidad."

Elizabeth Ordóñez has observed apropos of doña Leonor that, in her control of characters, the protagonist can be regarded as an analogue for the playwright (10-11). Doña Leonor engages in extreme manipulations of the others, so that by the end, her climactic revelation of her true gender—"he" steps off-stage and returns in a gown, as her true self—trips a series of rapid-fire confessions of devotion and promises of marriage. And finally, in the dramatic epilogue, the composer of the *comedia* reveals the punch line of the inside joke that, like don Leonardo's true identity, the audience has been in on from the beginning. Here, *senado discreto*, the play concludes: "Pídeos su dueño, / por mujer y por humilde, / que perdonéis sus defectos" (2755-57). Just as surely as doña Leonor commandeers the other characters' autonomy (and Flora swipes Tomillo's gold coins), Ana Caro is herself a "thief of language," the currency of Eros. She excels in the patriarchal forum of public self-expression, attiring herself in the prerogatives normally reserved for male writers, in order (among other things) to examine uses of rhetoric in literature about male-female relationships. Furthermore, she retaliates for her gender's exclusion from the arts by causing her female characters to prevail over the males in tactics and language, and analogously, situating her *comedia* and love poetry against those of any predecessors. After achieving these ends, *por mujer y por humilde*, she begs their pardon.

Among other things, then, this work is about recovery, validation, and appropriation. The protagonist recovers her honor, while the play employs what one might call an "autoreflexive dramatic poetics"²³ to validate a female as playwright. Finally, *Valor, agravio y mujer* fashions for itself a linguistic mission: to wrest the laurel of rhetorical virtuosity from the consummate seducer, and award it to the woman he had forsaken to the ravenous wolves of social censure. The play fantasizes the apprentice using her new tool to surpass the master, forcing him into shame and silence, in the end truly and not just rhetorically to adore her. And Ana

Caro likewise, together with her protagonist making their way into the masculine territory of subjectivity, using the very implements of patriarchy to surge past their models, simultaneously exposing and exploiting the rhetoric of presence.

Notes

¹H-32 (299) and H-618 (512) respectively, from *Comentarios de Herrera*, quoted in Smith 235.

²[M]odern critics have failed to recognize this rhetoric of presence and thus consistently misread the poems in which it is embodied" (225). For a recent model of the use of biography in interpretation, see Rivers, "Garcilaso's Poetry."

³See Thomas M. Greene, Heather Dubrow, and Ignacio Navarrete, among others.

⁴Not to mention with respect to Dante; see Vickers, "Re-membering Dante," and Ascoli.

⁵In *Les Voleuses de langue* (Paris: des femmes, 1976); quoted by Jones, *Currency*, 6.

⁶Jones, "City Women," 312; see also Stortoni. *El condenado por desconfiado* (attributed to Tirso) portrays a degraded version of the Italian courtesan / poet in the figure of the Enrico's girlfriend, Celia. Two men come to her asking for poetry to send their mistresses. She fancies herself so prodigious that she resolves to outdo Ovid by writing three poems simultaneously: "[H]aré agora más que él hizo. / A un tiempo se han de escribir / vuestros papeles y el mío" (ll. 467-69).

⁷Olivares ("In Her Image" 120) shows that, on the other hand, in the religious mystical tradition female poets write in strikingly sensual terms, as in Sor Marcela de San Félix's apostrophe to Christ on the Cross: "De tus hermosos labios, / del coral dulce afrenta, / su cárdeno color / me muestran las violetas."

⁸An exception is María de Zayas's *Madrigal XIV*, which describes an encounter between Jacinto and Isbella, observed by the jealous *pastora* Matilde as the lovers embrace each other and kiss. However, as Olivares and Boyce note (29-30), when Matilde awakens, she realizes that it has all been a dream. The poem appears in *La burlada Aminta* in the *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, and is reprinted in Olivares and Boyce 235-38.

⁹Fox, "¡Notable sujeto!". For seminal treatments of the Petrarchan fragmentation of the love object, see Freccero, 52-53, and Nancy J. Vickers, "Diana Described."

¹⁰We do not know whether her two extant *comedias* (the other is *El conde de Partinuplés*) were performed in public theaters. See Luna, "Ana Caro" 15-17.

¹¹Maroto Camino here uses as a point of departure Stephanie Jed's essay on "The Tenth Muse."

¹²"Su figura aparece como un fantasma oculto en la historia documental: no conocemos datos familiares, estamento, educación, estado... Ella, como los personajes femeninos de sus comedias, bajo el disfraz de mujer varonil o como amante secreta y nocturna, parece existir sólo en la escritura, velando su identidad bajo los textos" (Luna, "Introducción," 12).

¹³Caro, ll. 117, 1146, 1894ff, and 1982-86.

¹⁴He sighs to his servant Ripio: "Pensamientos de Isabela / me tienen, amigo, en calma [desesperación], / que como vive en el alma / anda el cuerpo siempre en

pena, / guardando ausente y presente / el castillo del honor" (1:203-08).

¹⁵In notes to her critical edition (pp. 115-16) Lola Luna identifies these figures: Argentaria was the learned wife of Lucan; "Sofaoreta" is "Safo" contaminated by "Areteia de Cirene" (the latter a Grecian woman who founded a philosophical school). Blesilla and other Roman women studied the Bible under the tutelage of St. Jerome.

¹⁶"The progression of *Valor* from the outdoor, threatening landscape dominated by masculine imagery to the domestic setting of the court corresponds to the transition from aggression to female agency" (Maroto Camino 10).

¹⁷"[Y]o solo el culpado he sido, / yo la dejé, yo fui ingrato," he admits in an aside.

¹⁸"[Y]a la adoro, ya me rindo / al rapaz arquero alado."

¹⁹But see Soufas (100-01), who finds the play less than sanguine with respect to the treatment of women, since finally there is no evidence that the males are permanently transformed in any way, and the protagonist settles for marriage to her seducer.

²⁰However, Amy Williamsen (25-26) points out that the servants, including Flora, make several oblique references to masculine anatomy.

²¹"Discreta como hermosa, / a un mismo tiempo ostentáis / en el agrado aspereza, / halago en la gravedad, / en los desvíos cordura, / entereza en la beldad, / en el ofender disculpa / pues tenéis para matar / altiveces de hermosura / con secretos de deidad" (1013-22)

²²See Smith's comments on Herrera's theoretical support for repetition in poetic language (235).

²³I appropriate this term from Freccero's analysis of Petrarch's "autoreflexive poetics" (51).

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