

Garcilaso de la Vega and the Material Culture of Renaissance Europe.

Mary E. Barnard.

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Barnard's studies of Garcilaso's Naples period (1532–36) are excellent approaches to his politics and his representations of emotional states. Chapter 1, "Weaving, Writing, and the Art of Gift-Giving," assesses eclogue 3's reliance on the "ancient link between text and textile" (26). A written version of the tapestry (an object prized by the period's courts), Garcilaso's gift to María Osorio Pimentel, thanks her and her husband Pedro de Toledo for harboring him during his exile. Moreover, it elevates Toledo while co-opting Greco-Roman mythology and Italian subtexts to create a new Castilian art form; it celebrates an aristocratic feminine ideal that escapes restrictive conduct codes; and it twists perspectives, transforming drifting pastoral luxury into Elisa's brutal decapitation.

Chapter 2, "Empire, Memory, and History," considers sonnets 33 ("A Boscán desde La Goleta") and 10 ("Oh dulces prendas por mi mal halladas"), and the Latin "Ode to Ginés de Sepúlveda." Contradicting Leoni's statue, Titian's portrait, and Vermeiren's tapestries, Garcilaso subverts imperial propaganda via Queen Dido and anguished Tunisian women. Chapter 3, "Objects of Dubious Persuasion," shows how "Ode ad florem Gnidi" — inspired by noblewoman Violante Sanseverino's rejection of Mario Galeota — mocks Petrarchan decorum. Garcilaso "constructs a counter-model for Violante, a wilful Venus figure, urging her to act on her sensuality to console her dispirited Mars" (61).

Chapter 4, "The Mirror and the Urn," glosses eclogue 2. The era's flat mirror fostered reexaminations of Ovid's Narcissus. Garcilaso echoes Aristotle, Ficino, and Freud's understandings of melancholy as fomenting "inspiration and creativity," its victim prone to voice loss "in exhibitionist performances" (84). Beyond Lapesa's vision of Albanio's madness versus Fernando de Toledo's heroism, Camila escapes the prior's "representational trap" (90), like Diana; Albanio's narcissistic "drama of misrecognition" (94) incorporates Orpheus searching for his own body in "el infierno y reino oscuro" among "las hermanas negras." Melodramatic mirror yields to epic history carved on an urn by the Tormes, which

fashions Fernando “according to the model of the Castilian warrior, whose very being and repute were forged in the long march against the Moors” (100). Fernando’s humanist tutor, Italian Benedictine monk Severo Varini, deciphers the urn’s archive of the house of Alba. Barnard shrewdly links Fernando’s father García’s death — “one of the most violent passages in Garcilaso’s poetry” — to Eurydice’s fate in eclogue 3 (105–06). She indicates Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso* as source for the description of Fernando’s birth and suggests virtues taught by Severo and Boscán are overshadowed by his natural Mars-Venus dyad. Finally, she unveils Garcilaso’s fictionalization of the tension between Fernando and Charles V, and argues that the blinding light of Fernando’s future signals Plato’s cave (119). The lyric ends abruptly as Salicio doubts that Severo cures Albanio.

Chapter 5, “Eros at Material Sites,” reads sonnets 11 (“Hermosas ninfas, que en río metidas”) and 13 (“A Dafne ya los brazos le crecían”) as emotional projections onto nymphs’ palaces and Daphne’s body, and then reads song 4 and sonnet 5 (“Escrito ‘stá en mi alma vuestro gesto”) as texts in which “melancholy subjects materialize their psychic interior” according to humoral and Neoplatonic theories (125). Bernard adds Alberti’s perspective theory and Erasmus’s principle of *enargeia*, which sought to vivify objects before readers’ eyes. She characterizes the morbidity of Garcilaso’s late verse as “melancholy crisis,” “loss of identity,” “self-division,” “dispersal,” “scattering,” “failure,” and “psychological, moral, and linguistic disorientation” (145–46). Chapter 6, “Staging Objects in Pastoral,” similarly approaches eclogue 1, which “underscores the failure of words” (154), “fixes Salicio as a diminished melancholic” (156), and uses *mise en abîme* to insinuate “the shepherd’s fragmentation” and “an unhappy outcome” (157). Finally, unrequited love empowers the Petrarchan: “Self-alienated and fractured, unable to rescue himself through narcissistic fantasy or to win back his Galatea, Salicio nonetheless stages a lament that testifies to full poetic agency” (159).

Barnard’s jargon sometimes muddles her insights: “reflexivity,” “oculocentric,” or “phantasmatic” embrace an ethereal mode in Renaissance studies. Dabbling in Marxian rhetoric — a “mapping of the material” (166) ends in “a final materializing act” (170), making for a “poetics of the material” (172) — she somehow avoids said rhetoric’s political superstructure. She flirts with academic attacks on Burckhardt’s notion of the Renaissance as the origin of modern consciousness: Garcilaso’s turns to objects express a “lack of autonomy” (172), an “inner impoverishment” (173). Nevertheless, instead of the trendy erasure of individualism, she reads Garcilaso as expressing melancholy, nostalgia, and disillusionment. This is compelling enough. Whatever “materiality” means, Barnard illuminates Garcilaso’s lyric by comparing it to tapestries, statues, paintings, anatomical drawings, and relics. These comparisons, along with intriguing factoids — Naples lawyer Scipione Capece dedicated his 1535 edition of Donato’s commentary on the *Aeneid* to Garcilaso (7); eclogue 2’s Fernando Álvarez de Toledo is the future “butcher of Flanders” (119); Elisa is Dido (167) — make Barnard’s book worthy of careful attention by anyone interested in Renaissance verse.

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