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# THE SONNET AS MIRROR: METAPOETRY AND SELF-REFERENTIALITY IN LOPE DE VEGA'S *RIMAS*

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The poetry of Lope de Vega has been most frequently studied for its amorous, spiritual, or autobiographical aspects. There has also been some interesting criticism done on Lope's general views of poetics, theory, and language, yet there has been considerably less work which directly points to the metapoetic and self-referential aspects of Lope's poetry.<sup>1</sup> To understand what makes such aspects metapoetic or self-referential, it is necessary to arrive at a practical definition of metapoetry. For this study, metapoetry is to be understood as lyrical works that refer in some way to their existence as artistic constructs and those which include an evaluation or examination of poetry—be it Lope's or someone else's. Insightful in examining the varieties of metapoetry is the relatively recent work on Spanish metapoetry by Leopoldo Sánchez Torre, *La poesía en el espejo del poema*. His definition of metapoetry includes not only the break between text and textual commentary, but also an examination of the multifaceted roles of the metapoem as a personal poetics or literary criticism: "La metapoesía, independientemente del elemento del proceso poético en el que se focalice su reflexión sobre la poesía, no sólo puede manifestarse como indagación teórica sobre la poesía, sino también, muchas veces, como exposición de una poética personal, como manifiesto o declaración de principios, como crítica literaria o como autocrítica" (137).<sup>2</sup> In this essay, I will examine nine of Lope de Vega's sonnets which contain and express the very reason for their construction as poetry, taken from his initial poetry collection, the *Rimas* of 1602.

The most frequent self-referential type of sonnet in this collection is the sonnet which details its genesis through its emotional and psychological underpinnings. Most often it is love which compels the poet to write these compositions. In this case, a particular woman, such as the "Lucinda" frequent in Lope's early sonnets, is mentioned as the reason for undertaking the poetic enterprise. These poems most often have their literary roots in Petrarchist tradition and the *cancioneros*. Another type is the sonnet which simply refers to its own construction, without necessarily mentioning emotional stimuli on the part of the author. These poems, more often than not, are metapoetic in the strict sense that they openly detail their existence as artistic constructs. Finally, there is the sonnet which

acts as a vehicle for literary self-eternalization and, implicitly at least, public recognition. On some occasions, this type of sonnet merges with the first type, where there is an affective stimulus underlying the poem's reason for being. In general, what will emerge through the study of these works is a Lope beset by the need to make his artistic endeavours their own self-evident object, whether it is due to an emotional bond with another human being, a bond with the actual written work itself, or a need to validate himself as an artist. For Lope, poetry is a life-affirming act of emotional and intellectual discharge which merits its own oftentimes narcissistic self-objectification.

### Sonnet 1

Sonnet 1 of the *Rimas*, known by its initial line as "Versos de amor, conceptos esparcidos" (1989: 23), focuses primarily on the poetry which Lope produces. It serves as an introduction to what will be an emotionally charged collection on both love and its versed elaborations:

Versos de amor, conceptos esparcidos,  
engendrados del alma en mis cuidados;  
partos de mis sentidos abrasados,  
con más dolor que libertad nacidos;  
expósitos al mundo, en que perdidos,  
tan rotos anduvistes y trocados,  
que sólo donde fuistes engendrados  
fuérades por la sangre conocidos;  
pues que le hurtáis el laberinto a Creta,  
a Dédalo los altos pensamientos,  
la furia al mar, las llamas al abismo,  
si aquel áspid hermoso no os aceta,  
dejad la tierra, entretened los vientos:  
descansaréis en vuestro centro mismo.

Lope addresses his own *cancionero* in the first strophe, whose lines announce the explicit act of self-referential poetic construction. The poem is a set of "Versos de amor" and of "conceptos esparcidos" brought forth from the poet's very soul, making public the private realm of the poet.<sup>3</sup> Lope refers openly to the ideas he places within his work, as seen in the use of "conceptos". His emotional state leads him to produce words and phrases which, according to the poetics of his day, express the correspondence between objects.<sup>4</sup> The poet's psychological state is clearly anguished and in need of expression, as seen in "engendrados," "cuidados," and "partos." The poetry becomes a child of its creator, a child born out of pain and not free will. Mary Gaylord describes this phenomenon: "Ap-

parently they [the verses] have not been begotten deliberately, but are instead accidental results of mental aberration, the involuntary progeny of 'cuidados' and 'sentidos abrasados'" (226). This notion reminds the reader of Lope's intertextual roots, especially the Petrarchan ones; poetry, and specifically sonnets, are a vehicle for expressing emotions.

The imagery of the second quatrain continues to provoke feelings of pain and familial ties, referring not only to the poem itself, but also to the public distribution of Lope's poetry as a whole. The lines of the sonnet are thrown into the world and errantly attempt to find their way. Implicitly, they could only be known by the blood of their creator. This "sangre" refers to the metaphoric blood spilled by the poem's parent in the process of giving birth to it. The terms "perdidos," "rotos," and "trocados" emphasize the poet's own uncertainty of finding adequate reception, as Lope renders the poem a highly personal and anthropomorphic aspect. Writing is thus characterized as an inherently visceral act.

The first tercet reemphasizes the poem's constructed existence and juxtaposes different physical spaces to describe its variety. Lope addresses the sonnet's lines directly while availing himself of elements from antiquity. The poem contains the complexity of Crete's labyrinth, the lofty thoughts and goals of Daedalus, the sea's fury and the fires of the nether world all at once. In so describing his poetry, Lope defends its variety and its emotional strength. The various spaces that are juxtaposed are seen in the opposing pairs of "altos" and "abismo," as well as "mar" and "llamas."

Finally, the second tercet brings the poem out of its earthly trappings and places it on a plane above human vanity. If the poisonous asp that is Lucinda does not accept Lope's creation, it would fare better in a heavenly plane, where it would not be in need of the acceptance of mortals. The poem would find its place alone ("descansaréis en vuestro centro mismo"), in a place eternalized by its creator. Helpful in understanding this type of artistic self-promotion is the analysis of Patricia E. Grieve, who examines the sonnet and extrapolates meaning for its relationship to the rest of the collection: "The poems will be 'up there' in the air, equating them with thoughts, superior to Daedalus' lofty ones. 'Versos de amor' quite arrogantly praises poetic creation — hence, the poet's *ingenio* — and embarks the entire collection on a journey of a highly creative level of poetic experimentation." (418)

Additionally, Felipe B. Pedraza Jiménez offers the following, in his introduction to the *Rimas*: "si la amada (Lucinda, tópicamente «aquel áspid hermoso») rechaza el ofrecimiento lírico de su pasión, los versos tendrán que abandonar el mundo de la realidad biográfica para vivir en el de la imaginación, que es su verdadero destino" (25). Daniel Heiple's conclusions are apposite as well:

In essence, Lope says that if the poems do not please his mistress, they should leave their earthly life as vagrants and enter a life of entertaining the spirits, for they will find rest with the poet in his collection. Here Lope distinguishes between literature written for a specific occasion and that which has more transcendental values. Removed from their traffic with the world, that is, the amorous occasion for which they were written, the poems will now retire into a spiritual life as a volume of poetry to be judged on aesthetic merits. ("Lope's *Arte poética*" 118)

Indeed, Lope places his poem where it belongs—in a collection of his own, away from debasing contact with the rest of the world—as he "characterizes his poems as wayward children who are returning home (that is, being anthologized)" (Heiple, *Garcilaso de la Vega* 35).

Lope removes the poem from the banal space of humanity and arrogates the power to grant it eternity as a creative construct, validating both his emotions and his lyrical representation of such emotions. Metapoetry has been achieved in that the space between the poem as artistic construct and the reflection upon the poem as such has been bridged. Pedraza Jiménez concludes: "No se ocupa tanto del poeta y su convulsa experiencia erótica, cuanto de su expresión y de la vida de su obra poética. . . . no se trata de una reflexión moral sino literaria" (25). Antonio Carreño extrapolates more global meaning from this sonnet as it relates to the *Rimas* as a whole: "Los versos 'rotos y trocados,' desviados de su destino, nombrados por voces ajenas como hijos sin padres ('expósitos'), testifican la misma poética de las *Rimas*: variedad de voces; hibridismo de estilos; incongruencia de formas al alternar versos a Lucinda con panegíricos y sonetos fúnebres, con romances, epístolas y églogas" ("La alegoría de la letra" 91).

As stated earlier, Lope's intertextual roots in emotional poetry lie within a tradition that dates back to the early Italian Renaissance and to Petrarch. Lope's use of the term "parto" echoes Petrarch's concept of creation as stated in the following segment of a *canzone*. Here, Petrarch addresses how his poetry is "born" from the inner sanctum of feeling as well as his own act of creating poetry, and in fact indicates that such activity is cathartic and emotionally beneficial:

In quella parte dove Amor mi sprona  
 conven ch'io volga le dogliose rime,  
 che son seguaci de la mente afflicta.  
 Quai fien ultime, lasso, et qua' fien prime?  
 Collui che del mio mal meco ragiona  
 mi lascia in dubbio, sí confuso ditta.  
 Ma pur quanto l'istoria trovo scripta

in mezzo 'l cor (che sí spesso rincorro)  
 co la sua propria man de' miei martiri,  
 dirò, perché i sospiri  
 parlando àn triegua, et al dolor soccorro.

[Wherever I am spurred by Love I must  
 Urge on these doleful rhymes, which are  
 The rag-tag creatures of my troubled mind.  
 Which should be last, ah me! and which come first?  
 He who discourses with me of my pain  
 Leaves me in doubt with his confused advice.  
 But since I find inscribed with his own hand  
 Within my heart the history of all  
 My martyrdom (which I often consult),  
 I'll speak, because sighs uttered  
 Declare an armistice and ease my pain. (trans. James Wyatt Cook, 176-77)]

As one can see from Petrarch's work, this tradition of metapoetical commentary predates Lope and the Golden Age. Petrarch also considered his words to be figurative "births" from his sentiments, as well as objects of self-examination.

It is, however, helpful to distinguish some characteristics of Lope's forebears. According to Heiple, the *cancioneros* that existed in Spain before Lope and the Petrarchan lyric differed somewhat in their focus on emotion and suffering: "The *cancionero* style abstracts the emotion and makes a verbal conceptual game out of the basic feeling, whereas the Petrarchans place emphasis on the suffering itself. The Petrarchans' focus on emotion and sentiment aims to create a sensation of sincerity and deeply felt emotional experiences" ("Lope's Arte poética" 20). In addition, the differences between the two lyrical traditions include degrees of sincerity, as illustrated by the conceits in each tradition: "The intellectual conceits of *cancionero* poetry give the impression of lacking sincere feeling, for their art lies in a constant shift of conceits and paradoxes. Petrarchan conceits, however, deal less with thought and intellectual paradoxes, and more with feelings and ironical contrasts of feelings" ("Lope's Arte poética" 21). It would seem that Lope incorporates elements of both: a sincere outpouring of emotion noticeable in Petrarch, and a continuous reliance on poetry as a series of *conceptos* which serves as the focal point of the work in question.

Heiple also indicates that the reference to verse—and specifically amatory verse—*within* a poem dates back to the time of Spanish poets such as Juan Boscán, who stated in his first sonnet: "Oh, vosotros, que andáis tras mis escritos / gustando de leer tormentos tristes" ("Lope's Arte poética" 106). Boscán refers to his verses as impassioned entities

that are born out of passion. Other examples prior to Lope and the Baroque exist. Heiple quotes a sonnet of Fernando de Herrera ("¿Do vas?, ¿do vas, cruel, do vas?; refrena,"), for example, in which the second quatrain allows for further evidence of emotional poetic discharge as its own object:

Oye la voz de mil suspiros llena,  
i del mal sufrido el triste canto;  
que no podrás ser fiera i dura tanto,  
que no te mueva esta mi acerba pena. (115)

Yet, according to Heiple, what Lope does that differs from his predecessors is to focus on poetry as creation and not as imitation. While Renaissance poets and contemporaneous treatise writers conceived of poetry as an imitative act, Lope began to portray poetry as inspired creation as opposed to simple mimesis. This initial sonnet of the *Rimas* serves as an example. As Heiple declares, and subsequently qualifies, "Lope's sonnet clearly has little to do with poetry as imitation or inspiration from the muses, for he characterizes his poetry as his own creation. This is not to say that he never practices imitation, or that he never refers to the muses or Parnassus" ("Lope's Arte poética" 118). Lope ended up being an innovator, as he "is one of the first poets to bring to the poem itself the topic of poetic inspiration" ("Lope's Arte poética" 118).

### Sonnet 66

Sonnet 66 of the *Rimas*, informally titled "A Lupercio Leonardo" and whose first line is "Pasé la mar cuando creyó mi engaño" (58) details the symbiosis of the acts of loving, feeling, living, and ultimately writing. Directed to Lupercio Leonardo de Argensola, a fellow poet and sonnet writer, this poem appears to respond to one written by Argensola, no longer extant, as José Manuel Blecua indicates (58). The explicit act of writing is detailed in the tercets, while the quatrains set up the author's emotional state and present the background for his reasons to write. The poet also introduces the element of spatial displacement to underscore his emotional attachment. Regardless of the narrator's distancing from his beloved, he is still bound by his emotions, and in fact is forced to recognize the falsity of his prior belief that love's passion would be reduced:

Pasé la mar cuando creyó mi engaño  
que en él mi antiguo fuego se templara,  
mudé mi natural, porque mudara  
naturaleza el uso, y curso el daño.

En otro cielo, en otro reino extraño,  
 mis trabajos se vieron en mi cara,  
 hallando, aunque otra tanta edad pasara,  
 incierto el bien, y cierto el desengaño.

The physical manifestations of love's passion are also visible, as the poet's "trabajos" are evident in his facial expressions. In addition, Lope adds an antithesis relating to the familiar Golden Age theme of *engaño* and *desengaño*, via the idea of certainty and uncertainty: "incierto el bien, y cierto el desengaño." The poet has been forced to concede openly that he was only misleading himself into believing what he stated in the second line: "que en él mi antiguo fuego se templara."

This disillusionment and the continuing force of amorous passion are the motives for the poet's lyrical enterprise. In the tercets, Lope shifts focus from his emotions to the necessity to inscribe them in poetic discourse. He questions Argensola in the first tercet, after finishing his description of love's power over the human will: "El mismo amor me abrasa y atormenta, / y de razón y libertad me priva. / ¿Por qué os quejáis del alma que le cuenta?" Because of the poet's affective state, his mental and physical abilities are deprived. As a result, Lope is compelled to write poetry—which in fact may not have been well received by Argensola. It appears that Lope had previously written of his emotions, and then had his writing criticized or simply rejected by Argensola. Lope thus poses the question of line eleven, unsure as to why Argensola would not want him to speak from his soul.

The final strophe highlights the sonnet's more directly metapoetic aspect within a brief directive to Argensola. Lope conjoins the act of writing and living, emphasizing his psychological state. He justifies his literary act by stating that it has the power of love as its root, which he challenges Argensola to take away: "¿Qué no escriba decís, o que no viva? / Haced vos con mi amor que yo no sienta, / que yo haré con mi pluma que no escriba." Writing is transformed into a life-affirming act; should the poet cease to have feelings, his literary necessity would cease to exist. The autobiographical elements in the first three strophes lead to Lope's definitive metaliterary statement at the end; as Pedraza Jiménez observes, "Estas alusiones autobiográficas no son más que el preámbulo que anuncia el verdadero núcleo temático: la imperiosa necesidad de expresar poéticamente estos sentimientos" (55). Although the challenge posed to Argensola in the final two lines is not as confrontational as many of Lope's poems which respond directly to others, it provides the reader with an understanding of the very personal reasons for undertaking lyrical composition. Poetry is the vehicle which transports the soul from its most private realm to a public one.



## Sonnet 70

In sonnet 70 of the *Rimas*, “Quiero escribir, y el llanto no me deja” (60-61), Lope again underscores his emotional motivation for writing poetry. Lope focuses on his attempt to write, which ends in failure. This, paradoxically, leads to Lope’s success of still having written a complete sonnet. Lope avails himself of the theme of *llanto*, which is frequent in the *cancioneros*. The first strophe immediately provides the reader with a profound sense of frustration that the poet feels in trying to write, one born out of his preexisting psychological state:

Quiero escribir, y el llanto no me deja,  
pruebo a llorar, y no descanso tanto,  
vuelvo a tomar la pluma, y vuelve el llanto,  
todo me impide el bien, todo me aqueja.

The acts of writing and weeping are linked in their shared futility for the poet, as neither method of expression is sufficient for the poet trying to find solace. Writing poetry now encounters an obstacle in *llanto*, and *llanto* itself is counterproductive in that it does not allow for peace of mind. The process of trial and error is exemplified as the poet and the act of writing are now separated by emotional discharge. As a result, the poet’s affective state once again fundamentally affects the way in which he attempts to write.

The second strophe continues the poem’s structure of trial and error and further highlights the poet’s psychological state. Such a state is clearly defined as one of despair, as the poet sees emotional communication and writing as mutually unproductive activities:

Si el llanto dura, el alma se me queja,  
si el escribir, mis ojos, y si en tanto  
por muerte o por consuelo me levanto,  
de entrambos la esperanza se me aleja.

The power of the poet’s *llanto* is accentuated in its effects upon the poet’s soul: “el alma se me queja.” At the same time, his attempts to write are further confounded by his eyes, through weeping, and hope abandons him. Once again, the metapoetic element of the sonnet is contained in Lope’s application of emotive force to the thematic and structural focus on writing. Writing is a constructive act which purports to express an individual’s feelings through the lyric, yet this time such an act is stymied.

The first tercet focuses on the poet’s success, or lack thereof, in writing. In it, Lope also challenges an unnamed reader not only to bear wit-

ness to his suffering but also to act as a poetic proxy due to Lope's emotional state. The challenge is continued in the final strophe, which ends the poem on a decidedly pessimistic tone:

Ve blanco, al fin, papel, y a quien penetra  
el centro deste pecho que me enciende  
le di (si en tanto bien pudieres verte),  
que haga de mis lágrimas la letra,  
pues ya que no lo siente, bien entiende:  
que cuanto escribo y lloro todo es muerte.

He who is able to understand how the poet feels and who is able to penetrate the poet's affective core is challenged to write for him using his tears as ink, thus becoming a poetic secretary for Lope. It can also be considered that the poet's beloved eventually receives the blank piece of paper, as she is subsequently obligated to write the text with the tears of the poet-subject. Although she may not feel anything for him, she understands the discursive scenario. Both acts of writing and crying, the two main acts which began the poem, now structure its concluding line: these acts lead to death. The deviant state of despair pervades the poem to its end, and the poet's ultimate efforts have failed.

As Carreño indicates, traditionally the *llanto* was a cry intended to show emotional pain and longing, but not desperation, which was the gravest of mortal sins and a popular topic in Baroque literature. Very rarely was the *llanto* associated with desperation as a result. Instead, it was included in the poem to give its creator an outlet for emotional expression and to provide a means for not allowing oneself to despair (*Poesía selecta* 255n). In fact, the *llanto* is originally derived from the Latin *planctus*, a word used with decidedly more religious overtones. Before the advent of the Petrarchan lyric, *planctus* had often been associated with crying for the love of God. However, in Lope's sonnet, the *llanto* is inscribed within the context of despair, as the poetic narrator welcomes death. In addition, no individual woman is named, although traditionally it had been the notion of such a woman's indifference and scorn which prompted the poet to write a poem focusing on his cries.

In spite of the expressions of desperation and failure, the poet has paradoxically succeeded, for although he sees his attempt to write as unfinished, a finished product has nevertheless been rendered. The phrase, "Ve blanco, al fin, papel," contrasts with the very existence of the sonnet in its complete form. Emotion and anguish cause the *llanto* mentioned throughout; this *llanto*, in turn, makes it more difficult for the poet to write, until it becomes impossible. Still, emotion—and more directly, its resultant *llanto*—are at the same time the very reason and structural element for the poem's own *raison d'être*. What the reader is left with is a

metapoetic paradox: the poem's progenitors are at the same time its obstacles. The poet's attitude of cynicism and despair contrasts with the very real success of the poem which is implied by its ability to exist autonomously as a complete sonnet. Lope's negative self-reflection upon writing turns up a positive result.

### Sonnet 117

Sonnet 117 (86), "Rompa con dulces números el canto," exhibits a more positive attitude towards writing poetry and explicitly states the reason for which Lope undertakes such a task. This reason is contained in the poem's final strophe, while the previous three detail other potential reasons for poetic composition. As a result, the metapoetic character of this poem is not strictly limited to the reason for its composition. Rather, it includes possible reasons for the written work of others as well:

Rompa con dulces números el canto  
de alguno al son de la confusa guerra,  
entre el rumor del escuadrón que cierra  
el silencio a la voz y a Juno el manto.

Cante las armas de Fernando santo,  
o el de Aragón en la nevada sierra,  
del duque Albano en la flamenca tierra,  
u del hijo de Carlos en Lepanto.

Otro cante a Cortés, que por España  
levanta las banderas por el polo  
que cuando nace el sol de sombras baña.

These stanzas reflect the potential for writing about one common theme: war and military glory. As seen elsewhere, Lope does indeed cultivate these themes and is consistent in a nationalistic rendering of Spain's achievements, both in arms and letters. In this case, however, Lope uses the subjunctive to indicate his allowance of another author to write on this topic. Specific references to lyrical composition are contained in the words "número," denoting harmony; "canto"; and the subjunctive form of the verb "cantar," "cante." In the first strophe, the lyrical sound of poetry is intertwined with the sounding of battle-trumpets, as it breaks forth with the "son de la confusa guerra." In the second strophe, specific military heroes of Spain appear: King Ferdinand, "el Santo," King Ferdinand of Aragón, the "Catholic king,"<sup>5</sup> the Duque de Alba, and Don Juan de Austria, referred to as the "hijo de Carlos en Lepanto." Finally, Hernán Cortés is mentioned for his conquest of México and for claiming land in a new hemisphere with the Spanish flag.

The final strophe, however, contains Lope's reason for writing this

sonnet. Predetermined from birth to sing the praises of his beloved, Lope makes his best attempt at a poem: "que yo, Lucinda, si me ayuda Apolo, / aunque vencerme tú fue humilde hazaña, / nací para cantar tu nombre solo." In contrast to his implicit accomplishment of writing a sonnet to Lucinda, her emotional and spiritual "conquest" of him was not very difficult for her to achieve. An element of humility is nevertheless added in the phrase "si me ayuda Apolo," although Lucinda's conquest of Lope's affection is seen as equally "humilde." The "Lucinda" of this poem is most likely Micaela de Luján, a woman with whom Lope had had an extramarital affair, while many of the poems in the *Rimas* were being composed.<sup>6</sup> Following Petrarchan conventions, the relationship of poet to beloved is one of psychological servant to master. Emotional dependency is again the reason for undertaking lyrical composition, but in contrast to sonnet 70, such dependency is here joyfully proclaimed and is in fact conducive to poetic creation. In addition, a more general conclusion can be made from the poem's final line: for emotional reasons above all, Lope sees himself as born to be a writer, as life and art become inseparable.

### Sonnet 133

Sonnet 133, "Ya no quiero más bien que sólo amaros" (95-96), also focuses on the figure of Lucinda as a reason for writing poetry.<sup>7</sup> In this instance, another element is added that is not apparent in the previous poem: the quest for literary permanence through the glorification of Lucinda. The poem opens by centering on the second person, demonstrated in the object pronoun "os," and establishes the dialectic between poet and beloved upon the poet's unending and dedicated glorification of the beloved. The quatrains imply a certain metapoetic rationale for this glorification:

Ya no quiero más bien que sólo amaros,  
ni más vida, Lucinda, que ofreceros  
la que me dais, cuando merezco veros,  
ni ver más luz que vuestros ojos claros.  
Para vivir me basta desearos,  
para ser venturoso, conoceros,  
para admirar el mundo, engrandeceros,  
y para ser Eróstrato, abrasaros.

Lucinda is portrayed as the poet's reason for living, a clearly Petrarchist ideal. The constant repetition of the second-person pronoun, "os," shows a relationship of dependency between the poet and his beloved; the latter validates the former in any enterprise which he undertakes. Lope re-

fers to his act of magnification in the second quatrain: “para admirar el mundo, engrandeceros.” Shortly thereafter, Lope uses a classical myth about the arrogation of power: much the same way that “Eróstrato” took fire from the temple of Diana, Lope captures Lucinda’s brilliance within a sonnet. Pedraza Jiménez defines Lope’s “afán de grandeza y notoriedad” in this sonnet: “si la vida y la felicidad eran importantes para el enamorado Lope, no era de menor relieve el deseo de admirar el mundo.”

The tercets refer more openly to the act of writing and discourse in connection to Lucinda’s beauty. A decidedly upward movement becomes noticeable, as Lucinda—and Lope, simultaneously—are placed on a plane above ordinary human existence.

La pluma y lengua, respondiendo a coros,  
quieren al cielo espléndido subiros,  
donde están los espíritus más puros;  
que entre tales riquezas y tesoros,  
mis lágrimas, mis versos, mis suspiros,  
de olvido y tiempo vivirán seguros.

Lope recreates her image through the concordance of written and vocalized lyric discourse, as seen in “La pluma y lengua, respondiendo a coros.” Together, the speech-act of this poem elevates Lucinda to a heavenly sphere, a sphere occupied by angelic members of the “coros,” as opposed to base human nature.

In writing the poem, Lope employs a tradition dating back to Sappho:

The Muses have made me happy  
in my lifetime  
and when I die  
I shall never be forgotten. (94)

Lope’s safeguarding of his work from oblivion echoes the tone of this more ancient example, as well as that of Ovid, who in the *Metamorphoses* had ironically claimed immortality for his work. Additionally, Lope’s sonnet closely resembles one of Garcilaso, in which the *yo-vos* dialectic between poet and beloved rests on the speaker’s singular need to love the unnamed feminine *vos* and to glorify her through verse. One key difference exists, however: Garcilaso makes no overt attempt at eternalizing himself. In this manner, Lope follows the same tradition which Garcilaso did and expands it further by glorifying himself. Garcilaso’s Sonnet V is structured entirely along the lines of emotional and literary dependence:

Escrito está en mi alma vuestro gesto,  
y cuanto yo escrebir de vos deseo;  
vos sola lo escrebistes, yo lo leo  
tan solo, que aun de vos me guardo en esto.

En esto estoy y estaré siempre puesto;  
que aunque no cabe en mí cuanto en vos veo,  
de tanto bien lo que no entiendo creo,  
tomando ya la fe por presupuesto.

Yo no nací sino para quereros;  
mi alma os ha cortado a su medida;  
por hábito del alma misma os quiero.

Cuanto tengo confieso yo deberos;  
por vos nací, por vos tengo la vida,  
por vos he de morir y por vos muero. (1983: 5)

What Lope does closely parallels his predecessor: both poets treat their respective feelings of love as well as their need to write of it in a self-conscious way. However, as mentioned above, Garcilaso apparently does not include self-eternalization as a poetic goal. In Garcilaso, it is only the woman who occupies an eternal space, and his poem evinces a certain textual awareness without the need to engage in self-aggrandizement. Though Lope does not necessarily allude directly to Garcilaso's sonnet nor to Sappho's work, some of the same basic themes can be found in all three authors.

Returning to Lope's sonnet, Lope validates himself in creating this fictitious, idealized space for Lucinda (a space seemingly religious as well, owing to its apparently divine denizens.) Amidst the "espíritus más puros," Lope's emotional manifestations, which include tears, sighs, and his actual poetry, occupy the same status as eternal entities. He protects his creations from becoming commonplace kitsch, as well as from falling into oblivion, by declaring that his "versos . . . / de olvido y tiempo vivirán seguros." The continuous rhyming of the final "-os" through 14 consecutive lines serves as a technique to bind together some of the poem's semantic significance: Lope tries to "engrandecer" both the antecedent of "os" (Lucinda) and his "versos". Unlike the poems examined thus far, a judgment of the self is attached to the judgment of the other. Pedraza Jiménez comments: "En «Ya no quiero más bien que sólo amaros» al tema de la plenitud amorosa se une el de la gloria literaria. Lengua y pluma aspiran a arrancar de la realidad inmediata a la amada, para elevarla a un mundo incontingente en el que el sentimiento y los versos del poeta alcancen la anhelada inmortalidad" (63, 64). The description of the other has itself become the object of the poem, and once again life, love, and artifice have become inextricably linked. As María Goyri de Menéndez Pidal has noted regarding the poet's feat, "Lope manifiesta la esperanza,

muy firme en él, de que sus versos, por una u otra causa, serán inmortales” (134-35).

### Sonnet 146

Sonnet 146, “Lucinda, el alma, pluma, y lengua mía” (102-03) continues the theme of Lucinda as a reason for poetic construction, although without as much overt attention to the quest for literary self-glorification. In this case, it is Lucinda who becomes the symbol of poetic hyperbole. The poet’s quest to achieve the perfect description of Lucinda is itself also an object of the poem:

Lucinda, el alma, pluma y lengua mía  
en vuestras alabanzas ocupara,  
si en mil comparaciones una hallara  
para satisfacción de su porfía.

Lope begins to reflect upon the very poetic techniques which he employs to describe this familiar feminine object. As a result, the lyrical and subjective reaction to this object becomes the key structural element of the poem. Lope devotes his soul and its expressions through language to this woman who merits, and effectively exceeds, innumerable descriptions (“mil comparaciones”). Speech and sentiment are again intertwined to form the poem’s principal focal point.

The second strophe continues this reflection upon poetic technique by describing, through hyperbole, the various natural elements which cannot equal Lucinda’s beauty:

Ni en el lucero, el alba, el sol, el día,  
la perla, el oro, ni el diamante para;  
que desde el cielo hasta la fénix rara,  
mil veces discurrió con osadía.

As a result of the inadequacy of the above descriptors, Lucinda acquires a sense of perfection which transgresses physical bounds. The familiar convention of hyperbole not only is the vehicle for bringing Lucinda to life but also becomes the object of the poem. Hyperbole is thus an inadequate technique to portray Lucinda; none of the metaphors mentioned in this stanza can possibly achieve this desired effect. Yet, in a fashion similar to that seen in sonnet 70, a paradox relating failure to success is already in the making. Although Lope cannot find an appropriate simile or metaphor to describe Lucinda’s beauty, her beauty is nevertheless relayed to the reader as one beyond comparison, beyond even the objects of great luminescence or value seen in lines five and six.

The first tercet portrays Lope's thought processes as dominated by Lucinda. At the same time, a comparison between her beauty and the effects of his love for her is forged: "Con esto el pensamiento, ya vencido, / no hallando igual con vos, compara aquella / que de vos en mi pecho Amor estampa." His devotion to Lucinda is figuratively emblazoned on his breast, and such a sign, having acquired great personal significance for the author, becomes the only element to which Lucinda might adequately be compared. Her importance is as great as her beauty, and is the only thing of which Lucinda might become jealous, as seen in the second tercet: "Ríndese la razón, calla el sentido, / y vos, porque confieso que es tan bella, / celos tenéis de vuestra misma estampa." Lucinda can only be jealous of her own reflection within the author precisely because of her unparalleled beauty. In addition, this final tercet introduces the supremacy of emotion over reason, as Lucinda's beauty is enough to persuade an eloquent poet to cede mental control to her.

However, the poetic paradox seen in previous sonnets is once again implied: although Lope may be bereft of adequate tropes to describe Lucinda fully, he has done so nonetheless within the space of the sonnet. What Lope does is to validate the lyrical power of his language through his validation of Lucinda and his love for her. The sonnet is, in essence, a poem on discursive ability as much as it is one on love and female objectification. The observations of Margaret H. Persin on this same linguistic power and a poet's treatment of it could be used to understand occasions in which Lope focuses upon poetry and the adequacy or inadequacy of language: "Ironically, language is and is not part of the poet. It springs from him, is the manner in which he creates, but as such must be exterior to him, since he wishes to use it to capture reality" (96). Poetic language is shaped by the inner world of the poet's feelings, as Persin suggests, though its final representation on paper demonstrates its external existence and allows Lope to view his creation. The sonnet's movement has evolved from being a hymn to Lucinda to a consideration of the different techniques used to construct such a hymn. Finally, there is a trace of Lope's own desire to achieve permanence in this poem. José F. Montesinos opines that this sonnet, along with several others from the *Rimas*, includes not only the element of sacredness and hyperbole but also the *implicit* quest for self-eternalization. He bases his belief on "La consagración que el poeta hace de su persona y de su pluma al nuevo amor verdadero, que excede a todos los anteriores amoríos y los pone en olvido" (243).

#### Sonnet 155

Sonnet 155, "Belleza singular, ingenio raro" (107), also begins as a hyperbolic examination of Lucinda's beauty.<sup>8</sup> The majority of the poem



consists of a series of hyperboles detailing Lucinda's beauty, while the strictly metapoetic element is contained in the final line, which describes the paradoxical element of desired pain as a reason for writing. Because of the sonnet's structure, the poem contains a more succinct elaboration of the emotional metapoetic element examined in this study. This structure prompts Montesinos to place this sonnet among those which contain "«letanías de amor», aquellos sonetos en que el poeta enumera las perfecciones de la amada" (243).

In the first thirteen lines of Lope's poem, the numerous examples of hyperbole underscore the poet's passion, his emotional self-reflection, and his portrayal of Lucinda, all of which constitute tendencies seen since Petrarch's day. The two quatrains begin the process:

Belleza singular, ingenio raro,  
fuera del natural curso del cielo,  
Etna de amor, que de tu mismo hielo  
despides llamas entre mármol paro;  
sol de hermosura, entendimiento claro,  
alma dichosa en cristalino velo,  
norte del mar, admiración del suelo,  
emula el sol como a la luna el faro.

The object of Lope's adoration becomes identified as perfection incarnate via a number of superlative judgments regarding her bodily appearance as well as her inner qualities. Lope also uses the familiar figure of antithesis (as seen in "Etna" and "llamas" as opposed to "hielo," and includes the four classical spaces of earth ("suelo"), wind or air ("cielo"), fire ("llamas," "sol") and water ("mar"). The woman is likened to "hielo"), though, because of the convention of feminine disdain towards the masculine observer/poet.

The first tercet summarizes Lucinda's perfect nature and contains a brief self-conscious reference to Lope's own animate state: "Milagro del Autor de cielo y tierra, / bien de naturaleza el más perfeto, / Lucinda hermosa en quien mi luz se encierra." The "luz" of line 11 might metaphorically represent Lope's passions as well as his poetic skills and his poem, drawing their inspiration from Lucinda. Though Lope is a mortal again attempting to find an adequate way to describe Lucinda, she is an unusual gift of nature and an example of divine perfection. As a result, the reader finds implicit praise for God as the divine creator who has given Lope such a radiant person about whom to write.

The final strophe contains a paradox to further describe Lucinda's extraordinary nature and ends with the statement of the author's metapoetic reflection: "nieve en blancura y fuego en el efeto, / paz de los ojos y del alma guerra; / dame a escribir como a penar sujeto." The "suf-

fering" which is the urge to idealize someone so intensely loved receives poetic reflection in the last line. Although this process is accomplished more succinctly than in the other sonnets analyzed thus far, the poem's concluding line again conjoins the act of poetic construction with overt self-reflection.

### Sonnet 179

Montesinos characterizes sonnet 179, "Angel divino, que en humano y tierno" (121), in the same fashion as sonnet 146, as one in which Lope consecrates Lucinda, his love for her, and his poetic description of the two. Lope's quest for artistic permanence appears briefly as well:

Angel divino, que en humano y tierno  
velo te goza el mundo, ¡oh!, no consuma  
el mar del tiempo, ni su blanca espuma  
cubra tu frente en su nevado invierno;  
beldad que del artífice superno  
imagen pura fuiste en cifra y suma,  
sujeto de mi lengua y de mi pluma,  
cuya hermosura me ha de hacer eterno.

Lucinda, named later, is the idealized woman who is likened once again to divine figures ("Angel divino") and accorded a lack of temporality ("no consuma / el mar del tiempo"), inspiring the mortal poet to write. This metapoetic statement of inspiration can be seen in Lucinda's classification as "sujeto de mi lengua y de mi pluma," closely resembling the notion contained in the final line of the preceding sonnet, "dame a escribir como a penar sujeto," although without the same element of a "joyful penance." Lope's justification for self-declared permanence also resembles that of sonnet 133. Her unsullied appearance provides him with a reason for writing and guarantees *a priori* his own eternal status as a sonnet writer.

In the tercets, Lope again clarifies how Lucinda has penetrated his soul and has provided him with a reason for life and for lofty contemplation. She is the

centro del alma venturosa mía,  
en quien el armonía y compostura  
del mundo superior contemplo y veo.  
Alba, Lucinda, cielo, sol, luz, día,  
para siempre al altar de tu hermosura  
ofrece su memoria mi deseo.

As these lines demonstrate, Lope is engaged in a relationship of depen-

dence upon both Lucinda and his artistic need to memorialize his feelings. She occupies the very center of his soul at the same time that she is placed on a par with heavenly bodies such as the sky, the sun, and daylight. This dual placement is what the poet wants the reader to see. Lope's pledge to remember Lucinda is his metapoetic guarantee: he shall always be spellbound by her but compelled to write about that spellbound state.

Implicitly, Lope also places distance between himself and everyday existence by having displaced Lucinda from it as well, using images of clarity and brilliance, some of which—such as “alba,” “sol,” and “día”—appear in sonnet 146. In so doing, he avoids the banality of poets and poetry which lack his quality and grace. Such an idea is useful in understanding much of Lope's work in which he overtly disparages the common reading public, or *vulgo*, and poets who pander to their tastes. At the same time, however, Petrarchist conventions and their particular application to Lope's situation are again present. Joseph G. Fucilla summarizes Lope's adoption of Petrarch and Petrarchism:

El procedimiento uniforme de detallar las bellezas de la mujer amada, alusiones a su virtud y crueldad, alocuciones a sus ojos y manos, a la noche, al sueño, a la naturaleza, al amor, a los celos; la comparación del sufrimiento del amador con el de criaturas mitológicas como Ticio, Ixión, Tántalo, etc.; el abuso de los antítesis y contrastes . . . , estos y otros muchos rasgos procedentes de Petrarca y del petrarquismo fueron adoptados por Lope. (236)

In his self-referential sonnets, such as this one, Lope adopts these time-honored techniques and themes to suit his emotional and literary needs. While emotionally the poet will always be on a level below that of the woman he adores, he occupies the same divine plane with respect to literary worth. Though human, Lope grants his writing permanence and eternity in an attempt to bridge the space between the mortal and the immortal. The earthly Lope of flesh and blood writes poetry which resides on the same ethereal plane as Lucinda, as his work distinguishes him as both a passionate human being and a (self-declared) superior writer.

### Sonnet 190

Sonnet 190, “Papeles rotos de las propias manos,” informally titled “A unos papeles rompidos” (127), centers on the very pages the poet uses to write.<sup>9</sup> Lope shows the relationship he has with the paper, metonymically representing all of poetry, in the first two strophes:

Papeles rotos de las propias manos  
 que os estimaron por reliquia santa,  
 bien muestra agora el viento que os levanta  
 que cuando más pesados sois livianos.

Si de mi libertad fuisteis tiranos  
 por la sirena que escribiendo encanta,  
 ya no tendrán conmigo fuerza tanta  
 palabras locas y concetos vanos.

The value he places on the written word—and hence, the profession of writing poetry—is here the same as the value placed on holy relics, as literature becomes sacred. Lope may have rent his paper but he realizes its physical lightness and figurative gravity, as the paradox of “más pesados” - “livianos” suggests. The force which the written word exerts on Lope’s psyche is further evidenced in its comparison to an enchanting mermaid: “Si de mi libertad fuisteis tiranos / por la sirena que escribiendo encanta.” This siren-like grip is, temporarily at least, broken due to the fact that the paper has been torn; no longer do the “palabras locas y concetos vanos” hold sway over him.

The tercets introduce reconciliation between the poet and his poetry as Lope attempts to “return” the printed pages to his soul. An element of calm is achieved, and the poet acknowledges his crudeness and impatience:

Sosieguense celosos alborotos,  
 sin tener, en romperos, mi osadía  
 torpes las manos y los dientes botos.

Venid así; mas, ¡ay mortal porfía!,  
 que pues os vuelvo a mis entrañas rotos,  
 hijos debéis de ser del alma mía.

As seen elsewhere, the wellspring of lyricism resides in the poet’s soul, regardless of a poem’s subject matter. It can again be likened to an act of figurative childbirth, as in “Versos de amor, conceptos esparcidos.” Since the poem is not about love (of a woman) as a reason for writing the poem, unlike many of the other sonnets of the *Rimas* analyzed thus far, I would categorize this poem as unique in that it examines the relationship between poet and poetry as relationships between two people in love and between parent and child. Taken as a whole, the sonnet reveals itself as a tangible entity resulting from creative activity and the intangible elements of the human intellect and psyche.

## Conclusion

These poems from the *Rimas* reflect a young and less developed Lope who is still dependent on certain poetic conventions. This is not to deny him any degree of originality or to say that his own voice is somehow completely lost in the imitation of older (and non-Spanish) models, especially Petrarchism. The poems do, however, also reflect a growing concern with the act of literary creation and specifically its relationship to emotion. The voice in most of this poetry is directed towards an audience primarily accustomed to reading poetry of this sort — an educated and often Court-based one, whose horizon of expectations had included the older models for quite some time. Yet, Lope pleases himself and attempts to please his audience as well, on the occasions in which he grants his own voice eternity. I believe that there are several reasons for which Lope writes these interesting sonnets. One is to show the poet's professional concern for lyrical creation through his examination of it. Another is to expose his inner emotions to the judgment of his readers, thus closing the gap between the public and the private spheres of the self. A third reason is to validate these exposed emotions as appropriate stimuli for writing. Finally, an additional purpose would be to provide himself with a vehicle for appropriation of artistic grandeur. These brief compositions conveniently accomplish all of these metapoetic goals. They also suggest that Lope's vast lyric legacy leaves much to be discovered in the realm of self-reflective poetry, and that this multifaceted and complex voice merits further study.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Several key studies which have examined these aspects of Lope's poetry include Antonio Carreño's two articles, "La alegoría de la letra: *Las Rimas* (1604) de Lope de Vega," and "Los engaños de la escritura: *Las Rimas de Tomé de Burguillos*, de Lope de Vega." Additionally, Mary Gaylord has provided valuable studies of Lope's self-referentiality and attention to issues of poetic language, in "Proper Language and Language as Property: The Personal Poetics of Lope's *Rimas*."

<sup>2</sup>For Sánchez Torre, the metapoem is not only a vehicle for lyrical self-identification, but also one for critical self-examination. It must, therefore, be more than just an exposure of the fictional nature of a given poem; rather, a metapoem poses questions, whether implicit or explicit, about what poetry can do. This, in turn, leads to a certain tension between fiction and reality: "Del mismo modo, el desenmascaramiento de la ficcionalidad del poema no nos parece sino una más de las funciones de la metapoesía, que así . . . debilita las fronteras entre ficción y realidad. Lo que hace el metapoema no es tanto manifestar la ficcionalidad del poema como problematizarla, indagar sus fronteras, sus implicaciones, su modo de generarse y de ser recibida, etc." (Sánchez Torre 153).

<sup>3</sup>The phrase "conceptos esparcidos" is also a direct gloss of the beginning lines of

the sonnets of Petrarch's *canzoniere*, in which the phrase "rime sparse" is clearly visible. See Gaylord, "Proper Language and Language as Property" 225.

<sup>4</sup>Alonso López Pinciano, writing in 1596, had defined a *concepto* as "una imagen que de la cosa el entendimiento forma dentro de sí; por lo qual, el que quisiere alcançar concepto bueno, deue entender la cosa muy bien entendida" (II: 204).

<sup>5</sup>Note the chronological disparities between these identically-named kings. Fernando III, "El Santo," lived from 1217 to 1252, and conquered Córdoba and Seville. The Reconquest became complete with Fernando "El Católico," responsible for the taking of Granada in 1492.

<sup>6</sup>Lucinda also appears elsewhere as a generally idealized female and object of the poet's adoration.

<sup>7</sup>This poem has three known versions: the one examined here, from the *Rimas*; one from the play, *Los comendadores de Córdoba*; and a completely separate version dedicated to a lover, Antonia Trillo. In the second instance, the second line substitutes "señora" for "Lucinda"; in the third, it is "Antonia" for "Lucinda." Chronologically, the first version to appear is the one from *Los comendadores*; the second is the version addressed to Antonia Trillo and written around 1596, and the final one is the following version, for Micaela de Luján, believed to have been written while Lope was married to Juana de Guardo (*Poesía selecta* 265n).

<sup>8</sup>In addition to undergoing various revisions on Lope's part, the sonnet was taken as a source of inspiration for a sonnet by the Italian poet Giambattista Marino (see Dámaso Alonso, *En torno a Lope*, 34-35). Marino's poem, published in 1614 in *La Lira* (whereas Lope's sonnet appears in 1602, according to Alonso [33]), is so similar that it not only contains the same themes, but also numerous phrases and some of the rhyme and metrical schemes. In it, as in Lope's sonnet, the final line contains the metapoetic statement of writing (or singing, in Marino's case.) The poem is as follows: "Simulacro divino, unica stampa / di bellezza immortal, pompa dal cielo. / Etna d'Amor, che dal tuo vivo gelo / scoti faville, ong'ogni core avampa; // chiara face d'honor, lucida lampa / ch'oscuri il Faro à Menfi, il Sole à Delo, / anima pura in christalino velo, / in cui d'alte virtù schiera s'accampa; // opra maggior del gran pennel di Dio, / lavoro di Natura il più perfetto, / meraviglia del mondo, Idolo mio; // beltà, neve al candor, foco al effetto, / pace de gli occhi e guerra del desio / dammi a cantar, com'à languir, suggetto."

<sup>9</sup>Montesinos notes that this poem actually first appeared in the play *La escolástica celosa*, which he believes was written no earlier than 1595. He also notes that its relationship within the play to the rest of the action is quite close: "se trata de algo determinado por la fábula misma" (111). Shortly thereafter, Montesinos makes a general conclusion regarding the role of sonnets within Lope's plays: "Con todo, es interesante notar que mientras los sonetos, en general, cierran una escena, constituyen un soliloquio o se disponen simétricamente en parlamentos paralelos, éste aparece solo, incluido algo violentamente en un diálogo en quintillas" (111).

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