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Mark J. Mascia

Sacred Heart University, masciam@sacredheart.edu

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POETRY AS THEORY: LOPE DE VEGA'S *EPÍSTOLA* AS ARBITER OF PROPER DISCOURSE

Throughout the years, many studies have been done on Lope de Vega's lyrical legacy, some of which has focused on his views of poetics and the use of language. However, relatively little attention has been paid to Lope's *epístolas*, and more specifically to his views on poetry and language as seen through this genre. The purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which Lope manipulates *epístolas* to serve his own ends with regards to language, both on a narrowly literary level and on a broader personal and even national one. What emerges is an *epístola* which blends both the self-evident art of poetry writing and critical speculation upon it, one which Lope consciously uses as a literary mode of vindication and defense for his ideas regarding proper discourse and as an attack on any type of discourse of which he disapproves.

The first *epístola* to be examined is from the *Rimas* (1602), Lope's *epístola* to Gaspar de Barrionuevo (1989: 212-224). Believed to have been written in 1603, it addresses the question of the *culteranos*, Lope's rival school of poetry, as well as the issue of writers who plagiarized Lope's work and identified it as Lope's own; it is thus a plea for poetic authenticity. Barrionuevo was a Toledan poet and the Spanish Navy's accountant as well as a close friend of the author. Montesinos notes that "Lope se la enviaba a su amigo desde Sevilla, en momentos en que ardía una encarnizada guerra contra nuestro poeta." (179) This *epístola* follows a fairly common structure, using primarily hendecasyllabic tercets, seen in many other *epístolas*: an invocation to begin reading; a recounting of certain events in Lope's life or in that of his correspondent; an entry into literary questions; and a quick and cordial closing, often with *captatio benevolentiae* and an apology for such a lengthy and foolish document.

Lope's focus on literature begins when he asks his friend if he would like to hear "del Parnaso / una historia" (vv. 79, 80). Lope describes the various poets he finds in his homeland, beginning with those of high quality and continuing on to poor poets. The latter occupy the majority of this subsection on poetic judgments (79-168). First, Lope offers support for his fellow Spanish poets against the accusations of the Italian author, Paolo

Giovio, who had criticized Spain for not being poetically talented.

Pardiós, hermano, que hay famosa gente
en el contorno de la madre España;
arroje Italia el árbol de la frente.

El Jovio desta vez se desengaña,
que la ignorancia celebró española;
cosa que allá se tiene por hazaña.

Las buenas letras goza y acrisola
España agora en sí, porque florece
en todas artes liberales sola.

Con divinas y humanas se enriquece,
y sujetos divinos más que humanos,
por quien ceñirse de laurel merece. (82-93)

Lope's nationalism and pride in being a craftsman of the Spanish lyric is evident, as he defends his country's poetic genius in the face of Italian ignorance.

The intellectual and artistic grandeur that Lope ascribes to Spain, however, is gravely counterbalanced with a subsequent attack leveled against those poets who wish to be part of this lyric tradition and acclaimed as great artists. Lope directs part of his attack at the *culteranos*, although not overtly named as such. Montesinos opines, "Interesante es además comprobar en esta epístola... pasajes satíricos contra vicios poéticos que hacen presumir ya la triunfal invasión del culteranismo" (179n). Lope turns his attention to these poets who seek to be eternalized on Helicon as they sully proper poetry:

la pluma se entorpece, tiembla el arte,
de ver tantos rocines matalotes
beber el agua que Helicón reparte.

Hay algunos poetas tagarotes
que apenas imagino cómo vuelan,
y cuyas musas tejen chamelotes.

Otros que por lo hinchado se desvelan,
tundiendo el paño al mar, frizando el polo,
y con decir que es tropos se arrodelan;

hacen candil la luna, incendio a Apolo,
peores que la dama de mi tierra,
que dijo en un bautismo birlo al volo. (109-120)

This section contains a brief metalinguistic reference to these poets' Latinist confusion, in "birlo al volo" (120).¹ The *culteranos*' attempt to adorn

poetry fails as they cannot even understand their own confusing speech, an example of which is their calling "a Scila latitante perra" (123). Lope continues: "Son todos sus caballos hipogrifos, / perlifican el alba, el día estofan / con tarjetas, florones y anaglifos" (124-126). The last line likens their poetry to overly superficial art intended to draw attention but devoid of meaning. Lope uses words innovatively, such as the verb "perlifican"; these elements are what Gonzalo Sobejano calls "neologismos improvisados" (20).

Lope likens this type of poetry to wine which ferments to vinegar, a metaphor of linguistic and esthetic impurity.

Hay plumas legas de melenas burdas,
poetas testarudos, gente ciega,
más desairados que una espada a zurdas.
También hay poesía que se pega
de tratar un amigo, como sarna,
y que toda en vinagre se trasiega. (142-147)

The finished product is only as good as its input, one which is severely flawed due to stupidity ("poetas testarudos", 143). As a result, these poets expend enormous amounts of energy only to arrive at poor language: "gente que se mata y se descarna, / y al cabo son como el que en una copla / quitó la u para decir *Cafarna*." (148-150)

In addition to being linguistically unskilled, these poets are worse for being unoriginal and guilty of literary felony. Aware of the work of others, they copy it but do not emerge unscathed: "Mil zánganos también, sólo zumbido, / en la miel trabajada de los otros, / porque traición o traducción ha sido." (154-156) All of this criticism contains a decidedly nationalistic element, as once again Lope implies a dichotomy whereby great Spanish poets – such as Garcilaso, Quevedo and others praised elsewhere, but not named here – are contrasted with bad ones, who do not belong in the Spanish canon due in part to their language. Their strangeness resembles outright barbarism: "Hay otros con las carnes como zapa / de poetas salvajes, cimarrones, / que no los pone en nuestra lengua el mapa." (163-165) The "us-them" distinction is apparent by the use of the possessive "nuestra", as the *yo* continues to judge poetry. The metalinguistic aspects of this *epístola* are intertwined with ethical and literary judgments: the poets commit improper acts by plagiarizing others and by using poor language while vainly striving for greatness. Propriety of personal and

artistic conduct is what Lope favors, who speaks as an authority on contemporaneous culture as much as individual behavior.

These issues of propriety take center stage in the next segment of this composition (169-351). Lope focuses again on the heinous practice of plagiarism and continues to attack bad poetry, but also introduces a markedly defensive stance when describing certain unnamed poets who wrote "sonetadas" against him. After telling Barrionuevo that he spends his time "Entre libros latinos y toscanos" (172), in the true vein of the literato, and after referring to a forthcoming extensive and Byzantine narrative work, *El peregrino en su patria* (176), Lope indicts those who publish material under his name and with some of his own words, but mostly with theirs. This seemingly strange practice of plagiarism occurs when these unnamed literary thieves try to have their works propagated under Lope's name, because they presumably would be more widely read – even if not acknowledged by name.

Cogen papeles de una y otra mano,
imprimen libros de mentiras llenos;
danme la paja a mí, llévanse el grano.

Veréis en mis comedias (por lo menos
en unas que han salido en Zaragoza)
a seis ringlones míos ciento ajenos;
porque al representante que los goza,
el otro que le envidia, y a quien dañan,
los hurta, los compone y los destroza.

Veréis tanto coplón, que aun los extrañan
los que menos entienden y que dicen
que sólo con mi nombre los engañan. (181-192)

The theme is literary authenticity and ethics: it is wrong, for the personal damage it does to Lope's honor and for the purposes of writing honestly, to plagiarize someone else and use his name while using largely apocryphal material.

Bewildered, Lope follows with a series of questions, lamenting "mis pesados versos" (194) and judging, "Los versos pervertidos son perversos" (196). Mary Gaylord's notion of Lope's hierarchical literature, where poetic theory, personal ethics and the power of the word are all properly defined, is helpful for understanding this fragment: "El mundo metafórico de la retórica anti-culterana de Lope es un mundo quintaesencialmente aristotélico y bíblico: en él todas las personas y las cosas tienen carácter,

función y lugar propios." (32) In addition to the notion of language being "proper" with respect to clarity, one of the epistle's underpinnings is the belief that "proper" language also includes an honest identification of the articulator of such language. Lope wishes to validate himself and warn Barrionuevo and the entire reading public of literature that is not really his. This ill-tailored and chimerical literature is thus summarized: "¿Qué mezcla de Segovia o tiritaña / ha tenido más listas y colores? / ¿Qué ambiguo tornasol que al sol engaña?" (202-204)

What Lope does in these protestations is to apply the familiar Golden Age theme of *desengaño*, in a way that is literary as it is personal. The revelation of the truth is essential to this poetic letter. With the poetic *yo* of a victim, Lope pleads with Barrionuevo to understand his feelings and to consider the stain upon his honor.

¿Para qué me he cansado tantos días,
si tienen este fruto mis trabajos?
En pobre mesa, ¿qué queréis, arpías?
Musas, ¿qué importan los honestos bajos,
entoldados de medias y chapines,
si os descubren juanetes y zancajos?
¿De qué sirven los verdes faldellines,
si el vulgo por los lodos os arrastra?
Hermosos pies, ¿por qué sufrís botines? (208-216)

His target includes the uncultured "vulgo"; the poets who drag his name "por los lodos" (215) do not belong to a more educated or eloquent class of people than the common masses whom Lope scorns so often. A second target is added for a brief segment: those who write sonnets against him. It is not believed to be Góngora who writes these anti-Lopesque sonnets, as seen in "Patos de la aguachirle castellana";² instead, it is certain poets of Seville who dislike Lope and his work. These poets, "por envidia[] le asestaban sus malignas composiciones." (Rodríguez Marín 266) Lope highlights his reaction to these calumnious writers and his defensive rage:

No se tiene por hombre el que primero
no escribe contra Lope sonetadas,
como quien tira al blanco de terrero.
Necios, no soy pared; si en las borradas
caber pueden de nuevo otros renglones,
éstas ya están del tiempo derribadas.
¿Soy yo vuestro zaguán, negros carbones?

¿Soy yo vuestro estafermo? ¿Es mi tarjeta
la obligada de tantos encontrones?

Luego se canoniza de poeta,
y a las musas del monte cabalino
despacha por el grado la estafeta,
cualquiera que ha enseñado a su vecino
el sonetazo escrito contra Lope,
y es discreto del conde palatino. (244-258)

Lope is offended by the fact that these very poets also aspire to Helicon's heights: "Éstos sí que caminan al galope / en el pobre Pegaso" (259, 260). The anger of the poetic *yo* is thus one directed at several groups of poets, all of whom bring indignity upon Lope's person as well as his art.

After detailing these indiscretions, Lope digresses somewhat by expounding on vice and virtue and on the particular wickedness of these enemies.

Y si quisiera hablar, ¿quién hay que al baño
vaya tan blanco, que desnudo diga
"Bien limpio estoy"? Y es todo mancha el paño.
Difícil es de ver la propia viga;
yo sé quien se pusiera colorado:
la paciencia ofendida a mucho obliga. (268-273)

Continuing to make character judgments, Lope attempts to impart some of his "worldly wisdom" to Barrionuevo and speaks as an authority on personal ethics as much as on literature. Phrases such as "el conocerse es celestial consejo" (303) abound. Lope reaches the height of his condemnation when he openly attacks all his targets together and labels their intellectual and artistic capacity as nothing but cheapened, false knowledge. Lope now purports to be an epistemological authority.

~Oh siempre archipedánticas personas,
mal gusto que se enfada de sí mismo,
maridos de las musas Amazonas;
centro de la ignorancia y idiotismo,
verso sexquipedal, prosa truhanesca,
de toda ceguedad confuso abismo!

~Oh bella librería villanesca,
ciencia resuelta entre la carne y cuero,
que, engañabobos, moscateles pesca! (319-327)

Another contrast becomes apparent when Lope speaks of his own poetic practices, specifically when writing about other poets. Unlike his enemies, Lope is respectful and honorable when he writes: "En honrar los ingenios me desvelo; / esto veréis en todos mis escritos / con pura voluntad, con limpio celo." (343-345) The assailant-victim relationship is fundamental to this epistle, although without explicitly naming the "poéticos mosquitos" (346) responsible.

The conclusion of the poem (352-370) invokes Barrionuevo's name once again and asks him to reply. Returning to other autobiographical elements, Lope closes his letter by referring to the poem's existence, granting it an overtly metapoetic character. As seen in many similar compositions, Lope ends by asking Barrionuevo, "y no os ofenda / este discurso tan prolijo y necio." (369, 370) *Captatio benevolentiae* is apparent, and perhaps appropriately so, after all the self-defense and counterattacks. Sobejano recapitulates Lope's foci in this poem, as in it

comunicaba el poeta a aquel amigo, ausente en la mar, noticias y juicios acerca de la poesía en España, le informaba de sus presentes labores literarias y le confiaba reflexiones morales contra la envidiosa murmuración y en favor del silencio y de la paciencia; todo ello, entre una invocación y una despedida... En el marco, pues, de una ocasional ausencia amistosa, el asunto primordial de la más temprana epístola al modo de Horacio, es la literatura. (19-20)

Similarly, in his anthology, Carreño provides a brief summary of this epistle:

La estancia de Lope en Sevilla, donde fue escrita (1603), y la nueva escuela culterana que surge en esta ciudad (es Herrera la máxima figura), representada por poetastros un tanto pedantes, sirve de fondo a las digresiones sobre lenguaje, formas, motivos, etc. Escrita en versos endecasílabos, ordenada en tercetos, forma típica de la epístola, representa un género que, siguiendo a Horacio, tuvo tantos imitadores. (224)

Lope is one such Horatian imitator, using the *epístola* to serve his own needs of literary speculation and personal justification. The self-validation seen above, however, is intimately linked to an attack on all those who dishonor him and his profession, whether it is the *culteranos*, his plagiarists, or his *ad hominem* attackers.

The collection of *La Filomena* (1621) is notable for its ten *epístolas*,

many of which are useful in gaining a further understanding of Lope's life and literary ideas. Two shall be examined herein. The first *epístola* was written in 1620 by Lope to a friend of his, Don Francisco de la Cueva y Silva, described in its supertitle as an "insigne jurisconsulto". Although "Francisco, yo no pude hallar, amando" (696-703) says relatively little about poetry itself, it does confront one of Lope's major concerns as a poet and public figure: criticism. In this instance, Lope writes to his friend about criticism leveled against him and comments on the behavior of these critics.³ He begins with an invocation to his reader to hear his "speech" regarding envy and criticism; such an invocation is a very broad reference to the literature that is to follow.

De hablaros esta vez tengo deseo
 en ciertos envidiosos, laberinto
 de donde sale la virtud Teseo.
 Pero si dilatado o si sucinto,
 en cosa tan infanie pongo el labio,
 y, siendo tan vulgar, la envidia os pinto (16-21).

It is appropriate that Lope focuses on the power of speech to condemn (or to defend oneself) in a missive addressed to someone who, being a lawyer, assuredly would understand such issues.

Lope briefly describes changes in Spanish poetry and the workings of the poetic mind before criticizing literary "harpies", poets of inferior quality who falsely claim to be moved by some inner numen. He reminds his reader that a writer is not automatically guided by such a spirit.

Hay en este lugar ciertas arpías
 destas que estudian, "oh qué ciencia rara!,
 sùmulas de Vilhán, noches y días,
 que cuando algún ingenio se prepara
 para escribir lo que estudiado tiene,
 dicen que cierto espíritu le ampara;
 dicen que a darle los conceptos viene,
 dicen que los hechiza y los perfuma,
 con cuyo engaño la opinión mantiene.
 Si no es que, como Sócrates, presuma
 que tiene este hombre algún aéreo genio
 que le sirve de espíritu a la pluma. (28-39)

As a parenthetical aside, Lope even tells Cueva what language he uses, which is not only a familiar nationalist statement of linguistic purity but also a metaphor of honesty and directness: "yo hablo en castellano, no os asombre" (47). He also tells his friend, "hablar con vos querría, / pero no de manera que os espante." (53, 54)

Referring thereafter to Cristóbal de Castillejo (698n) and his defense of traditional meter before the innovations of Boscán and Garcilaso – two poets Lope always respected, in spite of permanently changing the course of Spanish verse – Lope laments some of the changes introduced in Spanish poetry and the fashionable nature of novelty. In this manner, Lope demonstrates a certain reactionary approach to current literature. Unfortunately, he does not delve into this issue enough for the modern reader to see the precise changes he mentions, although it would appear that he refers to *culteranismo*.

No fue tenida en poco la poesía
 hasta que vino a España, ¡oh Castillejo!
 ¡Que bien de su venida hablar solía!
 Admírome de ver que el tiempo es viejo,
 y tanto de las cosas nuevas gusta,
 que parece de mozo su consejo. (55-60)

Romera-Navarro believes that indeed this is what Lope is doing: "En su epístola a D. Francisco de la Cueva, ... tras hacerle notar que en castellano le habla, y 'no os asombre', admírase de que siendo el Tiempo un anciano, tenga imprudencias de mozo al gustar tanto de las cosas nuevas: y tales novedades bien claro nos dice que son las del culteranismo." (296)

Abruptly, Lope begins to attack critics who make a living from their criticism and who are (predictably) neither literary authorities nor genuine creators of literature. Once again, Lope merges discursive with ethical commentary.

¡Oh qué contentos infinitos viven
 desto que llaman crítica censura!
 ¡Oh qué placer de criticar reciben!
 Gente pedante, faronesca y dura
 de su opinión, y que poner presumen
 en el mayor poder abreviatura.
 En ceros su aritmética resumen,
 y a pura detracción de ajena fama,

de envidia de los sabios se consumen.
 Aspiran a la verde inmortal rama
 por reprehensiones, no por propia pluma,
 que quieren tener fama porque infama. (70-81)

The people he describes criticize others liberally yet, talentless themselves, vainly aspire to literary immortality. Lope then adds: "Ya vistes la canción que en breve suma / refirió las grandezas de Onosandro, / el mar Tirreno y la celeste espuma." (82-84) Entrambasaguas believes this to refer to a missive of Lope's to the Duque de Osuna, which the humanist and critic, Francisco Pérez de Amaya⁴, had disliked and condemned. A number of biographical allusions to Pérez de Amaya abound, according to the eminent Lopist.⁵ He also adds other findings which indicate that Lope had disliked him; apparently, Pérez de Amaya was enamored of Góngora's work, and Entrambasaguas notes with weighted favoritism towards Lope, "El idólatra defensor de Góngora se atisba en las alusiones que hace a los culteranos." (II: 463) Lope condemns these critics along with Pérez de Amaya, calling them "poeticidas" (104) and asking a rhetorical question regarding their vices: "¿Qué importa del estudio el ejercicio, / si falta el ente donde está fundado, / y florece la borla con el vicio?" (94-96) Lope echoes his ethical preoccupation before closing the section: "¿Cuán fácilmente bárbaros castigan / ajenas obras, porque no hay espejo / no desengaño que sus faltas digan!" (121-123) The poet's intense response stems from a conflation of literary practice and perceived personal attack. Montesinos explains his emotional reaction: "Para él... toda crítica debía ser considerada como calumnia, toda censura como libelo." (198)

Before ending the epistle, Lope also indicates that he is secretly the role model of other poets: "Soy en secreto a muchos arquetipo, / que en público me niegan, mas no importa, / así de Marte y Venus participo." (136-138) They may be unwilling to acknowledge Lope as their source of inspiration, yet to him (and his ego), such intertextual relations are clear. He later likens his friend to a "castellano Demóstenes" (224), for although Cueva is not by trade a poet, his knowledge of legal studies gives him a linguistic edge which Lope respects.

In concluding, Lope uses *captatio benevolentiae* to draw attention to his daring lyre, though what he intends to do in reality is to eternalize his verse:

del más sacro laurel suspensa quede
 de vuestro templo mi atrevida lira,
 hasta que voz de más valor la herede,
 si a tanto ingenio humano aspira. (229-232)

This serves as a final insult against Pérez de Amaya and other potential censors, as Lope implicitly claims that his poetry does not need their approval because it will outlast their words. The epistle provides another *desengaño* as to the true nature of the critics who hold Lope in low regard and acts as a defensive vehicle for a poet victimized by unwarranted attacks. Sobejano succinctly analyzes the varied functions of the *epístola*: "Por debajo del juego que, como cualquier obra de arte ha de ser, la epístola poética 'familiar' puede funcionar como un medio de protección (defenderse) y de pretensión (aspirar al favor), pero significa también un modo de comunicación amistosa y de confesión para el propio descanso." (22) Equally accurate and helpful is Claudio Guillén's analysis: "Ciertamente lo principal es la querencia en Lope hacia el dialogismo, la amistad, la polémica, la seducción, o sea, todo cuanto supone siempre la copresencia implícita de un 'tú' que orienta, imanta y actualiza las palabras de un 'yo'...La carta enlaza el dentro con el fuera, el antes con el después." (167, 168)

The second *epístola* from *La Filomena* to be examined, and the second in the collection, is "Señor Doctor, yo tengo gran deseo", addressed to Doctor Gregorio de Angulo, Regidor de Toledo (704-714) and composed in 1608. Angulo was a Toledan jurist and poet, praised later in the lengthy lyric compendium honoring Spain's best poets, the *Laurel de Apolo*. Lope treats questions of poetic language and styles as well as the familiar question of *culteranismo*, while offering praise for certain poets. *Culteranismo* as a literary movement had not taken shape entirely by this date, though Lope senses the oncoming tendencies towards what he considered artificial language and forced Latinization and inserts his anxieties regarding these new trends. Juan Millé y Giménez remarks that this poem "nos permite estudiar el proceso creador de una de las corrientes literarias que iban a producir poco después el culteranismo." (159) Lope's ideal Baroque would therefore be a *pre-culterano* period, in which the basic lexicon of Spanish would remain unchanged.

Lope begins with a familiar entry, praising his addressee and offer-

ing autobiographical information (1-120), while including criticism of people's vices and several references to poetry. First, Lope uses *captatio benevolentiae* with respect to his style: "Que, puesto que el estilo no tuviese / aquella urbanidad, cultura y tropo / que a vuestro igual satisfacer pudiese" (4-6). Shortly thereafter, Lope adds certain anecdotal elements: as a writer, Lope was naturally forced to use the patronage system, although he did not always have a sponsor. Here, he writes Angulo about what it is like not to have one, and to disseminate his literature among the common people, who are vilified as uncultured and insolent citizens. The problem for Lope is that his own literature must pander to their tastes, thus adulterating his work. Lope's voice is markedly elitist:

que soy galán de las señoras musas,
y las traigo a vivir con el vulgacho,
ya de vergüenza de mi honor confusas.

Los labios angerónicos sellando,
con los afeminados megabizos,
estoy los semicapros escuchando.

Otras veces los hallo espantadizos,
cuando se representan las carocas,
en versos, si no bárbaros, mestizos.

No tengo mano para tantas bocas;
pues, pluma, ¿qué podrá, si yo desprecio
quimeras viles de palabras locas? (16-18, 25-33)

Lope's use of the adjectives "bárbaros" and especially "mestizos" in line 30 is noteworthy, and Gaylord's description of the poet's orderly worldview is again applicable. Lope still prefers his life as it is to having to wait for approval from noblemen and other figures of power: "lo tengo por mejor que a las paredes / digamos que tapiz es arrimado, / de sus figuras esperar mercedes." (43-45). Lope's life is characterized as such: "Ha dominado, pues, a la plebe; pero las clases ricas y cultas no le son favorables. Los pedantones especialmente no le perdonan su éxito." (Millé y Giménez 172) The literato's career is far from ideal, as Lope provides another colleague with a *desengaño* about what it takes to survive as a poet.

After noting his typical "digressions", Lope focuses on the pompous ways of the court and the difficulties he had there (121-183). Suddenly, he switches focus from behavioral concerns to literary ones and draws Angulo's attention to questions of language and style (184-240).

Lope laments the Latinizing trends burgeoning at the time and believes that they denigrate existing poetic traditions: "No habéis de decir bien de Garcilaso, / no hablar palabra que en romance sea, / sino latinizando a cada paso." (187-189) One prevailing practice of the day was to write treatises on poetry, drawing primarily from Aristotle. To be considered a true poet, one needs to do more than have these poetic manuals: it is necessary to use certain tropes as well.

Que a fe, Doctor, que no estudiéis de balde,
si encajáis de Marcial la chanzoneta.
¿No tenéis a Escalígero? Compralde,
porque jamás pareceréis poeta,
si alguna paradoja o desatino
no les encaramáis cada estafeta. (193-198)

"Desatino" and "estafeta" (197, 198) attest to Lope's sarcasm and his denunciation of what he saw. The poet "toma a risa los extravíos cultistas, el desdén con que los de la nueva escuela miran a Garcilaso, su latinización del castellano, sus paradojas y desatinos, sin los cuales no es posible parecer poeta (culterano)" (Romera-Navarro 296).

He then denounces what later came to be known as *culteranismo*, using once more a *culterano* metalanguage, which Romera-Navarro calls a "lista de voces culteranas, o que por tales las tenía el autor" (297). All of these elements are foreign to Lope, but earn poets praise in spite of their incomprehensibility.

Tal vez una palabra, como cuña,
de hebreo y griego es cordial bocado,
y sea de Vizcaya o Cataluña,
que no la entenderán, y acreditando
quedaréis en extremo, como alguno
que tiene más de un príncipe engañado.⁶

Diréis a mil preguntas, importuno,
en plática, de haber algún poeta,
latinos cuatro, y español ninguno.

Y advertid que el vocablo se entremeta;
verbigracia: *boato, asumpto, activo,*
recalcitrar, morigerar, seleta,
terso, culto, embrión, correlativo,
recíproco, concreto, abstracto, diablo,
épico, garipundio y positivo.

Jugaréis por instantes del vocablo,

como decir: *Si se mudó en ausencia,
ya no es mujer estable, sino establo.* (211-228)

Though humorous to the modern reader, Lope's play with the words he italicized above underscores his ridicule of the budding movement, as well as his familiar nationalist beliefs (noted by an implicit contrast between Castilian and the languages of Antiquity or of the *patrias chicas*). This linguistic fad is reflected in the court, as well as in poetry: "Que en la Corte no piensan que hay más ciencia / que hablar en jerigonza estos divinos / y andar con la gramática en pendencia." (229-231) Quevedo's "La culta latiniparla" again comes to mind, as Lope focuses on both literature and courtly behavior. This segment "está dedicada a hacer la crítica de los cenáculos literarios exaltadamente latinizantes de Madrid." (Millé y Giménez 160)⁷ Finally, Lope judges speech frankly and tersely: "Latín, señor Doctor, es pueblo en Flandes" (235), and "la presunción corre sin rienda." (240) Francisco de Cascales, who wrote his *Tablas poéticas* (1604, published 1617) before the definitive apogee of *culteranismo*, allowed for at least minimal linguistic obscurity but nothing that would stymie even the learned: "solamente vituperamos la Phrasis enigmática y obscura aun para los hombres doctos." (García Berrio 267) This sound advice, Lope might think, was not taken by such confusing writers.

The poem's final section offers praise for a number of poets and other intellectual figures, naming them. In this fashion, Lope provides a very personal contrast to the unnamed people who abuse language. Millé y Giménez observes that these poets closely resemble the same ones Lope later criticizes during the zenith of *culteranismo*, who are guilty of "la latinización excesiva del vocabulario y de la sintaxis, el abuso de la erudición clásica y de la mitología, juntamente con afectada oscuridad." (160)

Using the anaphora of "Veréis", Lope adds their names, including the Príncipe de Esquilache, Don Francisco de Borja y Aragón, referred to simply as "Borja" in line 244. The addressee of Lope's first *epístola* from this collection is present, don Francisco de la Cueva (260), as well as that of the collection's third, Baltasar Elisio de Medinilla (270), whose name is merged with the end of a larger segment on Quevedo:

Veréis otro Francisco, que renueva
con más divino estilo que el de Estacio
las silvas, donde ya vencerle prueba.
Si aquí tuviera ingenio, si aquí espacio,

yo os pintara a Quevedo, mas no puedo:
 que entré por el euripo de palacio.
 Veréis a don Francisco de Quevedo;
 no os quedará qué ver, si con él viene
 Elisio, honor y gloria de Toledo (262-270)

Vicente Espinel appears as the man whom Lope credits with the invention of the *décima* (271). Lope refers to the acts of composing and singing in "yo villancicos, Juan Blas los tonos" (278). However, as Romera-Navarro comments, "Haremos notar asimismo que... brilla por su ausencia el nombre de Góngora." (298) Lope concludes with more references to life in Madrid and the court, along with a final blessing for Angulo. In sum, the *epístola* stands as another document in Lope's long fight against *culteranismo*. Owing to its date of composition, it ends up as one of the seminal works in such a fight, "entre los primeros documentos en que Lope nos revela su oposición a las corrientes literarias que ante su vista plasmaban una nueva escuela." (Millé y Giménez 169) It also should not be surprising that Lope focuses less on the vicissitudes of his life than he does in later epistles which reflect the perspective *de senectute*.

La Circe (1624) offers the last *epístola* of this study. Judgments of poetic language, along with literary and autobiographical speculation, occupy the epistle to Francisco de Herrera Maldonado (1136-1147), the collection's fourth, believed to have been written in 1621.⁸ Herrera Maldonado was a priest who had translated a Marian poem by Jacopo Sannazzaro, *De partu Virginis*. Lope's poetic judgments here cover *culteranismo* far more overtly, while the rest of the epistle attempts to inform his friend of personal events, notably the religious vows taken by one of his daughters, Marcela, along with the exploits of a son, also named Lope.

The *epístola's* focus on language and poetry begins very late in the poem, as Lope describes *culteranismo* and its chief progenitor, Góngora, in less than flattering terms. A point-counterpoint structure becomes evident in this section (the epistle's last), along with another oppositional dialectic of "us" and "them":

Ya tienen las culturas inauditas
 un castellano Horacio en una puente,
 aficionado a voces trogloditas.
 Dice que quiero yo que se contente

de bajos ornamentos la poesía,
sintiendo lo contrario quien no siente. (280-285)

Lope characterizes their speech-acts as those of deaf-mutes, of "culturas inauditas", and of the rhyming "trogloditas". In this manner, he uses the power of his word to silence that of others. Lope resists the snide remarks of such people, such as the accusation of his using "bajos ornamentos" above, and defends language without unnecessary ornamentation.

Yo la lengua definiendo; que en la mía
pretendo que el poeta se levante,
no que escriba poemas de ataujía.
Con la sentencia quiero que me espante,
de dulce verso y locución vestida,
que no con la tiniebla extravagante. (286-291)

Again, Lope's language is proper and ordered, as Gaylord has noted. By this time, Góngora's movement had already become well-entrenched in Spanish letters, and thus it is not surprising that Lope spends considerably less time on such issues than he does elsewhere. The attacks against such a movement, however, are no less sharp than they were in other epistles; for example, Lope insistently uses the metaphor of darkness ("tiniebla", 291, and below) to characterize his poetic enemies. He voices confidence as a poet, and on this occasion his defensive stance does not result from anger or personal insecurity but rather the need to safeguard Spanish. This demonstration of typical Lopesque conservatism prejudices authors who, over time, contributed to the Baroque in their continuation of the then-fashionable tradition of *culteranismo*.

Another point-counterpoint coupling of tercets can be found when Lope mentions *culteranismo* by its name. Lope's familiarity with poetic scholars of the day, such as Bartolomé Jiménez Patón and Angel Manrique, is obvious in debunking the movement:

Allí nos acusó de barbarismo
gente ciega vulgar, y que profana
lo que llamó Patón *culteranismo*.
Yo voy con la dotrina castellana,
que fray Angel Manrique me aconseja,
por fácil senda, permitida y llana (295-300).

Jiménez Patón alludes to the tendencies of *culteranismo* in analyzing proper poetic diction: "Bárbara razón, que dicen 'bárbara lexis', es algo parecida al barbarismo; sólo hay diferencia que aquello se halla en dicción sola y esto no, sino en oración entera. Es cuando usamos de dicciones peregrinas, como mezclando latín en español y el español con latín... el lenguaje puro, propio y cortesano procura huir este vicio" (117). Lope's nationalism differentiates the "doctrina castellana" from the repeated metaphor of darkness, "las tinieblas" (303).

The poem concludes with laudatory strophes on the "claras luces de Esquilache" (Romera-Navarro 331). The Marqués de Esquilache rivals Italy itself in writing "Estancias" (310), a form invented there. He combines "lo dulce con lo grave" (314), and his honor "derriba todo bárbaro concilio" (321). Lope still does not fail to insert a nationalistic stance, in describing Esquilache as "poeta toledano, que no armenio" (315). Lope calls attention to epistolary discourse, in this case that which occurred between the Roman general Munacio Planco and Cicero, as he implies that he follows this time-honored tradition: "Dándole en una epístola elocuente / gracias a Cicerón Planco, su amigo, / por la defensa de su honor, ausente..." (322-324). Lope's voice is that of the "poeta muy consciente de sus ideales" (Sobejano 26), ones which had assuredly been tested on numerous occasions by the poets he speedily condemns in this missive.

From this study, several conclusions can be reached. One is that Lope uses the *epístola* as a literary defense mechanism for any perceived slights against his honor, both his public honor (as seen through the reception of, and reaction to, his literature) and his private honor (as seen through his general self-image as a confident writer and master of language.) What appears is a Lope constantly preoccupied not only with the state of poetry and with the various uses of language but also with the stance which the wider literary public takes with respect to his views. Another conclusion is that the *epístola* also serves as a vehicle for Lope to publicize his orthodox and nationalist views regarding the Spanish language in particular. Poetry must be written in a Spanish untainted by Latin (or by any other idiom), and the intelligence with which a poet infuses his work resides fundamentally in its manipulation of the poet's native tongue. In using the *epístola* to advocate these ideas, Lope constructs his own image as that of a self-appointed authority on the vernacular and its lyrical

usage. Finally, the *epístola* can be considered a means of defining human discourse in general, and is thus not a genre confined in this case to the examination of literary language alone. The *epístola* is one discursive resource which Lope uses to distinguish that which is linguistically proper from that which is not. As a result, through writing these works Lope both validates his own speech (and anyone else's whose word is deemed honorable and appropriate) and condemns language which is outside the esthetic and ethical boundaries he establishes. Theory and literature are merged in the *epístolas*, and it is hoped that further study may be undertaken in examining other ways in which Lope treats literary discourse through itself.

Sacred Heart University

Mark J. Mascia

NOTES

¹ Carreño explains their own confusion over the Latin expression uttered during the ceremony of baptism: "alude a la confusión, dada la ignorancia, de la expresión latina que se enuncia en el bautismo, *volo*: quiero, por 'bolo', del juego de este nombre, también llamado 'birlo'; en lenguaje de germanía, ladrón." (286n)

² With original orthography, Góngora's well-known anti-Lope sonnet reads as follows:

Patos de aguachirle Castellana,
Que de su rudo origen facil riega,
I tal vez dulce inunda nuestra Vega;
Con razon Vega por lo siempre llana:
Pisad graznando la corriente cana
De el antiguo idioma, i turba lega,
Las ondas accusad, quantas os niega
Attico estylo, erudicion Romana.
Los cysnes venerad cultos, no aquellos
Que escuchan su canoro fin los rios;
Aquellos si, que de su docta espuma
Vistiò Aganippe. Huis? No quereis veellos,
Palustres aues? Vuestra vulgar pluma
No borre, no, mas charcos, Zabullios. (1970: 5, 6)

³ One of these critics is probably the grammarian and professor at the University of Alcalá de Henares, Pedro de Torres Rámila, described in far greater detail in a number of other poems written by Lope. Perhaps the longest extant anti-Torres Rámila composition is the "Segunda parte de la *Filomena*" (1989: 577-611), in which Lope creates a fictitious literary battle between himself (cast as the *filomena*, or nightingale) and Torres Rámila (the *tordo*, or thrush), with the predictable result of Lope's victory. Here, however, Lope de-

votes just one line to his relations with the academic: "y al negro tordo el ruiseñor agosto" (9).

⁴Pérez de Amaya was a learned man who attained university degrees in Canon law and was well-read in the humanities and in law, including civil law. He also had written books, including heavily favorable commentaries of Góngora's *Polifemo* and the *Soledades*. (I: 325n, 326n) However, he was not a creator of literature at all, but rather a critic on the outside looking in. He apparently did not entertain Lope's response as a result: "permanecía alejado del mundillo de las letras, que fueron en su vida accesorias." (II: 464) Regarding the *canción* that Lope had written to the Duque de Osuna for the latter's arrival in Spain from Naples, see Castro and Rennert, *Vida de Lope de Vega*, 359 and 553.

⁵See Entrambasaguas II: 465-466 and subsequent footnotes for examples. One of them is on 466n, where Lope states, "y de los libros vuelven a los bueyes." (105) Entrambasaguas sees this as a possible reference to Pérez de Amaya's peasant background and a slight on Lope's part against him for his origins. Lope's problem was not only that Pérez de Amaya had criticized him, but also that he was far more professionally involved in legal affairs than in literature.

⁶Regarding this reference, Romera-Navarro asks a question and answers it subsequently by saying, "¿Quién podía ser este escritor que tenía a más de un príncipe engañado con su nueva poesía, sino Góngora?... Era ciertamente Góngora, el de gustos aristocráticos, el bienquisto con la nobleza." (297)

⁷It should be mentioned that Millé y Giménez adds some very personal judgments of his own regarding these "cenáculos" and Góngora himself: "la pedantería de los doctos impondría también allí desgraciadamente su huella. Góngora, influido por los cenáculos latinizantes, trataría de pensar a veces en latín lo que debía escribir en castellano, y de ahí su retorcido y a veces incomprensible hipérbaton." (177)

⁸Sobejano's dating indicates this particular year (23), while Montesinos gives 1623 as the year of composition (197n), owing to the year in which Lope's daughter, Marcela, became ordained.

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