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EMOTION, SATIRE, AND A SENSE OF PLACE: TWO SPANISH RIVERS IN LOPE DE VEGA'S SONNETS

MARK J. MASCIA

IN the criticism on the poetry of Lope de Vega (1562-1635), relatively little formal study exists on the use of certain topographical elements found frequently in his work. Whereas scholarship has tended to focus on themes such as love, absence, and spirituality, especially with respect to his sonnets, less attention has been given to related geographical elements which are often intertwined with some of these same themes. One such element is Lope's use of rivers. The purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which Lope makes use of certain Spanish rivers throughout two very divergent periods in his sonnet writing, and to show the development of how he uses these same rivers with respect to his overall sonnet development.

This study will focus on two rivers: the Betis, or Guadalquivir, River in Seville, and the Manzanares River, running through Madrid. The two poetry collections from which this study will draw its examples are the *Rimas humanas* (1602) and the *Rimas humanas y divinas del licenciado Tomé de Burguillos* (1634). While an exhaustive study of Lope's use of rivers (either in Spain or elsewhere in the world) would be impossible for the length of this study, these two rivers were chosen for their significance in Spain and, in particular, in Lope's sonnets throughout approximately the last thirty years of his life. While the Guadalquivir is often seen as an icon of splendor and magnificence, the Manzanares receives a much more nuanced treatment. To some extent it is idealized, yet it more often than not receives a parodic treatment, especially as Lope ages and matures into the sonnet writer known to the public as Burguillos. More importantly, in Lope's earlier sonnets of the *Rimas*, these rivers are used as loci for genuine emotional discharge,

often laden with Petrarchist conventions and focused primarily on love. However, with the *Burguillos* collection, rivers are seen as a vehicle for creating satire and to some extent for deconstructing earlier models of emotional representation. In sum, whereas these two rivers are to be taken more seriously by an earlier Lope compelled to make public his emotions, the later Lope consciously uses them to engage in more ludic poetic discourse.

Before entering into an analysis of the specific sonnets of this study, it is necessary to provide some background for Lope's poetic development between the *Rimas* and the *Burguillos* collection. In the *Rimas*, the reader is able to note a conscious attempt at assimilating Petrarchist conventions as Lope crafts his two hundred sonnets. The Baroque was only beginning to take shape and Lope's contemporaries, along with him, held onto the older Renaissance conventions of courtly love. The *Rimas* collection shows the voice of a poet whose soul is captivated by a woman who does not always return his affection; very frequently, this female character is simply named Lucinda, understood by most scholars to represent one of Lope's lovers, Micaela de Luján. However, by the time Lope published the *Burguillos* collection, he had matured from a follower of Petrarchan conventions to a far more satirical poet, bent in large part on deconstructing these same conventions. Baroque literature itself had seen considerable development in Spain as well, as Lope now had to confront what he perceived as the excesses of *culteranismo*. The alter ego of *Burguillos* enabled Lope to scorn and parody both *culterano* and Petrarchist conventions with impunity. Coupled with his literary success and rivalries is the simple fact that by this time, Lope simply endured more trials in life, including marriages, affairs, and problems with patronage. Therefore, by the time Lope published the *Burguillos* collection, a vein of satire and parodying past work became well-developed. This allows the treatment of these already different rivers to stand in contrast.

Sonnet 8 of the *Rimas* (27) exemplifies Lope's idealization of the river as a locus of emotional discharge. In this instance, it is not the Guadalquivir which is idealized but rather the Manzanares. For Lope, his city's river provides the perfect locale for modeling himself according to Petrarchan conventions and for idealizing a woman at the same time:

De hoy más las crespas sienes de olorosa
 verbena y mirto coronarte puedes,
 juncoso Manzanares, pues excedes
 del Tajo la corriente caudalosa.

Lucinda en ti bañó su planta hermosa;
 bien es que su dorado nombre heredes,
 y que con perlas por arenas quedas,
 mereciendo besar su nieve y rosa.

Y yo envidiar pudiera tu fortuna,
 mas he llorado en ti lágrimas tantas
 (tú, buen testigo de mi amargo lloro),
 que mezclada en tus aguas pudo alguna
 de Lucinda tocar las tiernas plantas,
 y convertirse en tus arenas de oro. (1-14)

In addressing the Manzanares River directly, Lope creates an idealized image of female beauty along with that of the river. Such an idealization of a river like this, of course, owes itself to Petrarchan conventions. This normally commonplace river even exceeds the Tajo in the volume of its current, through Lope's creation of this pastoral *locus amoenus*. What ennobles an already idealized Manzanares, however, is Lucinda's presence and physical imprinting, as she sets her foot in it.¹ The Manzanares becomes even more glorified as it inherits her "dorado nombre" (6), and as its sandy shores are characterized with the hyperbole of "perlas" (7). Lucinda, for her part, is accorded the normal treatment of Petrarchan objectification, with her white skin and red lips.

Lope shifts his focus with the first tercet by inserting his voice and its feeling, melding it with the association of Lucinda and the Manzanares. While his poetic persona envies the river for having made physical contact with his love, his emotional state leads him to break down and cry bitterly into the river's waters. The Manzanares becomes a witness to his outpouring of sadness at Lucinda's absence.² This persona

¹ Felipe B. Pedraza Jiménez notes that this line closely resembles a line from an earlier poem in which Lope refers to "Filis," believed to be an earlier lover, Elena Osorio. Lope had taken great pains to erase all references to Filis in the *Rimas*, and with the examples cited it appears as though Lope often substituted her name with that of Lucinda (99).

² Francisco Rodríguez Marín believes that this particular sonnet corresponds to a period in time in which Lucinda, or Micaela de Luján, gradually loosened her resistance to Lope without completely giving herself up to him: "es de advertir que Lucinda, bien por estudio, o bien por natural pudor, no correspondió ostensible y francamente al afecto

can only hope that even just one teardrop shed from his eyes may one day reach Lucinda herself and touch her perfect feet. With Lucinda once more, the shoreline of the Manzanares is again idealized as its sands may become “oro” (14). Clearly, Lope uses this normally humble river as a locus of enunciation for idealized love, and in so doing he idealizes not only the woman he adores but also the river itself.

Similarly, sonnet 12 (29) of the *Rimas* offers an idealized association of Lucinda and a river, though this time it is the Guadalquivir, or Betis. In this poem, the reader can see what normally is not associated with the Manzanares: not only is Lucinda’s radiance evident, but also so are the glory and importance which the Guadalquivir brings to the nation.

Así en las olas de la mar feroces,
Betis, mil siglos tu cristal escondas,
y otra tanta ciudad sobre tus ondas
de mil navales edificios goces;
 así tus cuevas no interrumpen voces,
ni quillas toquen, ni permitan sondas,
y en tus campos tan fértil correspondas,
que rompa el trigo las agudas hoces;
 así en tu arena el indio margen rinda,
y al avariento corazón descubras
más barras que en ti mira el cielo estrellas;
 que si pusiere en ti sus pies Lucinda,
no por besallos sus estampas cubras:
que estoy celoso, y voy leyendo en ellas. (1-14)

Much like the preceding example in which Lucinda’s beauty merged with the idealized Manzanares, this poem presents the Guadalquivir in a similar light. However, unlike the same Manzanares, the Guadalquivir captures a glory and significance like no other river in Spain, even as it serves the same emotional function for the poet. The first three stanzas all highlight the Guadalquivir’s greatness. Lope constructs an exaggerated model of civilization in treating the shores of the Betis as a city with “mil navales edificios” (4), along with an idealization of both the river and its

de su amante de buenas a primeras, sino que a pasos contados fué dejándose ablandar, poco a poco y día tras día, por sus ruegos, y aun por sus lágrimas. A aquel período de tiempo del pretender sin alcanzar corresponde [este] soneto” (7).

city, Seville, as eternal.³ The reader also notes the Guadalquivir's unique contribution to Spain as a route of commerce and wealth. With characteristic hyperbole, Lope notes how the river finds more "barras" (11) than there are stars in the heavens, a wealth made readily available to the "avariento corazón" (10) and a symbol of a "money economy in general and... New World money in particular" which Lope often scorned, as Walter Cohen has noted (273). However, the ultimate significance of the sonnet is not contained in these simple descriptions of the Guadalquivir; rather, it is in the final stanza where Lope reveals his true intention via his poetic persona, that of declaring his jealousy of this river since it, too, has made contact with Lucinda's feet. Like the Manzanares in the preceding sonnet, the Guadalquivir actually touches Lucinda, witnesses the emotional reaction of Lope's poetic voice, and provides an idealized space for Lope to write. Though the two rivers are by themselves quite distinct, they receive much the same treatment in these two sonnets.

The last poem from the *Rimas* to be examined is sonnet 183 (123). In this case, both the Manzanares and the Guadalquivir are present, and the distinctions between the two are readily visible. However, at the forefront once again are the emotions of this poetic voice, as the rivers provide a backdrop for them and as the voice addresses the waters directly:

Fugitivo cristal, el curso enfrena,
 en tanto que te cuento mis pesares;
 pero ¿cómo te digo que te pares,
 si lloro, y creces por la blanda arena?
 Ya de la sierra, que de nieves llena
 te da principio humilde Manzanares,
 por dar luz al que tienen tantos mares,
 mi sol hizo su ocaso en la Morena.
 Ya del Betis la orilla verde adorna
 en otro bosque de árboles desnudos,
 que en agua dan por fruto, plata en barras.
 Yo, triste, en tanto que a tu margen torna,
 de aquestos olmos, a mis quejas mudos,
 nidos deshago y desenlazo parras. (1-14)

³ Marcelin Defourneaux notes that Seville's striking and impressive appearance is included in other sources as well, specifically Lope's play *El Arenal de Sevilla*. The Strand appeared as a permanent marketplace, as the very shore of the Guadalquivir had to be used to loading and unloading goods due to insufficient warehouses to serve commercial functions (77).

Once more, Lope is using the space of these two rivers to discharge emotion, in this case both within the space of the same sonnet. The Manzanares, though “humilde” (6), is still accorded a sense of quiet dignity as the poet addresses it while recounting his unspecified “pesares” (2). While the quatrains focus on the Manzanares and, more broadly, Castile, the tercets shift that focus to the Guadalquivir and Andalucía. The Betis is an equally peaceful locale, which sees once more the grandeur of tall ships transporting valuables and wealth. Nevertheless, Lope’s poetic persona is sad and directs his emotions to the elms, although with some apparent frustration as he topples their bird nests and undoes vines. Naturally, Lope does not fully equate the Manzanares and the Guadalquivir, yet they serve the same function as generally idealized and tranquil locations for the display of feeling. Felipe B. Pedraza Jiménez contextualizes the use of both rivers in this sonnet, observing that it refers to a time in which Lope had often traveled between Madrid and Seville, and specifically to an occasion in which Micaela de Luján had left Madrid (and thus Lope, alone) for Seville (107). In sum, these river-centered sonnets from the *Rimas* allow Lope to engage human emotions with seriousness, within an idealized framework that has its roots dating back to Catullus and running through to Petrarch, as Pedraza Jiménez has also noted (107).

In distinction to these sonnets, other sonnets from the *Burquillos* collection demonstrate a far more parodic or ludic intent. On many occasions, Lope accomplishes this throughout the numerous “Juana” poems, sonnets in which he intentionally deconstructs idealized Petrarchist notions of feminine beauty by portraying a common washerwoman (with an equally common name, Juana) as the object of his love. Most often, this generalized “Juana” is seen cleaning clothes by the shores of the Manzanares.⁴ By this time, Lope had developed his satirical technique, all the while using Tomé de Burquillos as a pseudonym. This satire also extends beyond the characterization of “Juana” to focus more exclusively on the Manzanares. The sonnet entitled “Describe el río de Madrid en julio” (1306) is one clear example in which Lope shifts his earlier focus away from idealizing his city’s river as a gentle and calm

⁴ For further study of these Juana poems and the ways in which Lope consciously responds to his *Rimas* and his treatment of Lucinda, parodying his own earlier work, see Pedraza Jiménez (221-223).

location to gaze upon a distant Lucinda. In this instance, the Manzanares is shown to be what it really is, in the hottest and most uncomfortable season of the year:

Mísero Manzanares, ¿no te basta
 todo el año sufrir tanta fregona,
 tanto lacayo y paje de valona,
 tanta ropa servil, tanta canasta?
 Agora en julio tus riberas gasta
 tanto prestado coche, tanta dona,
 que lo que peca abril, julio jabona,
 cáfila más altiva y menos casta.
 Escupe rayos del León la ira
 feroz, aunque de Alcides fue despojo;
 la ardiente arena por humor suspira;
 mas, como el río es viejo y sin antojo,
 a su primera fuente se retira,
 de ver tantas pescadas en remojo. (1-14)

Burguillos immediately sets the tone as he characterizes the capital city's river as "mísero" (1), and asks it directly if it has had enough of such mundane labors. The river is not so much vilified as it is portrayed honestly, a considerable departure from Lope's earlier writing under Petrarchan conventions; as a result, the river contributes to what Justin Vitiello characterizes as an "atmosphere of mock pastoral" (77). Gone are the images of an idealized female touching the golden riverbanks; instead, the reader is treated to washerwomen, lackeys and servants, coaches carrying passengers down to the river's edge, and entire groups of people engaging in activities perhaps best understood as unchaste. Finally, the Manzanares itself is shown to be a tired, old character ("viejo y sin antojo" 12) which retreats to its source after having seen so much *merluza* (the "pescadas" of line 14). The Manzanares now becomes a paradigm not of glory or peacefulness but of the common and simple, a center of diverse but ordinary activities noted by Marcelin Defourneaux and the numerous authors and travel writers of the age whose works he frequently cites (71).⁵

⁵ Defourneaux's work is especially insightful in gaining a clearer understanding of daily life in Madrid, and in this case along the banks of the Manzanares. Though he includes examples of ridicule often directed at the river, he also notes some of the ordinary activities which took place nearby: "Sometimes it had water and the women of

Finally, this study will close with a ludic sonnet in which the Manzanares itself speaks. “Laméntase Manzanares de tener tan gran Puente” (1323) gently parodies Madrid’s river as a frustrated personage which would rather be left alone. This poem befits the nature of its writer, as the river itself is likened to an irascible old man which in many respects seems to resemble Lope at this stage in his life.

¡Quítenme aquesta puente que me mata,
señores regidores de la villa;
miren que me ha quebrado una costilla;
que aunque me viene grande me maltrata!

De bola en bola tanto se dilata,
que no la alcanza a ver mi verde orilla;
mejor es que la lleven a Sevilla,
si cabe en el camino de la Plata.

Pereciendo de sed en el estío,
es falsa la causal y el argumento
de que en las tempestades tengo brío.

Pues yo con la mitad estoy contento,
tráiganle sus mercedes otro río
que le sirva de huésped de aposento. (1-14)

The Manzanares cannot stand having such a large bridge constructed over it, and complains to the civil authorities to have it moved to some other river. In this instance, Burguillos avails himself briefly of the other river included in this study, implicitly the Guadalquivir, as is evident in the reference to Seville in the second quatrain. Its economic importance is clear, in “el camino de la Plata” (8) – a pun on its being a conduit of wealth (“plata”) as well as its direct route to the sea and eventually, the Río de la Plata in South America (“Plata,” capitalized as it is in the poem). Burguillos does not have any particular intent in this poem save to satirize simply because he can, and in departing once more the conventions of the much younger Lope he does not treat love or absence directly. The river can be seen as a metaphor for Lope himself, mistreat-

Madrid bathed in it without a stitch on, a spectacle by which foreigners were shocked – or pretended to be. The river was also a rendezvous for maids who went there to wash the laundry, but according to the *Guide for Foreigners*, worked their tongues harder than their hands, whispering the secrets of their families or recounting the little ructions in the noble or bourgeois homes in which they were employed” (71).

ed by the city's governing body in building this uncomfortable bridge much as Lope had lamented troubles with the patronage system, literary rivals, and his numerous affairs. Using this demystified portrayal of physical space, "Burguillos" becomes a comfortable mask for an older, world-weary Lope, as Antonio Carreño has noted: "Bajo la ráida sotana de este licenciado, enamoradizo y mal aliñado, se enmascara Lope, quien se ve a sí mismo viejo, setentón..., impetuoso y hasta impertinente en el amor, y a la vez desairadamente fracasado" (31).

In conclusion, the Manzanares and the Guadalquivir remain as icons of both idealism and stark realism at varying stages in Lope's career as a poet. To obtain a more complete sense of how Lope used these two important geographical entities, of course, one would have to examine their use not only in other sonnets of these same collections but also in poems from other collections and in his theatrical works. The Manzanares is not so much a river as it is a paradigm of youthful, idealized times and later an anti-paradigm for realism and an older man's cynicism. The Guadalquivir, for its part, remains the idealized and strategically important place which did not seem to change much during Lope's life. Their significance as places has evolved considerably since Lope's day, yet they remain vehicles by which this Golden Age master – the first Baroque poet to truly master these and other elements of Nature, as Dámaso Alonso believes (476-477) – can conduct his poetic work, melding once more life and art for the Fénix.

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