Ethics and Economies of Art in Renaissance Spain: Felipe de Guevara's Comentario de la pintura y pintores antiguos *

by ALEJANDRA GIMÉNEZ-BERGER

The Comentario de la pintura y pintores antiguos (Commentary on Painting and Antique Painters) *by the humanist Felipe de Guevara stands as the first art treatise of its type produced in Renaissance Spain. Critical studies underscore the reliance on ancient texts in spite of significant divergences from the sources. Philological studies of near-contemporary texts and a close reading of the author's extant writings provide an alternative framework for understanding these transformations. Through the appropriation of ancient texts, Guevara calls for the practical overhauling of the Spanish artistic system. The text addresses the art of painting as having both transcendental and intrinsic values, focusing on its formative capabilities and virtue ethics as the most important for the former, and its role in the larger Spanish economy for the latter.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1563, responding to economic and image-management problems at the Spanish court of Philip II (1527–98), the career courtier and humanist Don Felipe de Guevara (ca. 1500–ca. 1563) drafted his second book, the *Comentario de la pintura y pintores antiguos* (*Commentary on Painting and Antique Painters*). A compilation of antique histories annotated with suggestions on how the arts might improve the moral and financial health of the country, it is the first treatise of its type in Spain. The *Comentario* presents a singular approach to the genre: its author, not an artist, defends the superior judgment of the educated viewer while

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proposing a theory for the regulation of taste, recognizing the powers and dangers of images as key components of ideological figuration and as commodities.

Revisiting the *Comentario* as a product meant for the education of the king reveals its congruency with contemporary political theories and budding political economies cultivated by Spanish humanists in the second half of the sixteenth century. Echoing the moral philosophy of current political theory, the text shows a notable affinity with the ideologies that informed Habsburg portraiture during the first decade of Philip's reign. An important concept that emerges from this reading is the *imitativa imaginaria* (imitation in the mind or mimetic imaginary), which the author elucidates for Philip's benefit as an empowering instrument in the sustenance of cultural habits and long-lasting stereotypes. Through the discussion of imitation as a cognitive process, Guevara enlightens the art patron on the malleable nature of public opinion and the power of painting to shape collective responses. Beyond aiming to control public opinion, however, he delineates the relationship between moral education and financial prosperity, advancing art as a means to challenge social ills and economic failures, prescribing the controlled production of art for the achievement of the common good.

Guevara's understanding of the power of images as vehicle for moral education and his familiarity with the financial needs of the court stemmed from knowledge accrued after a long life at the service of the Habsburg house. His background and interests placed him at an advantageous position in matters related to artistic taste and courtly ideologies as well. Born in Brussels, he was the illegitimate and only son of Don Diego de Guevara (d. 1520), who served at the court of Philip the Handsome (1478–1506). Like his father, he received an extensive education, developing a love for art and amassing a significant collection of paintings by renowned artists, such as Jan van Eyck (ca. 1399–1464) and Hieronymus Bosch (ca. 1450–1516). In his early twenties, Guevara joined the household of Charles V (1500–58), who became his protector. In the mid-1530s, he accompanied Charles to Bologna for his imperial coronation, and later to Tunis where he earned praise for his valor — events he recalls in the *Comentario*.[1] He also served as *gentilhombre de la boca* (gentleman of the mouth) of the emperor,[2] but this

[1]Guevara, 1788, 103. All subsequent quotations will be from this edition.

[2]*Gentilhombres de boca* were responsible for serving meals to the royals and escorted the monarch in public outings. The position most likely contributed to Guevara's education in humoral medicine (which was very much concerned with dietary habits) and issues of self-presentation. See *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*, s.v. "gentilhombre de boca."

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did not preclude his humanist studies. By 1556, his reputation as an intellectual gained him an invitation to contribute to the allegorical program devised for the official welcoming ceremonies of Philip II at Alcalá de Henares; the dedicatory inscriptions he created for the occasion were published immediately after the celebrations. After this date, he continued to serve as *gentilhombre de boca* for the new monarch, who recognized him as a leading antiquarian and commissioned him to study and arrange the royal collection of antique coins.[3] At Guevara's death, his manuscript on numismatics became part of the royal collection at El Escorial.[4] Philip further demonstrated the high regard he had for Guevara's judgment and aesthetics when, in 1570, he issued a rare order of alienation of the author's estate that allowed for the purchase of his art collection, along with several households and important manuscripts from his library.[5] The now-lost manuscript of the *Comentario* passed to the royal architect, Juan de Herrera (ca. 1530–97),[6] whose output — particularly in terms of the unadorned style of El Escorial — shares with Guevara, to a remarkable degree, a disdain for irrationality.

Letters from several professors at Alcalá reveal that, like his book on numismatics, Guevara's *Comentario* was to be a welcome contribution to their discourses. Its unprecedented combination of aesthetics, politics, and economics might have fueled some debate indeed, had Guevara not died before its publication. After the death of Juan de Herrera (its last and only known sixteenth-century owner), the manuscript was lost until Antonio Ponz (1725–92) published it under the shortened title, *Comentarios de la pintura*, in 1788.[7] Ponz received, in 1776, the position of secretary of the Royal Academy of San Fernando, which he held until 1790. He was then named honorary counselor by King Charles IV of Spain (1748–1819), for whom he had curated portrait galleries, decorated royal residences, and studied the contents of the library at El Escorial. His most famous work, the *Viage de España* (*Travels through Spain*, 1772–94), aimed to rescue Spain's reputation abroad through a celebration of its landscapes, art, and

[3]Vaquero Serrano, 94, 198–200; Collantes Terán, 62; Mora, 79.

[4]He is now recognized as one of the fathers of numismatics in Spain: see Mora.

[5]Matilla Tascón.

[6]Vázquez Dueñas, 33.

[7]The last notice of the manuscript in the sixteenth century appears in the inventory of the belongings of Juan de Herrera, dated 1597. Subsequently, the manuscript was lost until Josef Alphonso de Roa found it and gave it to Ponz, only to disappear again after its publication. A prepublication manuscript copy is housed at the Biblioteca del Museo del Prado, MS/8. For a brief comparison of this copy to the Ponz edition, see Vázquez Dueñas, 37–40.

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antiquities. Like Guevara, Ponz openly rejected antiquarianism for its own sake as he sought to provide his king with useful strategies for development.[8] He found in the *Comentario* an example that demonstrated both the intellectual richness and economic potential of his country, highlighting in the prologue and in footnotes the ways in which the patronage of Philip II paralleled that of Charles IV, evincing its continued relevance in the late eighteenth century.

Besides noting the ways in which the text addresses moral education and mercantile activity as means to the common good, Ponz commented on its classicist aesthetics, an aspect that the influential art historian Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo (1856–1912) characterized as intolerant and ignorant, erroneously ascribing to Guevara a dislike of High Renaissance painting.[9] Nonetheless, Menéndez y Pelayo shared with Ponz a desire to support the study of national history. To this end, he gave significant attention to the *Comentario*, pointing out the novel character of Guevara's discussions on imitation and taste. Guevara, as he puts it, "expressed with unsurpassable skill . . . the following transcendental affirmations: 1st. [That] the critical faculty, in essence, does not differ from the aesthetic faculty . . . 2nd. [That there is] a close relationship between the work of art and the temperament of its author . . . 3rd. [That there are] intellectual exchanges between the artist and his public . . . 4th. [That] there is a relationship between the artwork and the milieu in which it is born . . . 5th. The importance of the study of history, not only to find subjects, but also to delve into the local color required by each [visual] argument; 6th. The importance of 'the study of Philosophy, to conceive more greatness and more fantastic conceptions of admirable subjects.'"[10] These affirmations about the nature of taste, art, and its environment as the source of stereotypes; the need for education as a prerequisite for art making; and the impressionable nature of viewers create an inextricable link between art and morality. While they overlook the political and economic aspects of the text, they rightly highlight Guevara's contribution to the elevation of painting as a primary agent in the formation and propagation of virtue ethics.

Surprisingly, the issue addressed by Ponz and Menéndez y Pelayo — Guevara's interest in the relationship between moral education, artistic theory, and prosperity — does not figure as the primary concern in scholarship of the last century. English-language studies tend to focus on a few passages of the *Comentario* that describe the works of Hieronymus

[8]Román.
[9]Menéndez y Pelayo, 2:394.
[10]Ibid., 2:393.

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Bosch.[11] Studies in Spanish are more varied, but they are generally concerned with a few important research paths. Scholarship by Fernando Checa Cremades and Miguel Falomir Faus ties Guevara to the artistic programs supported by Emperor Charles V and Philip II, elucidating the collecting and displaying practices at the Habsburg courts.[12] Another group of scholars has contributed enormously to Guevara studies by rescuing his biography and reputation, compiling and publishing his works.[13] The publication of his correspondence with the rhetorician and epigraphist Álvar Gomez de Castro (1515–80) by María del Carmen Vaquero Serrano, and the rediscovery of his manuscript on numismatics are important examples.[14] A promising evaluation of his theory of mimesis by Ana Gonzalo Carbó stemmed from this area of study, similarly underscoring his reliance on antique texts in spite of significant divergences found throughout his text. Paradoxically, Gonzalo Carbó explains some of these divergences as errors in translation, as a type of narcissist posturing that might unravel if the reader recognizes the inconsistent use of ancient sources.[15] This misunderstanding undermines Guevara's appropriation of antique texts to advance his arguments on the foundations of moral character and dismisses his economic advice.

This essay contributes to Guevara studies by taking a closer look at the ethical, aesthetic, and economic features of the text first brought to attention by Ponz and Menéndez y Pelayo. It examines their correlation as revealed by practices of art making, buying, and viewing described in the *Comentario*. The complex and somewhat disorganized character of the treatise requires a careful consideration of three specific aspects that, while intertwined in its pages, are here presented separately to facilitate their study: its courtly context, its humanist approach, and its function as economic counsel.

[11]Recent examples that cite Guevara in discussions of Bosch include Bosing, 7; Silver, 134, 136–37, 147, 280n21. For specific discussions of Bosch's fantasies, discussed vis-à-vis Guevara's interpretation of classical *grylloi*, see Koerner, 74–76, 93–95; Dempsey, S248. Many authors cite Guevara's method for spotting copies and fakes of Bosch; an interesting relationship between attribution and the art market is discussed by Marchi and Miegroet, 455. For a brief discussion of Guevara's rhetorical tone, again in terms of understanding Bosch, see Becker, 77.

[12]Checa Cremades; Faus, 2000, 117. An exception to the trend is Gonzalo Carbó, who examines Guevara's understanding of mimesis in comparison to his Italian contemporaries.

[13]This line of inquiry was initiated by Sánchez Cantón, 1923, 1:189–92; and Allende-Salazar. It was continued by Benet, in the second edition of the *Comentarios de la pintura*. More recently, see Vaquero Serrano; and Collantes Terán.

[14]For the book on numismatics, see Mora.

[15]Gonzalo Carbó, 90–91.

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Firstly, as a conversation with the king, the text relies heavily on its courtly context. Guevara held a unique position as a career courtier in two Habsburg courts and their intellectual circles, wielding significant agency at a moment in Spanish history when the visual arts became key components in the sustenance of monarchic ideology. This calls for an examination of the larger cultural context that inspired him, which will provide a clear framework on which to build an interpretation, and in the process will elucidate some of the intellectual topoi that supported his use of art as means to improve the lives and the mores of his compatriots.

Secondly, as part of a larger Renaissance discourse on the status of the arts, the text relies on the translation and appropriation of ancient sources. As Menéndez y Pelayo noted, Guevara's reading of these sources led him to equate the ability to create with the critical faculty. What the scholar did not note, however, was that in defining the locus of both creativity and aesthetic judgment in the imagination, Guevara proposed that these aesthetic faculties could be manipulated through their visual inputs: nature and art. This argument relies on a creative rewriting of a passage from Philostratus's *The Life of Apollonius of Tiana*, and thus significant attention to it is needed. This appropriation must be set in the humanist context of the court in order to gauge its relevancy to and possible agency upon its intended reader. Like his fellow courtiers, Guevara focused his attention on the decorum of figural presentation and representation, therefore this study examines the Habsburg constructs of the body as index of exemplary virtue and the inherent dangers posed by abnormal figuration as an agent of moral corruption.

Thirdly, as economic counsel, the text manipulates Scholastic notions of fair pricing and introduces a political economy that encourages royal patronage, thus extending its agency beyond ethics and aesthetics. Ponz praised the "healthy and wise [economic] policy"[16] proposed in the *Comentario* as another parallel to the patronage of Charles IV, revealing the text's continuing usefulness, in spite of its age, as part of the tradition of mirror of princes and the humanist discourses on good government. Following a rich variety of antique and humanist examples, Guevara addresses the needs of the common good not only by providing means to enhance moral virtues, but also by suggesting ways through which the king might take care of the material needs of his people. Therefore, this study closes with an examination of this pragmatic aspect, demonstrating the author's attempt to offer practical solutions to real problems.

[16]Guevara, 1788, 115n1.

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2. Difficulties at Court

Guevara and the members of the humanist circle to which he belonged were the primary architects and executors of programs that contributed to the royal iconography and intellectual output of Philip's reign. They focused, among other things, on the role of the monarch as exemplary model and as the head of a large family — his empire — who had responsibility for its financial management. Although often characterized as a "noble gentleman who served under Charles V"[17] or a member of the old guard, most of Guevara's known literary output was produced during the first decade of Philip's reign. This was a period of definitions for the king and his Spain. As demonstrated by Checa Cremades, the need to institute a unified, stable, courtly, and majestic iconography had eluded Charles V; Philip's choice to establish a permanent court (rather than to maintain the itinerant practices of his father) demanded careful reconsideration of royal representations and settings.[18] The search for a visual identity for the monarch — and, by extension, for the nation — is apparent in the development of the state portrait at this pivotal moment.

New formulas in the representation of the monarchic ideals, as embodied by Philip, were quickly assimilated into the language of public displays and performances, evolving along with the creation of a specific iconographic program that encompassed art, architecture, and literature. The increase in artistic commissions addressing those needs had begun prior to Charles V's abdication in 1556, but other projects initiated by Philip — such as the writing of histories, the systematic survey of Iberian territories, and the visual recording of towns — were part of this larger cultural program. These projects, however, were not cultivated for their own sake or solely as propaganda; the most salient products of Philip's patronage catalogued the natural resources and mercantile activities of his European holdings, which undoubtedly were evaluated for their financial potential after Philip's inherited debts forced the declaration of bankruptcy in 1557 and the default on loan payments in 1560.

By the time Guevara crafted his *Comentario*, humanist courtiers and scholars had begun to refine Philip's personal iconography in response to these and other challenges, including his failure to win the bid for the imperial throne and the repercussions of the reluctant attitude of the Spanish kingdoms to accept, in the figure of Charles V, a foreign ruler. Artists needed to develop a visual vocabulary that emphasized the financial acumen,

[17]Menéndez y Pelayo, 2:391.
[18]Checa Cremades, 369.

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political capability, and Spanishness of the new king, while presenting him as an imperial and, more importantly, likeable paradigm. This was much harder to accomplish than it might seem. The *distanciamiento* (ritual distancing of the king from his subjects) characteristic of Castilian and Portuguese etiquette had caused serious difficulties in image management in the early years of Philip's political life. The censure of Philip's courtiers, the negative international responses, and the political pressures to fashion an image that would be amenable to a diverse European audience found a response in the portrait formulas elaborated in works such as *King Philip II of Spain* in courtly garb by Anthonis Mor (ca. 1517–77) (fig. 1), or its military counterpart by Titian (ca. 1488–1576) (fig. 2). The iconography of the state portrait crystallized in the 1560s in works by Alonso Sánchez Coello (1531/32–1588) and Sofonisba Anguissola (ca. 1532–1625), among others, as Philip's advisors presented him with exemplary, authoritative examples, primarily embodied by the public image of his father. The contents and timing of the *Comentario* suggest that Guevara intended to address those same concerns. Furthermore, his focus on the depiction of the human figure as signifier of moral virtue links the text directly to the ruler's visual portrait as didactic and exemplary.

3. A Humanist Exercise

The aptly titled *Comentario* comprises a history of antique painting laced with explanations and comparisons to the state of the arts in Spain, which the author includes to promote the revival of antique aesthetics as a means to ensure the virtuous development and prosperity of the people — to usher in a golden age. In terms of its contents, the book is difficult to categorize, but in claiming that he writes to "entertain [himself], gathering [ideas about] antique Painting and Sculpture [that he] had read in passing," Guevara sets the mode of discourse that allows him a greater freedom of expression.[19] Gleaned mostly from the thirty-fifth book of Pliny's *Natural History* and enriched by the author's engagement with other antique texts and contemporary writings, the work appears at first as a disordered compilation of ideas. Careful reading, however, reveals a pattern of discussion in which the author presents the advantages of historical knowledge for the development of Spanish artists and patrons.

The book begins with a dedication to Philip that legitimizes painting as an object of royal patronage, linking it to agriculture and architecture, arts that offer nourishment and shelter for the body as well as harmony and order

[19]Guevara, 1788, 1.

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FIGURE 1. Anthonis Mor. *King Philip II of Spain*, 1549–55. Bilbao, Museo de Bellas Artes / Madrid, Caylus Anticuario / The Bridgeman Art Library.

for the soul, thus establishing a link between economic and ethical principles. These initial sections rely on Xenophon, Hippocrates, Philostratus, and examples from Pliny. A series of definitions open the "Discourse on Painting" proper, identifying what the art of painting is and is not, characterizing the nature of the visual experience and its relationship to current physiognomic theories. After defining painting as the representation of "that which is or can be,"[20] the text lists and explains a variety of widely ranging media — textiles, glass, intarsia, and encaustic, for example — all of which are considered to belong to the realm of the art in question. Pliny provides the backbone without limiting the discussion — in fact, Guevara departs from his source when he incorporates an original history of glass painting and when, imitating

[20]Ibid., 9.

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FIGURE 2. Titian. *King Philip II*, 1550. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado / Giraudon / The Bridgeman Art Library.

Pliny's tone, he adds a response to each of the arts he discusses, following with speculations about their feasibility in the present. The latter exercise often includes a critical evaluation of the economic potential of each particular mode, material, or technique in Spain.

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The middle chapters turn to a history of Greek and Roman painters; some biting annotations about the state of the arts and patronage in Spain color a narrative that otherwise follows Pliny closely. The section on Roman painters provides a brief reprieve from criticism, but the whole chapter seems unfinished. Upon reaching the reign of Vespasian — "the beginning of the downfall of Painting" — the text segues to the present, reminding the reader of that Renaissance commonplace that blamed the Gothic for the slumber of the art and praised Italy for its reawakening.[21] Here, however, he adds two important agents of revival: Flemish painters and Philip himself. New patronage demands close policing, and for this argument, Guevara relies on Plato and Aristotle as guides for the ethical aspects of painting, and on Lucian and Philostratus to inform the aesthetic. An intriguing comparison between the Egyptian and Mesoamerican uses of painting links the past with the present and illustrates his claim that all art must conform to the educated judgment of the elite if it is to have a positive effect upon all levels of society. The text closes abruptly with an encouraging call to Spanish artists to cultivate the resurgence of good judgment in the arts. Nowhere in the text is it clearer that the call for the revival of antique techniques in Spain is the unifying force of the "Discourse," supporting Guevara's aesthetic vision for his country as the locus for the reconstruction of antique greatness.

That vision contrasts with Guevara's opinion on the current situation. He despairs at the loss of quality and general laziness of artists and patrons alike, fearing, perhaps, a further loss of economic and didactic potential. Yet, although highly critical of the lack of judgment that has led to the decline of taste and production, he does not name any of the artists he criticizes and identifies only a few whose works demand praise. A handful of artists from the early and High Renaissance illustrate the desirable qualities of painting: Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden (ca. 1395–1441) epitomize the achievement of exquisite verisimilitude in oil; Hieronymus Bosch shows the proper restraint that the artist must apply to his fantasies; Raphael Sanzio (1483–1520) and Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1565) represent the ability to synthesize and emulate the ancients, respectively. Biographical notes and examples of their works are conspicuously missing from the argument, except in the case of Bosch, whose works demonstrate the correct and incorrect ways of exercising the imagination. Since both Guevara and Philip collected his works, Bosch afforded ready examples to illustrate the nature of decorum, thus addressing the virtue ethics of good painting and the role of the art patron in its dissemination. For the same reason, Bosch's paintings

[21]Guevara, 1788, 225.

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serve to prove that art of outstanding quality, while demanding high prices initially, endures through time.

Guevara's inconsistent depth of analysis obscures these important issues. This, in turn, has precluded a clear understanding of the author's initial intentions. The uneven citation of sources, while common for the time, has led to the accusation that like many other Renaissance authors, he simply "appropriated the intellectual work of others . . . to boast of an erudition [he] did not possess," a lack supposedly made evident when he "translates [a dialogue by] Philostratus erroneously."[22] It is worth noting that, in spite of writing in a period when predatory borrowings from ancient texts were common, Guevara cites his sources more often than not.[23] He names at least thirty ancient authors (some paraphrased by Pliny, who is identified sixty-three times), and consistently identifies the sources of direct quotations. The most noticeable failure to cite a source occurs early in the text, in the passage based on Philostratus that has led to scholarly criticism of Guevara's translation practices. Since the passage defines the interplay between imitation and the cognitive processes that define the self,[24] it is imperative to consider how the rewritten version of the ancient passage differs from the original, as well as the impact of the revisions in furthering the author's search for the common good.

In order to address these issues, it is necessary to set aside a discussion of the ethical, aesthetic, and economic contents of the text for the moment, to unravel Guevara's approach and humanist interpretive method. The passage in question appears in the opening paragraphs of the "Discourse on Painting," immediately following the dedication to Philip. Guevara asserts that although the painter is primarily required to imitate nature, creativity is, nonetheless, the realm of art and thus painting must comprise the faculties of invention and fantasy. To explain the correlation between imitation and invention, he appropriates various sections from *The Life of Apollonius of Tiana* by Philostratus. The original presents a dialogue in which the characters, Apollonius and Damis, discuss the qualities of painting. At Apollonius's prompting question, "what does the [art of painting] do?" Damis defines it as a "[mixing] of colors . . . for the sake of imitation."[25] Invoking the common experience of *pareidolia* (whereby vague or ambiguous shapes, such as clouds, are thought to resemble something else), Apollonius challenges Damis's assumption that painting is mere imitation, calling

[22]Gonzalo Carbó, 99.

[23]Guevara occasionally mistakes a chapter of Pliny for another.

[24]Guevara, 1788, 9–12.

[25]Philostratus, 1989, 173–79.

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attention to the importance of fantasy in art. Guevara transforms the conversation between Apollonius and Damis into a monologue. It seems unlikely that such a drastic change would have resulted from an error in translation. Moreover, it is important to note that through this alteration the ancient dialectic becomes prescriptive, clearly establishing a discursive mode from the beginning of the text and at the central point of proof.

Understanding this departure from the ancient dialogue as a choice rather than a mistake is necessary to evaluate the persuasiveness of the argument. As a humanist active in the most revered intellectual circles in Spain, Guevara was well aware of the challenges of translation. He had taught himself Latin late in life, and in writing and translating he seems to have developed the habit of consulting with professors he had met earlier at Alcalá, who were his friends and tutors to his son Diego.[26] Extant letters addressed to Álvar Gómez de Castro elucidate Guevara's desire for accuracy and profound knowledge of antique sources, as well as his easy reliance on the opinion of professional scholars.[27] A letter sent in 1555 communicates Guevara's own reaction to incorrect citations when he requests verification of a passage found in *De Roma Triumphante* (1459) by the Italian historian Flavio Biondo (1392–1463).[28] Other correspondence illustrates his thorough research methods, consulting and citing antique sources (Tacitus, Livy, Pliny, Cicero, Cassiodorus), Renaissance texts (Biondo, Vasari), and his fellows' opinions in order to identify a single coin.[29] More importantly, the text of the *Comentario* evinces a clear acceptance of fallibility when the author simply states that he has never heard of certain Latin or Greek words and thus does not know their meaning.[30]

Guevara's approach to the ancient sources makes more sense when considered in terms of humanist practice rather than as the work of a dilettante. During the previous century, Castilian humanists concentrated on the recuperation of Greek and Latin texts and their *romanceamiento* (translation into a Romance language). By the end of the first quarter of the sixteenth century, however, the concerns had expanded well beyond that initial Renaissance impetus. The strengthening of Castilian as the primary language of the Crown spurred, for example, the humanist desire to create works that could compete in content and impact with those of the antique

[26]Vaquero Serrano, 93–116.
[27]Ibid., 109.
[28]Letter most probably to Álvar Gómez in 1555: see ibid., 122.
[29]Ibid., 122–23.
[30]For example, see Guevara, 1788, 62.

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past.[31] These concerns applied to translations from other contemporary languages as well. This is seen in much of the *Diálogo de la lengua* (*Dialogue on the Language*, ca. 1535–36) by Juan de Valdés (1495–1541), who praised the translation practices of Juan Boscán (1492–1542), especially his interpretation of Baldassare Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*, 1528). It is important to note that Valdés considers Boscán's *El Cortesano* (1534) as much more than a simple *romanceamiento* or translation *ad literam*; he understands it as a transmutation from one language to the other, in which the interpretation of the ideas communicated in the original language are presented in new, culturally appropriate terms in the language of the translator, *ad sensum*.[32]

Philological studies of near-contemporary texts, such as Margherita Morreale's comparative analysis of Castiglione's *Cortegiano* versus Boscán's *El Cortesano*, demonstrate the intentional processes of the sixteenth-century translator who aims to interpret Italian cultural concepts to Castilian habitus. While the goal of this study is not to provide a philological analysis of Guevara's translations, Morreale's insight can serve as a lens through which approaches to the *Comentario*, and to Renaissance translations in general, might be reframed. Boscán's translation of *Il Cortegiano* is arguably the critical step in the process of transformation and assimilation of the ideals culled by Castiglione into an aesthetic theory and practice of self-presentation at Philip II's court. Aware of the cultural differences between the two nations, Boscán interprets those customs that are foreign to his Spanish readers, and thus affords views of the Spanish assimilation of ideas on ideal courtiership. Morreale notes that semantically *El Cortesano* is characterized by an interpretation of the elegant abstractions of Castiglione into corporeal images. For example, Castiglione's *infamia* (infamy) becomes *deslustre* (tarnish).[33] Other concepts are equally tied to the physical realities of the body, and thus manifest themselves either as belonging to the physical body or as bodily experiences: *aver cognizione* (to have knowledge) in Castiglione becomes *tener buen ojo* (to have a good eye) in the translation, *gratissima* (pleasing) becomes *que tanto suele contentar a nuestros ojos* (that so often brings happiness to our eyes).[34] As Morreale eloquently puts it, "something as abstract as the expression of moral conduct is expressed in the translation as the vicissitudes of a material object. . . . Through verbs of

[31]Micó, 176. For an effective description of the intellectual environment, see Middlebrook.

[32]Valdés and Garcilaso de la Vega cited in Micó, 178.

[33]Boscán, 13–157.

[34]Morreale, 24, 59.

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generic and abstract sense, Castiglione alludes and judges with elegant detachment, almost without coming into contact with reality; while in the Spanish text the subject is submerged in its material being."[35]

Guevara embraces this humanist method, appropriating the ancient text and turning his attention to the process of figuration beginning with the object in nature and ending with the art object, mediated by the culturally conditioned imaginations of both patrons and artists. By rewriting Philostratus, Guevara is able to present the various types of imitation discussed in his source while recasting each type as aspects of a singular process that begins with the apprehension of a natural or artificial object and continues in the mind affecting, and being subject to, both the temperament and the physical qualities of the artist. This, in turn, affects the creation of an art object, completing a circle of influences upon both the imagination and art production. Each instance of representation contributes not only to the country's productivity, but, more importantly, becomes part of an ever-growing imagined narrative of being. The dissemination of such narratives through art forms emphasizes individual and collective identities, and thus affects the ethical development of both.

4. Imaging and Imagining Virtue

The common Renaissance practice of borrowing ancient knowledge to address current problems, coupled with the specific Castilian translation methods to disseminate that knowledge, permits Guevara to construe a nuanced epistemological schema on the virtue ethics of paintings. In appropriating Philostratus, Guevara proposes that knowledge of antiquity, censorship of bad taste, and the agency of the enlightened patron will create a new golden age. This argument relies on the assumption that images have the power to change cultural habits, and thus the whole of it rests on the simple act of reproducing the world in painting. Two types of imitation take part in this process of representation: one results in the making of an art object, and another occurs in the mind exclusively. The first, *imitación* (imitation), occurs "when with the intellect and the hand we imitate that which we want, and this is the art of Painting."[36] Guevara's equal emphasis on intellectual engagement and manual skill differentiates the artistic representation from a mere mimetic reproduction of the world. While at first it might appear that the subject of imitation could originate either in nature or in the imagination — "that which we want" — by equating imitation with the art of painting, it is limited to "that which is or can

[35]Ibid., 61.
[36]Guevara, 1788, 10.

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be," including imaginary subjects and situations but only insofar as they could exist or happen in the natural world. In summary, this type of imitation refers to the illusionistic representation of a subject in an artwork whose production requires both manual and intellectual powers. In defining imitation in this manner, Guevara subscribes to his Aristotelian source. This contrasts with the second type of imitation, which, while relying on Philostratus, nonetheless takes on an intriguing Platonist character. It encompasses the visualization, recall, and conceptualization of a subject solely in the mind, "when only the intellect imitates a thing, even if the man is not a painter who could put into effect [or] represent with his hands that which he imagines."[37] Perhaps to avoid reducing the concept to a simple mental visualization, Guevara eschews the use of the Castilian words *imaginación* (imagination) and *imaginativo* (of the imagination), introducing a neologism — *imitativa imaginaria* — to label the second type of imitation, which is a cognitive faculty rather than a manual skill. Semantically, this neologism is composed of two adjectives used in conjunction as a noun, which designates something that exists in the mind of an individual and in the collective imagination of a nation.

The analysis of Guevara's linguistic choice reveals the neologism as an epistemic signifier of a particular way of acquiring knowledge of, and construing, the world. The word *imitativa* is taken directly from the Italian edition of Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius of Tiana* that Guevara had at his disposal, where it refers to imitation in general.[38] *Imaginaria*, on the other hand, does not appear in the corresponding section of the text. Both words share a common root derived from the Latin *imago* (image). Like the English word *imitative*, the Castilian word *imitativa* addresses a mimetic action. The suffix *-iva* implies a continuous action: imitating, copying, mimicking. *Imaginaria,* on the other hand, establishes a sense of permanence and belonging through its suffix, *-aria*, identifying the imagination as the site of action. It seems, then, that by *imitativa imaginaria* Guevara refers to an uninterrupted mental visualization, or the ongoing mimetic visualizations that occur in the imagination, or, more simply, imagining. It is worth repeating that the author could have used the Castilian word *imaginación* (imagination) to refer to the cognitive process he describes, yet he chose to create a neo-Latinism instead. He was doubtlessly familiar with the Latin *imaginari* (to picture oneself)[39] from his reading of Pliny.

[37]Ibid.

[38]For the identification of Guevara's source, see Gonzalo Carbó, 90n5. For the use of the word *imitativa* in Baldelli's Italian translation, see Philostratus, 1549, 138.

[39]In the deponent singular present indicative active conjugation of *imaginarius.*

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Guevara's *imaginaria*, a word so similar to its Latin origin, suggests that he wanted to emphasize a specific mode of mental imagery associated with the formation of identity. This aspect of the word is of paramount importance when choosing an appropriate English translation. Its cognate in English, *imaginary*, designates that which exists in the imagination only, and thus approximates at least one of its meanings. Moreover, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries the word *imaginary* — as used in Lacanian psychology, and borrowed by sociology and aesthetics — has come to stand for more than a figment of the imagination, encompassing the ways in which individuals and communities construe narratives of the self and of belonging, designating "the imagination as constitutive of social reality."[40] Guevara recognizes that the visual experience of an individual seeds not only personal, but also collective constructs of self and other. This suggests that the term *imaginary* as understood in twenty-first-century aesthetics, psychology, and sociology is the closest counterpart to Guevara's *imaginaria*, and that *imitativa imaginaria* might be interpreted as *imitative* or *mimetic imaginaries*.

Although a concept indispensable for the understanding of the representation of the individual as index of the group, the *imitativa imaginaria* has been ignored in the scholarship on Spanish art writing. The *imitativa imaginaria* is the force behind the artistic expression and perspective of a group (or to use Guevara's terminology, "of a nation"): expression that nurtures commonly held opinions and in turn affects taste and art production. On another level, however, the *imitativa imaginaria* depends on a form of apprehension, "a habit that causes people to continue to perceive certain things as particular of one nation, and not of others," things that have come to be perceived as such because of the way in which artists from each community imitate their world — real or fantastic — through painting.[41] The *imitativa imaginaria* is also the arbiter of taste, and thus it must be shaped by education.[42] Learning — particularly of antiquity — prevents bad taste and reverses flawed collective habits: "Achieve this with the knowledge of the fine arts and lessons on Antique matters, such as History and Poetry, which are not only useful in painting the decorum which each person requires but also in placing the habits and other things according to the Nation, or to the custom of each people."[43] All painters, viewers, and patrons ought to pursue knowledge in order to improve their

[40]Çinar and Bender, xiii.
[41]Guevara, 1788, 15.
[42]Ibid., 21–25.
[43]Ibid., 21.

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judgments. Driven by this understanding, Guevara urges Philip to centralize art production and to manage its content through visual education and censorship. A particularly strong passage begins with his translation of an excerpt from Plato's *Laws* and culminates with a praise of the legislation of artistic taste:

> The Egyptians used two genres in painting; one of them was what the Greeks and Romans had in common: painting figures and natural things from History and Poetry. . . . [The] legislators were very diligent in ensuring that no new figures be introduced, [exhorting] the use of only those determined by their sacred things, to the aim that the eyes of young men become accustomed to well-composed and decent things, inclining their wills to virtue and honesty, and not wasting them in clumsy or lustful figures. . . . Aristotle, wanting to imitate this in the Seventh Book of his Politics, not only prohibits young men from hearing or saying ugly things, but also keeps them from seeing them. For this reason, he states that magistrates ought to take great care in ordering that no painting or sculpture depict clumsy or dirty things that youth could take as example and imitate. The Thebans had a famous law regarding painting that ordered painters and sculptors to produce very beautiful and finished images, punishing those who did not comply, condemning them to pay a certain amount of money.[44]

A strict imitation of nature does not suffice to ensure the production of decorous images.[45] Simultaneously, Guevara clearly supports the institution of state-endorsed exemplary models as a regulatory strategy to ensure the virtuous development of young men, an attitude in line with the paternalism of the Habsburg monarchy.

5. Normative Physiognomy as Ethical Index

Guevara's reliance on Plato aligns the *Comentario* with the humanist discourses that equated beauty with virtue and ugliness with vice, particularly in terms of figural representation. Figural painting carries a moral imperative, then, as signifier and shaper of the inner state of being. Instead of providing a visual formulary that would explicitly define beauty and virtue and serve as a compendium of ideal models, however, Guevara complicates the issue by linking beauty and ugliness to individual experiences and to common stereotypes. Far from arguing that beauty is subjective (or, as the cliché would have it, in the eye of the beholder), he presents examples that reveal

[44]Ibid., 232–33.
[45]See ibid., 70.

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how beauty and ugliness are dependent on cultural forces, how taste is dictated by knowledge of art and, thus, how art in itself is knowledge. To illustrate how figural representation relies on cultural intertexts — on networks of familiar imagery — he appropriates two Second Sophistic texts: Lucian's *Imagines* to account for idealized and beautiful figures, and Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius* for the terrifying and the ugly. Interestingly, Lucian's meaning barely changes in Guevara's narrative, while another subtle rewriting of Philostratus turns the original Aristotelian text into something that complements the Platonic character of Lucian.

Guevara invokes a synthesis of beauty familiar to Renaissance humanists, Lucian's panegyric to Panthea, as an example of the process of creation and idealization, concurrently illustrating the need for artistic selection and collaboration across the arts:[46]

> Lucian, wanting to imply who was Panthea . . . had no painting or sculpture to compare her with. And so he came to imagine such beauty, and was able to explain who Panthea was, by forming a figure with parts taken from other [figures made by] various artists, who in each case had surpassed the others in art. And because Painting, not being an art of [three-dimensional] relief, could not satisfy his imagining, nor could Sculpture for making colorless, dead images, he helped [his argument by combining] Painting and Sculpture together. Moreover, as neither Painting nor Sculpture could express certain movements and spirits and certain elegance of things, [Lucian] agreed to help himself with Poetry, interpreter of [the] occult and mute things desirable in a figure. Thus aided, he composed a figure of such prettiness that Nature could not match it.[47]

Here Guevara uncovers the aim of ancient painters (to surpass the beauty of nature through selective mimesis), highlights the work of other artists as possible sources of beauty in addition to nature, and exposes the limits of each of the arts. He advocates for collaboration between the arts: painting, sculpture, and poetry must work in concert to fashion an ideal that will encompass color, relief, spirit, disposition, and elegance.

To represent Panthea's pleasing physiognomy and demeanor, Lucian relied on the description of visual and poetic excerpts that completed a whole that worked only insofar as the audience remained familiar with the artworks and texts referenced. Guevara's awareness of this fact reveals his understanding of how arguments gain validity through intertexts, and of their failure when the original indexes that provide meaning are lost: "This argument had more grace in times of Lucian, because the statues and paintings from which he

[46]Ibid., 237–42.
[47]Ibid., 237–38.

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composed his figures were still standing."[48] Gombrich once remarked upon an inescapable prerequisite for the success of a painting — "the public's skill in taking hints."[49] Guevara's reasoning is similar: in order for a representation to be efficacious, it must have current referents. This stance aligns him with the views on imitation expressed by Erasmus (1466–1536) and places the *Comentario* within a larger discourse central to Renaissance theory and rhetoric: the decorum that regulates imitation as artistic practice. In a rare reference to sacred art, Guevara exhorts patrons to police artistic production so that "[works] be painted and sculpted with the decorum, gravity, and sanctity that is convenient and that [sacred art] deserves."[50] While in the realm of spiritual practice imitation is a path to the divine (*imitatio Christi*), imitation of antique models, as presented in Erasmus's *Ciceronianus* (*The Ciceronian,* 1528), clearly establishes the need for the writer (and, in Guevara, the artist) to avoid an anachronistic vocabulary and to adapt to contemporary beliefs and needs — in other words, to observe a temporal decorum.[51]

Similarly, the creation of a fearsome or ugly subject also requires allusions to current indexes, as it engages the same basic cognitive processes of the *imitativa imaginaria* that make the representations of beauty effective. Once again revising Philostratus to suit his purposes, Guevara introduces the subject of monochrome painting as a point of departure for a forceful statement about the role stereotypes play in the visual experience, arguing that:

> Within the genres of painting there is one that is composed only of lines without any color, which we will justly call Painting of only shadows and lights, in which it is seen the verisimilitude of things, their beauty or ugliness, the mood and the shame and the daring. Although these effects lacked colors . . . this genre of painting makes understandable the whiteness and the redness of [the blood and the hair and the flourishing of a newly-bearded youth] . . . . It is certain that if we were to paint an Indian only with lines, he would be represented as if we saw him [as being] black; because the Roman nose and the curly hair and the high cheekbones and the horror of such an image [would] represent all that which to our eyes seems white to be [the] blackness of [an] Indian. And in being Indian the man which we see painted is manifested, as we have said, that the imitation of the intellect is needed.[52]

[48]Ibid., 238.
[49]Gombrich, 195.
[50]Guevara, 1788, 233.
[51]Pigman, 4–8.
[52]Guevara, 1788, 11–12.

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From the sixteenth-century point of view, "the horror of such an image" is coded by a physiognomic reading that opposes the virtuous "whiteness" of the first subject — a "flourishing of youth" — to the construct of the Indian's "blackness" as something less than virtuous. The hierarchical, normative principles in which Guevara participates — principles of balance, symmetry, proportion — are those that were familiar to the intended reader, for they regulated the figuration of the royal body as well. Successful representations of Philip from his princely years, such as the portraits previously mentioned, establish a type that structures public imaginaries not only in painting, but also in text; congruencies are revealed by ambassadorial depictions: "[Philip's] bodily grace, his manly behavior, his words and deeds, which are at the same time kindly and gentle — all these add to his attractiveness. He is small, but he is so well formed, with every limb perfectly proportioned to every other, and he dresses so neatly and tastefully, that you have never seen anything so perfect."[53] Philip's bodily perfection correlates, for the Venetian ambassador Michele Suriano, with the young royal's ability to be likeable to the public and with his ability to rule. This was of particular import, as previously Philip's "aloof and harsh behavior" was seen as "unwise for someone who has to rule dissimilar lands, and people with varying traditions" by the same ambassador and by Charles V's advisors.[54]

The body of the king, as archetype of a nation represented in painting or sculpture, became, by extension, an intrinsic element of the *imitativa imaginaria*. Both the treatment of the human figure in the *Comentario* and of the royal body in courtly painting followed certain Renaissance commonplaces, such as the belief that the physical body, interdependent with the mind or the soul, acted as index of the individual's spiritual or moral virtues. Guevara gave precedence to the physical body, both as index and as master, explaining that, "as Hippocrates said, the affectations of the mind follow the complexions and dispositions of the body," which, in turn, regulate both fantasy and imagination, influencing art production, and so on.[55] As a member of the imperial court, he was familiar with countless topical characterizations of the Spanish nation as sanguine or phlegmatic, characterizations that invariably coincided with the temperament of the current king. This provided a moral imperative, since the reputation of the ruler and its sustenance through images became a pivotal component of self-control and presentation. A performance that depended upon literary types that functioned as intertexts, the self-fashioning of Philip as king defined the

[53]Cited in Davis, 67.
[54]Ibid., 66.
[55]Guevara, 1788, 12.

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character of his subalterns. His portraits, therefore, must be understood as relics of a style of governing the self, as evidence of the body as art.

Thus courtiers and princes felt the particular burden of maintaining perfect bodies. *El concejo y consejeros del príncipe* (1559) by Fadrique Furió Ceriol (1532–92) encouraged Philip to rely on a physiognomic evaluation of his would-be courtiers and advisors, to avoid men that were either too tall or too short, too thin or too fat, finding a myriad of faults in them. For example, the tall, thin man lacks prudence and wisdom, is incapable of high achievements, and is bullheaded; the short man, in turn, does not serve the government well because of his presumptuousness and the scarce esteem he foments in the masses; the thin and the tall share a lack of ability brought about by their humoral imbalances; and so on.[56] Furió Ceriol relied on Aristotle's *Fisiognomica*, advising Philip to depend on two methods: experience (to evaluate the would-be courtier through a concrete appraisal of his knowledge and reputation), and conjecture (to assess the body for signs of goodness and the potential of the soul). To those who would criticize the latter, he countered: "To buy a horse . . . what do we look at? The hair, the mane, the tail . . . the bones, the cheek, the belly, the posture, the grace, the way of walking, of stopping, of eating, of drinking; and even the prince himself . . . opens its muzzle with his own hands only to look at its teeth: so, why do we call minutia or excesses those things which show us the perfection of whom would have in his hands the finances, the honor, the life and death of the whole principality? . . . [It] is enough to know that, as by certain signs we know that a meadow is fertile or sterile, or a horse good or bad, in this same manner a man has certain qualities or accidents, or signs in his body, which show the disposition of his soul, if he is capable or not."[57]

Furió Ceriol also catalogued general characteristics for suitable candidates, such as "natural proportion" and "correspondence between the limbs," as well as specific features: "the fifth . . . quality that demonstrates [his] adequacy . . . is that he be of good face and of good grace; because those who have this quality, and only with it, are respected, loved, and gain authority. Therefore it is necessary that [he] have a medium-sized and round head . . . the contour of the face a bit more elongated than round, not small, rotund, or weighted with flesh. The forehead large or medium-sized, not small and sad. The eyes medium-sized, clear, full of life and relaxed, not too large, cloudy, heavy, tired. The nose long and delicate, neither short, nor wide, not

[56]Furió Ceriol, 170.
[57]Ibid., 176, 168.

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turned upwards. The lips slightly full, not too delicate or too fat, much less down-turned. That is, [that he be] graceful and of good bearing."[58] Facial features were particularly important in discerning whether the would-be courtier had natural grace; in fact, beauty of countenance and grace are one and the same here.[59] Furió Ceriol's ideal courtier was an embodiment of equilibrium that did not allow for what he perceived as "lack or excess of matter." This included *desproporción* (disproportion), defined by teratoid features: "an arm longer than the other, one hand small and the other large; one shoulder high, the other low; or other parts in this manner" that by the physical departure from the norm called attention to the person in question and were found repugnant by others.[60] The efforts of courtiers to shape their bodies to this ideal, from following strict diets to wearing clothing tailored to showcase their fitness, elucidates the currency of the theoretical model.[61]

The appearance of these precepts in the art theories of Francisco Pacheco (1564–1644) in the next century also underscores the triumph of physiognomy over other paradigms of the body. Like Guevara, Pacheco believes that decorum is an inextricable constituent of beauty, manifested "through dress, words and actions, and the disposition of the body."[62] Yet when expressing the relationship between a beautiful countenance and a virtuous soul, Pacheco opened the door to other interpretations. An original passage from his *Arte de la pintura* (*Art of Painting*, 1649) embraces the old belief fully: "all just things are decent [honest], and the unjust, as they are crude and ugly, are indecent. And this same thing is found in Fortitude, because all which is done in a virile manner . . . seems to us to be worthy and decent, and that which is contrary does not."[63] Before publishing, though, he changed his mind, writing instead that "because in all things there is [an element of] decency or good judgment, which extends to all virtue, and this is different from that virtue [that exists] more in the imagination than in effect. Because as youth and bodily beauty cannot be separated from good disposition — although the difference [between them] is well understood . . . all of it [good disposition] is wrapped by and mixed with virtue; . . . with judgment and imagination the difference is evident."[64] In this manner, Pacheco evinces a growing ambiguity toward the physiognomic tenets of the sixteenth century.

[58]Ibid., 176.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Ibid., 174, 176.

[61]For documents to support a reconstruction of this facet of the courtier's life, see Bouza, 72–92.

[62]Pacheco, 277.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Ibid.

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As Guevara was writing his *Comentario*, however, the importance of a normative representation of the body was particularly felt at court. The abnormal proportions of Prince Don Carlos (1545–68), for example, challenged the Habsburg ideal and the beliefs expressed in courtly writings. Don Carlos's explosive temperament (understood to stem from the humoral imbalances of his misshapen body) exacerbated the tensions between the call for verisimilitude in portraiture and the desire to submit his scoliotic body to the exemplary ideal.[65] To the contemporary reader, Guevara's characterization of artists who compose grotesques as being imbalanced due to their bad habits would have resonated with the very same medical understanding.[66] Perhaps this ideology led Guevara to reject grotesques in art and architecture. Although through most of the text he praises innovation, these bizarre novelties are treated apprehensively as they are seen as an unfortunate vogue advertised by the recent discoveries in Rome. Equally reprehensible is the current taste for what he calls *matachines*,[67] which he describes as figures tortured beyond the healthy imagination.[68] Guevara laments that the fashion of painting grotesques has yielded artists who "can do masks and monsters, but not a good figure," which certainly does not bode well for the future of painting, as the inability to produce beautiful figures is the hallmark of painting in decline, and thus, of a society in decline.[69]

Nonetheless, not all inventions and fantasies are blameworthy. Guevara supports invention tempered by decorum, as exemplified, surprisingly, by

[65]Giménez-Berger, 130–221.

[66]Giovanni Battista della Porta's *De humana physiognomia libri IIII* (1586), for example, linked bad habits with the deformation of the body. See Giovanni della Porta, 449.

[67]Although the term is unclear (some authors have argued that it refers to mannerist treatment of the human figure), the earliest extant definition, found in Sebastián de Covarrubias's *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (1611), evokes the colorful, exuberant paroxysms of a violent dance: *Tesoro de la lengua*, s.v. "matachín." Joan Coromines traces the word back to the Italian *mattaccino*, a pejorative term for a popular dancer: *Diccionario Etimológico de la Lengua Española*, s.v. "matachín." Ottorino Pianigiani's *Vocabolario Etimologico della lingua Italiana*, s.v. "mattaccino," notes that "in Spain, it [*mattaccino*] was a theater mask similar to our Harlequin." Similarly, the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*, s.v. "matachín," says that the word was used in antiquity to denote "a man ridiculously dressed with a mask and a costume of several colors, skin tight from head to feet." Ponz believes the term refers to grotesques produced by mannerist painters, particularly by Giovanni da Udine, and Churriguera's architecture: see Guevara, 1788, 17–18. Sánchez Cantón, Benet, and Fernando Marías propose the term refers to the work of Berruguete and/or his followers: Sánchez Canton, 1916, 26; Benet, 46–47; Marías in Shearman, 46n107.

[68]Guevara, 1788, 17.

[69]Ibid., 161–62.

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the work of Hieronymus Bosch, the only artist in the text to receive more than passing attention. In line with the rest of the discourse, the section on Bosch readily ties him to antiquity and to the peculiar style of Antiphilus of Alexandria, who provided a label for the type of inventive painting known as *gryllo* (amusing and graceful).[70] This, in Guevara's opinion, differs significantly from the painting of decorative grotesques in that Bosch's paintings are distinctively decorous and prudently conceived, appearing only in the appropriate settings, such as in depictions of hell or purgatory.[71] Guevara asserts, rather fervently, that Bosch's "admirable imagined compositions" are "extremely observant of decorum and in careful keeping with the limits of nature,"[72] reinforcing the principle that painting is a representation of "what is or could be." On the contrary, paintings by followers or imitators of Bosch can be easily identified by their indecorous use of monstrous figures in inappropriate settings.[73] Guevara goes as far as to say that any appearance of grotesque fantasies in settings other than hell and purgatory serve as an index of authorship: decidedly not Bosch's.

The proper exercise of the imagination in Bosch's paintings contrasts with the use of grotesques in decoration and with irrational architectural decoration. Guevara treats grotesques as an aberration, for while painting "is imitation," grotesques "comprise things that are not, and cannot be." As such, they corrupt, causing blindness to their own falsehoods.[74] Like the Platonic simulacrum, the grotesque seduces through its apparent beauty but it is dangerous in its departure from Truth. Should an artist create such corrupting imagery, the regulatory gaze of a patron of untainted judgment must intervene.[75] Such evaluation would, of course, lead the artist to amend the work in ways that might "change it to the reason of Truth," establishing good judgment and decorum, in the manner that the ancient painter Apaturius of Alabanda had done with his own flawed works after the intervention of the mathematician Licinius.[76]

[70]Pliny's *grylloi* is usually translated as *caricature* now. In the Renaissance, it also referred to hybrid monsters and grotesques. The definition I provide above is from Guevara, 1788, 41.

[71]Ibid. In this, Guevara seems to have disagreed with his near contemporaries: Covarrubias equates *grutesco* with Bosch's inventions. See *Tesoro de la lengua*, s.v. "grutesco."

[72]Guevara, 1788, 41, 43.

[73]With the exception of a particularly gifted disciple of Bosch, who, according to Guevara, painted the *Table of the Seven Sins* in the collection of Philip II: Guevara, 1788, 43.

[74]Ibid., 67, 69.

[75]Ibid., 70.

[76]Vitruvius, 167–68 (*De Architectura* 7.5.5–7); Guevara, 1788, 71–72.

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Guevara also contends that grotesques cannot be called an antique invention because, he says, they were unknown to the Greeks. He places their origins in Rome, in the "vices and disorders without number" that plagued the reign of Augustus.[77] The vicious character of the grotesque stems from the intellectual disorder that creates it; therefore, according to Guevara, it could not come from the "well measured, composed moods" of artists of ancient Greece.[78] Since grotesques spring from imbalanced and ill-composed minds, the viewing of these inventions inevitably leads to the creation of disorderly imitations and worse imaginations.[79] The emphasis returns to the exemplary model: choosing nature and its idealizations as models demonstrates intellectual balance. Grotesques, on the other hand, are symptomatic of moral corruption.

It can be argued, however, that both the *grylloi* and the grotesques, offsprings of antique fantasy and medieval marginalia, are products of a shared Renaissance fascination with deformity. The visual grotesque combined fragments of all spheres of natural and human creation by an additive process that blurred the limits between those worlds, creating an incomplete, unfinished, and monstrous being forever in metamorphosis. Together with the literary grotesques of Cervantes, for example, the visual grotesque decorations of the Renaissance relied on their reference to and inversion of the classical ideal as the source of laughter; but in so doing they also threatened the ideal. Guevara considered that even though grotesques were a legacy of ancient Rome, they were also "decadent, vicious and monstrous" things, impure constructions reminiscent of Plateresque art.[80] This attitude toward the grotesque body reflected a fear of contamination that leads Guevara to condemn it for its power to influence the individual and collective imaginaries.[81]

6. The Artistic Milieu as Ethical Index

The affinity between Guevara's understanding of the grotesque and Renaissance physiognomists' eloquent attacks on any breakdown of the boundaries between human civility and animal monstrosity reflected a fear of the Other.[82] This stance seems at odds with a text that praises Moorish

[77]Guevara, 1788, 68.
[78]Ibid., 67.
[79]Ibid., 68.
[80]Benet, 34.
[81]Guevara, 1788, 69.
[82]Ambiguously, the Renaissance practices of physiognomy relied upon the pairing of body fragments with the behavioral characteristics of animals they resembled to decode the nature of the soul: Meller, 59.

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architecture as an example of gracefulness and pre-Columbian artworks as expert accomplishments of iconic genealogy. Yet the anxiety produced by the encounter with Moorish and pre-Columbian art is obvious in passages that stray from ancient sources. There, the author seems compelled to explain their appearance, as in his demonstration that majolica painting was not invented by the Moors, or in the assertion that any ornamental qualities of mosaic ought to be figural (as opposed to the abstraction of Moorish decoration). In a sort of apology on behalf of pre-Columbian art, Guevara expresses his belief that "if their [the natives'] *imitativa imaginaria*, dull by the habitual viewing of their own things did not impede them, they would progress in their arts with facility and great use,"[83] asserting the superiority of the Spanish judgment above all else. The stunted virtue of Mesoamerican art finds its causes in itself, illustrating, as a warning, the potentially devastating effects of a visual culture unconstrained by (what the author considers) good education and good judgment.

Clearly, Guevara extends this understanding to encompass the *imitativa imaginaria* of whole nations, as illustrated by the pre-Columbian example cited above. He elaborates on the relationship between art and virtue, not only concerning individual experience, but also as it influences a community. The temperament or disposition of the artist is affected by the artistic environment and, evidently, this has a direct impact upon the artistic product; in this Guevara echoes Pliny as well as Galen and Hippocrates. If the saturnine artist produces "terrible things and tortures never imagined by anyone except himself,"[84] then the German artist reproduces "German horses," and the Venetian artist produces likenesses of what Venetians (and perhaps no others) consider beautiful, and so on:

> There is another cause that often corrupts the intellectual imitation of he who paints. This is a habit that leads people to sustain the apprehension of certain things that are particular and peculiar of one nation and not of others. For example: let's take a German [artist] most skilled in design, even if he were to be Dürer who draws or paints, if he [painted] a horse, never in one hundred thousand horses would he come up in his imagination with a beautiful Spanish horse, even if he had seen one before. The cause of this is the habit of seeing German horses, strong of limb and coarse. And from here comes that all of the ideas represented [by German artists] will be of German horses, as we ordinarily see in all of his [Dürer's] drawings and paintings. Let's consider Venetian Painters, who wanting to treat the nude of some woman by their fantastic imitation, come to give too much fatness and fleshiness. This is born

[83] Guevara, 1788, 236.
[84] Ibid., 12–13.

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> from the opinion that is commonly conceived in that nation, which persuades itself that no woman is perfectly beautiful if she is not fat, and so all of their ideas and imaginations in this area end in corpulent figures.[85]

While the artist who possesses a balanced temperament is less likely to make mistakes, the environmental influences seem inescapable.[86] The text also implies that artists, like any other viewers, cannot escape the influence of their creations. For Guevara, herein lies the power of art: in changing the visual referents of a particular artwork or environment, the patron, via the artist, is able to influence communal imaginaries. This action initiates a process of change in the formulation of the visual vocabulary of a whole nation, or perhaps of multiple national groups united under one ruler politically but not culturally (as was the case for Philip). Once again Guevara turns to the New World as an example, reiterating that the whole argument begins at the top of the hierarchical pyramid, with the representation of the king: "And thus all which said Indians want to communicate about their betters they show us in Painting, and among themselves they declare all of their conceptions by means of the same Painting."[87]

7. Art and Prosperity

In the previous sections, this study has focused on Guevara's attention to painting as a means of dissemination of transcendental values and virtues elevated as worthy of imitation, which would find a ready, if not exclusive, mirror in the figuration of the elites. Besides attending to critical issues, however, Guevara's recounting of the history of ancient art contains a third discourse, embedded inconsistently but noticeably in its chapters. Closely tied to technique, this discourse concerns quality in art in terms of art economics, grounding the lofty theoretical discussion of ideology in the production of actual works of art, not only in how they represent their subjects, but also as objects that have distinctive properties in the market. Guevara's primary area of humanist study was, after all, numismatics. The antique coins that he collected and borrowed from and lent to his friends are discussed in his letters in terms of their symbolism, their cash value as objects made out of precious metals, and their current value as collectibles.[88] He treats artworks analogously, in terms of their potential to communicate

[85]Ibid., 15–17.
[86]Ibid., 13.
[87]Ibid., 236.
[88]For examples, see Vaquero Serrano, 119–52.

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virtue ethics, in their intrinsic value as objects made of expensive materials, and in terms of the quality that might transform them into heirlooms worthy of preservation. Guevara urges art patrons to acknowledge their role both in the sustenance of taste and in the financial development of the nation.

While Guevara does not develop an economics of art per se, he frames the discussion of the economic impact of art production within a context clearly stated at the beginning and end of the *Comentario*, addressed to the king and to artists, respectively. The dedication encourages Philip II to provide commissions — a suggestion that nearly approaches exhortation as the text develops. Concurrently, Guevara joins painting to the art of agriculture, as both deal with nature.[89] Painting can provide — albeit in ways different from agriculture — nourishment to the people by improving the economy while imposing order onto nature. Thus the patronage of painting, like the practice of agriculture, is a sign of good government.[90] The coupling immediately elevates painting, increasing its relevance for the patron.

Philip's artistic projects confirm his ability to determine patronage and to influence supply and demand.[91] The hiring of accomplished foreign artists earns Philip some praise, but Guevara insists on promoting the education of local artists to ensure sound practices and to alleviate poverty in the country. Calling on patrons to "find a bit of gold that may otherwise be hidden or used in vanities," he urges the construction of great buildings in order to provide work and income for the artisans and laborers of Spain.[92] Concurrently, however, Guevara recognizes the dependency of any economic endeavor on sound labor practices — practices that, unfortunately, he cannot reconcile with Spanish habit. This opinion echoes the international critiques of Spanish laziness, and demonstrates at length how the Spanish attitude toward work results in economic disadvantages. Guevara notes that the territories ruled by Philip are rich in natural resources, which, lamentably, are then exported to be refined, only to be imported back at unreasonable prices.[93] "It pains me [to realize that] we never cease to be Indians," complains the author, acknowledging the ruthless predatory practices carried out in the New World and echoed in the relationship between Spain and other European powers, equating Spain with what he sees as the lowest common denominator:

[89]Guevara, 1788, 5.
[90]Ibid., 5–6.
[91]Ibid., 3.
[92]Ibid., 5, 114–15, 129–31.
[93]Ibid., 131.

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"We produce steel so that it may be refined for us in Milan; we breed wool for Flanders, so that with all of this [the refined products] they [may] take our money as if [we were] brutes. Spain grows sycamore, ash, viburnum, mulberry, juniper; such variety of trees whose roots and diversity of grains foreigners admire. And [yet] we admire so much a varnished desk [produced by them with Spanish wood], with which they take our money, worse than [if we were] savage Indians."[94] This demand for foreign-made objects, prized for the quality of their facture, cripples the local economy.

It hardly needs to be said that production without quality will not improve the situation. Criteria for quality include the proper choice of materials, skill and care in execution, and good judgment in conception (with its corollary need for verisimilitude), all of which are in reach. Materials abound in Spain; Guevara points out which local substitutions might be made for materials used in antiquity. The rest — skill and good judgment — are achievable through education. Without quality, the Spanish arts have no hope of competing in the European market.[95] This need for competition reaches the height of frustration in the analysis of the taste for German intarsia (made with Spanish materials). The first step in competing with the leaders of an industry, Guevara tells the reader, is to recognize that the ancients surpassed all living artisans. Thus, "with [the ancient] example, Spanish joiners will be able to stop being in awe of the Germans, and they [will] lose their vainglory, if they have any, of their assemblages."[96] The advantages of the ancient techniques are highlighted, be it in the construction, durability, or ease of use — all pragmatic concerns.

Secondly, Guevara emphasizes the intertwining of art and market by underlining the agency of consumers. Artistic innovation is bound to attract buyers and have a positive impact on the Spanish economy, providing jobs for "laborers and mechanics, who sustain themselves and their families only by their sweat,"[97] but only as long as quality is maintained.[98] He advises the use of nontraditional materials reluctantly, and only because of their economic benefits. Novelties, in his experience, attract people's attention to the detriment of quality. Certain materials, while on demand, also may lead to loss of quality. He cites, for example, the popularity of painting on canvas, a medium fit to the needs of a mobile court, but not one that requires

[94]Ibid.
[95]Ibid., 122–31.
[96]Ibid., 122.
[97]Ibid., 111.
[98]Ibid., 52–53, 231–37.

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consummate skill.[99] In Antwerp in 1540, the author recalls, one of his friends could negotiate to buy twenty-four paintings on canvas for a mere ducat each (half the original asking price, and perhaps a tenth of the price for a painting on panel). He notes that these are worthless compositions, lacking in quality, skill, and intrinsic value, and that the perpetuation of this type of production is due solely to the flawed judgment of the buyer who, in thinking that more is better, creates further demand for such poorly executed canvases.[100] The comparison of the colors of paintings on canvas to those created decades before on panels, such as the portraits of his father by Michel Sittow (ca. 1468–1525/26), attest to the superiority of the time-consuming technique of painting on wood.[101] Here the value of an artwork does not equal its price alone, but also its durability and potential as a collectible. The fate of the Guevara collection, purchased by Philip II in 1570, demonstrates its intrinsic value as an investment commodity.

Lest such artworks be confined to the treasuries, as many of them indeed were, the author reminds Philip that the more important formative value of paintings can only be achieved if they are placed where they can be seen and praised: "Painting and sculpture have . . . the properties that Boethius says riches have, which collected and under cover have no fruit or benefit, but [they do] when they are divided and distributed. And thus paintings [which are] covered and hidden [away] lose their value, which consists of the eyes of others and the judgment that men of good understanding and good imagination make of them, which cannot be done . . . if [paintings and sculptures] are not placed where they can be seen by many."[102] This, of course, gives Guevara the opportunity to encourage his ruler to finance the building of public spaces for the display of exemplary works.

8. CONCLUSIONS

As Ponz and Menéndez y Pelayo noted in the earliest historiographies, the *Comentario de la pintura* contends that art has both transcendental and intrinsic values. This study further elucidates this perspective, focusing on art's formative capabilities and virtue ethics as the most important of the transcendental, and its role in the larger Spanish economy for the intrinsic. In addition, it is evident that the contents belie the author's claim that he wrote simply to entertain himself. On the contrary, by adopting this blasé

[99]Ibid., 53.
[100]Ibid., 50–54.
[101]Ibid., 54, 179–82.
[102]Ibid., 5.

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tone at the beginning of the text, Guevara embraces a familiar humanist strategy that allows him to call for the practical overhauling of the Spanish artistic system. Seeking to improve the quality of art — and thus its effects on the public — he provides examples from antiquity to solve current issues, calculates the benefits of increased quality production, and encourages the elite to take an active role by assuming a conscientious and educated patronage of art. Moreover, it is evident that Guevara's appropriation of Philostratus, Pliny, and others, beyond quotation and translation, calls attention to the imagination as a humanist, artistic, and cultural process of self-definition. Imitation (of nature primarily, of the classics secondly and only in terms of method) provides the writer and may provide his readers with the tools to liberate themselves, paradoxically, from mere imitation, to achieve equal footing with the great artists of antiquity and the present.

Guevara's attention to technique, quality, content, and style as components of good painting stems from an emergent cognitive hypothesis rooted in Hippocratic humoral medicine. As a result, there is a strong focus on the representation of the human figure, not only in its Albertian cast as a vehicle for narrative, but also as the basic, albeit not always recognized, index from which the viewer's own self may be molded. Good measure, the imitation of nature, and the regulation of the painter's imagination are presented as the guiding principles revealed by history and by the author's manipulation of Aristotelian and Platonic knowledge. Beginning with the normative human figure and applying the principles to all painting, sculpture, and architecture, Guevara's understanding of the visual experience ties art with social habits and identity — both national and personal — and with the fates of whole empires. Given the force attributed to art in the text, those principles become the only viable alternatives that must be embraced by patrons if Spain is to reach and maintain greatness.

Upon Guevara's death the manuscript was lost until its publication by Ponz in 1788, and thus no immediate effect upon sixteenth-century art can be scientifically measured as of yet. Nonetheless, the ideas presented in the discourse coincide with the development of courtly portraiture in the 1560s, the building of El Escorial, and the decoration of the Palacio del Pardo, to name a few of the most important artistic programs of the period.[103] If not a direct agent for change, the *Comentario* certainly reflects the policies of artistic patronage that continued throughout Philip's reign and much of the following century.

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[103]Faus, 1998, 211.

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