

LOPE DE VEGA'S TRANSFORMATION OF THE  
PALINODE TRADITION IN *RIMAS SACRAS*:  
SONNETS I, VII, AND XV

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As Paul Oppenheimer has argued, the sonnet is by nature an introspective genre designed "to portray the self in conflict and explore self-consciousness"(1). This is especially evident in palinode sonnets, in which the speaker looks back with a gesture of regret and recantation. The term "palinode" derives from the Greek word "palinoidia" and has been translated as "against the ode" or "singing again" (Phillippy 16). It was first used with reference to "a lyric by Stesichorus in which he recanted his earlier attack upon Helen as the baneful cause of the Trojan War" (Preminger). Petrarch and the Renaissance poets who followed him tend to emphasize personal regret over recantation of previous poetry, however the term has since its inception referred to both of these themes.

The self depicted in the palinode is of course a poetic construct, no matter how sincere and confessional the speaker may sound, no matter how exact the autobiographical coincidence between poet and speaker may be.<sup>1</sup> The speaker, the poetic persona, the protagonist, the "yo" that addresses the reader—is a character created by the poet. This distinction takes on special importance in the study of Lope, whose work has so often been studied as if it were the poet's biography. In fact, as Mary Gaylord Randel has stated, "with rare exceptions, the approach to Lope's poetry has had the *man* as its real target" (223).<sup>2</sup>

This study of Lope's transformation of the palinode tradition will focus primarily on the character he creates in three sonnets of his *Rimas sacras*, a character who represents a dramatic departure from those found in previous palinodes. Although there are biographical facts that tend to explain Lope's publication of a collection of religious poems dominated by palinode themes—the tragic death of his son Carlos Félix in 1612 and of his wife Juana de Guardo in 1613, his entrance into the priesthood in 1614 when the book was published—I will go no further than that in correlating his life and his art. I will examine instead the *persona* Lope creates in three sonnets that represent different kinds of palinode which appear repeatedly within the book.<sup>3</sup>

Sonnet I announces the central themes of regret and conversion, VII recants earlier poetry, and XV deals with the speaker's backsliding and indifference to the entreaties of Christ. Although there are differences in the way Lope depicts the speaker in these poems, and we could consider each speaker as a different person, there is also a generalized portrayal that emerges from all these palinodes and from the totality of the book. While I will study the different characterizations in all three sonnets, I will consider them within the framework provided by the *yo poético* that Lope develops throughout *Rimas sacras*. As Yolanda Novo rightly argues, this *yo poético* is the central unifying element of the volume.<sup>4</sup>

Lope creates his palinodes within the tradition of sonnet palinodes made known to Spanish poets through Petrarch and profoundly affected by the example of Garcilaso's Sonnet I.<sup>5</sup> I will begin by comparing Lope's palinode persona to those in three of his models and demonstrate that his development of the *yo poético* differs profoundly from that of his predecessors. I will go on to show how in the creation of this persona Lope employs various rhetorical strategies, fusing and transforming biblical, mythological, literary, and artistic traditions in a radical revision and renovation of the palinode genre.

### *The Palinode Tradition: Petrarch and Garcilaso*

Petrarch's sonnet 298 to Laura *in morte*—"Quand'io mi volgo in dietro a mirar gli anni" (When I turn back to gaze at the years)—is widely considered to be the model that inspired Garcilaso and many other Spanish poets.<sup>6</sup> Petrarch's speaker looks back and laments lost love, professing envy of others whose misfortunes are not as terrible as his own. He finds himself helpless against his fate, vulnerable, "naked," as he puts it:

Quand'io mi volgo indietro a mirar gli anni  
 ch'anno fuggendo i miei pensieri sparse,  
 et spento'l foco ove agghiacciando io arsi,  
 et finito il riposo pien d'affanni,  
     rotta la fé degli amorosi inganni,  
 et sol due parti d'ogni mio ben farsi,  
 l'una nel Cielo et l'altra in terra starsi,  
 et perduto il guadagno de' miei danni,  
     i'mi riscuoto, et trovomi sì nudo  
 ch'i' poroto invidia ad ogni estrema sorte,  
 tal cordoglio et paura ò di me stesso.

O mia stella, o fortuna, o fato, o morte,  
o per me sempre dolce giorono et crudo,  
come m'avete in basso stato messo! (Wardropper 50-51)

[When I turn back to gaze at the years that fleeing have scattered all my thoughts, and put out the fire where I freezing burned, and ended my laboring repose, broken the faith of amorous deceptions, and turned all my wealth into two parts only (one is in Heaven, the other in the ground), and destroyed the profit of my losses, I shake myself and find myself so naked that I am envious of every most extreme misfortune, such anguish and fear I have for myself. O my Star, O Fortune, O Fate, O Death, O Day to me always sweet and cruel, how you have put me in low estate! (Armi)]<sup>7</sup>

As Luis F. Avilés has argued, Petrarch's poem represents "la construcción de un yo que se presenta como frágil, dividido, y que se convierte en el objeto de análisis para toda la tradición que va de los *fideli d'amore* y que pasa hacia el petrarquismo posterior" (58).

Garcilaso, in his Sonnet I, follows Petrarch's lead but changes "years" to "steps," thus implying what becomes the fundamental image of the Spanish palinode tradition—the look backward down the road traveled. In a *conceptista* play on repeated verbs that is reminiscent of *cancionero* poetry, Garcilaso intertwines the metaphors of the road of life and the road of love. Also in the *cancionero* tradition, Garcilaso's protagonist laments the unmerciful rejection he has suffered at the hands of a lover. He expresses a feeling of helplessness and vulnerability, ending his lamentations on a note of despair even deeper than that found in the Petrarch poem:

Cuando me paro a contemplar mi estado  
y a ver los pasos por do me han traído,  
hallo, según por do anduve perdido,  
que a mayor mal pudiera haber llegado;  
mas cuando del camino está olvidado,  
a tanto mal no sé por do he venido;  
sé que me acabo, y más he yo sentido  
ver acabar conmigo mi cuidado.

Yo acabaré, que me entregué sin arte  
a quien sabrá perderme y acabarme  
si quisiere, y aún sabrá querello;  
que pues mi voluntad puede matarme,  
la suya, que no es tanto de mi parte,  
pudiendo, ¿qué hará sino hacello? (34-35)<sup>8</sup>

Although the speaker in this poem represents himself as having the capacity to contemplate and evaluate his situation, he sees himself as a "yo atrapado por un tú," as a "yo que carecía de la capacidad para elegir su propio destino" (Avilés 65, 60).

In addition to Petrarch and Garcilaso, Lope would most likely have been aware of the versión *a lo divino* of Garcilaso's poem by Sebastián de Córdoba, which appeared in 1575. Sebastián's protagonist finds himself fallen from grace, wounded not by love but by his own sins. Like the other palinode figures, this one feels helpless and lost. Instead of looking ahead to his own demise, however, he is delivered by hope into the healing hands of Christ. Sebastián finishes his poem by inverting Garcilaso's rhetorical question to express faith in Christian redemption and salvation:

Quando me paro a contemplar mi estado  
y a ver los pasos por do me ha traído,  
hallo, según que anduve tan perdido,  
que hubiera merecido ser juzgado.

Bajando de la gracia en bajo estado,  
estaba de mis culpas tan herido  
que quien me viera fuera conmovido  
a me llamar, con lástima, "cuitado";  
mas la esperanza me entregó (sin arte)  
a quien puede (mirándome) sanarme,  
y cierto como puede es el querello;  
que pues la vida puso por librarme,  
y él solo puede darla por su parte,  
pudiendo, ¿qué hará sino hacello?<sup>9</sup>

Thus far, then, we have three palinode protagonists who look back at error and misfortune, who feel helpless and vulnerable. Petrarch's laments a *fait accompli*—the death of Laura; Garcilaso's laments his approaching death—literal or metaphorical—because of a lady's rejection; and Sebastián's laments his sinful ways but looks forward to a triumph over death through salvation.

### Lope's Sonnet I

Lope alludes to Garcilaso's palinode in the opening line of the first sonnet of *Rimas sacras*, "Soneto primero":<sup>10</sup>

Cuando me paro a contemplar mi estado  
y a ver los pasos por donde he venido,  
me espanto de que un hombre tan perdido  
a conocer su error haya llegado.

Cuando miro los años que he pasado,  
la divina razón puesta en olvido,  
conozco que piedad del cielo ha sido  
no haberme en tanto mal precipitado.

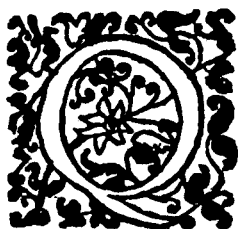
Entré por laberinto tan extraño,  
fiando al débil hilo de la vida  
el tarde conocido desengaño;  
mas de tu luz mi escuridad vencida,  
el monstro muerto de mi ciego engaño,  
vuelve a la patria la razón perdida. (316)

The poet does not simply substitute Christian images of sacred love for those of profane love within a framework provided by Garcilaso, as Sebastián de Córdoba does; nor does he have his protagonist wallow in despair, as Petrarch and Garcilaso do. Lope goes his own way.

His new direction becomes evident at the end of the allusion to Garcilaso in the first two lines. Instead of looking at where his steps "me han traído," Lope's character looks at the "pasos por donde he venido." Lope replaces the passive construction with an active one because, in sharp contrast to previous palinodes, he characterizes his speaker not as a fragile character dominated by forces outside himself, but as a powerful person who seeks his own destiny. Indeed, Lope compares his protagonist to Theseus, one of the most adventurous and resourceful of all mythological heroes. When he enters the labyrinth of error and confusion, he makes use of the same saving device used by Theseus—a thread. It is not, however, a thread given to him by Ariadne or anyone else, it is the thread of his own life. He tries to rely upon himself to reach the goal of *desengaño*. Unlike the protagonists of Petrarch, Garcilaso, and Sebastián de Córdoba, this one actively seeks enlightenment; he is not helplessly battered about by fate or by the will of another person.<sup>11</sup>

There is of course a negative aspect to the speaker's daring as well, for his attempt to travel the road alone separates him from the help of God that ultimately redeems him. That he enters the labyrinth "fiando al débil hilo de la vida" suggests not only the courage and resourcefulness of Theseus, but also the arrogance of Tirso's Don Juan who responds "¡Qué largo me lo fiáis!" to those who warn him of the consequences of sin. The speaker first believes his life experience will give him the wisdom necessary to find his way

I  
  
RIMAS SACRAS  
DE LOPE DE VEGA  
CARPIO.  
SONETO PRIMERO.



Vando me paro a cõtem-  
plar mi estado,  
Y a ver los passos por  
donde he venido,  
Me espanto de que vn  
hombre tan perdido,  
A conocer su error aya llegado:  
Quando miro los años que he passado  
La diuina razon puesta en oluido,  
Conozcõ que piedad del cielo ha sido  
No auerme en tanto mal precipitado  
Entrê por laberinto tan estraño,  
Fiando al debil hilo de la vida  
El tarde conocido defengaño,  
A Mas

*Rimas sacras*

Edición facsimilar, Madrid:  
CSIC, 1963

out of the labyrinth into *desengaño* but he eventually realizes that only through the mercy of heaven has he avoided downfall. Thus, his self-confidence starts him on his quest and yet almost keeps him from reaching his goal.

Lope represents the quest for enlightenment through allegory. His protagonist embarks on the journey of life through a dark labyrinth created by his separation from divine reason, hoping that the path of his life will lead him to *desengaño*. He encounters a light—the light of God—that overcomes the darkness of unreason and slays the monster of *engaño* within himself. Once the monster is dead, his divine reason finds its way back to its true home, its “patria” within the protagonist’s own heart and mind.<sup>12</sup> Lope fuses both mythological allusion and Christian imagery to support this allegory, and in the use of both he portrays the speaker as a courageous person who undertakes the journey, recognizes his error and, with the help of heaven, finds his way to “divina razón.”

Through this allegory, Lope suggests not only that the speaker is a Christian Theseus, but that he has a many-faceted personality, that he is more than a daring adventurer. He is also the minotaur, for Lope refers to “el monstruo muerto de mi ciego *engaño*.” The poet takes advantage of the idea of the minotaur as half-man and half-bull to suggest the “monstruous” half of the protagonist and, implicitly, of all human beings. In the depths of the labyrinth—the darkest recesses of his own psyche—the protagonist finds the dark, bestial side of his nature, which is exposed and destroyed by the light of God. Lope’s man has within himself the opposing forces in the struggle for good and evil. The labyrinth and the monster both stand for things inside the self; only the light comes from outside him, and eventually even the light enters into the speaker’s psyche. In the battleground of the self, the protagonist meets monster and savior, darkness and light, defeat and victory, *engaño* and *desengaño*.

In Lope’s day the labyrinth had many different symbolic meanings in art and literature. As John M. Steadman has noted, it “served frequently as a type of the world, a symbol of error and of intellectual or moral perplexity” (12). He cites Filippo Picinelli’s *Mundus Symbolicus* and argues that in that work it can stand for “wordly pleasure or lust, the ways of the irresolute, the heretic, and the damned” (7, n. 5). The many paths of error in the labyrinth were often contrasted with the one true road to salvation through Christ, and this contrast lies implicit in Lope’s text.

The imagery of a man emerging from a dark labyrinth of unreason into the light of divine reason may also suggest the metaphor of Plato’s cave. According to Plato, of course, most human beings live as if they were underground, seeing only vague, flickering reflections

of reality on the walls of a cave. Those who emerge from the cave, and we can include the protagonist in Lope's poem among that number, see the light of truth and reason, thus arriving at a state that Lope and his contemporaries call "desengaño." Plato argues that every man has "the power of learning the truth and the organ to see it with; and that, just as one might have to turn the body round in order that the eye should see light instead of darkness, so the entire soul must be turned away from this changing world, until its eye can bear to contemplate reality and that supreme splendour which we have called the Good" (232). Plato's imagery closely resembles that of Lope, and both Plato and Lope define man as an active seeker of truth, as one who has "the power of learning the truth." This idea of the human potential for enlightenment reappears in the last line of Lope's poem, in which "vuelve a la patria la razón divina." I would argue that the "yo" in Lope's poem could represent a microcosm of the ideal republic of Plato, where reason reigns supreme, that Lope's use of the term "patria" within this kind of allegory reflects a comparison between the reasoning self and Plato's republic of reason.<sup>13</sup>

The image of the dark cave contrasted with the light of reason is the central image of Plato's Republic, and it is so familiar to us that perhaps we do not realize the originality of joining it with the Theseus myth. "Theseus and the Minotaur" is the story of a hero who makes use of his masculine charm to gain the help of Ariadne and who demonstrates his courage and fighting ability in slaying the minotaur. It has, ostensibly, nothing to do with enlightenment and salvation until Lope sees those things in it. He recasts the myth to represent the human psyche's struggle toward "razón," a term which sums up the Platonic implications of the speaker's quest, for reason is the goal Plato advocates throughout his work. Lope adds spiritual overtones to these Platonic implications by modifying the term "razón" with the adjective "divina," thus bringing together the philosophical tradition of Plato and the Judaeo-Christian religious tradition. His character simultaneously reaches the philosophical state of enlightenment and the religious state of salvation.

Lope's depiction of this palinode persona reveals much about his method of poetic creation. It demonstrates his phenomenal ability to fuse various literary, mythological, philosophical, and religious elements into a dramatically original configuration. He alludes to Garcilaso as a starting point, a way of orienting his poem. He then departs from this model, drawing from classical mythology to characterize his hero as a traveler on the road of life who seeks *desengaño* even in the labyrinth of his own error, as a man who finds within himself a labyrinth as well as an openness to light. He ultimately finds "divina razón" and establishes within himself, microcosmically,



so to speak, the just republic envisioned by Plato. It is also the kind of republic envisioned by Christ, of course, who wanted men to be governed by the divine element of their natures. While Lope places his hero on the road described by Garcilaso, he then takes him down a different road through a labyrinth to enlightenment and salvation.

### *Lope's Sonnet VII*

In Sonnet VII Lope once again casts his speaker in an active role, this time that of self-interrogator:

¿Quién sino yo tan ciego hubiera sido,  
que no viera la luz? ¿Quién aguardara  
a que con tantas voces le llamara  
aquel despertador de tanto olvido?  
¿Quién sino yo por el abril florido  
de caduco laurel se coronara,  
y la opinión mortal solicitara,  
con tanto tiempo, en tanto error perdido?  
¿Quién sino yo tan atrevido fuera,  
que descolgara de Sión la lira,  
y al babilonio vil música diera?  
¿Y quién, sino quien es verdad, la ira  
templara en mí, porque al morir dijera  
que toda mi esperanza fue mentira? (319)

Although the theme of regret, the image of human blindness to the light of God, and terms like "perdido" and "olvido" echo Sonnet I, this poem differs substantially from "Cuando me paro." Here Lope does not emphasize the recovery of the protagonist, as he does in Sonnet I, but dwells more on his error, on his pursuit of misguided goals. The emotion that informs it is much angrier, much less philosophical than that of the opening sonnet. Furthermore, Lope expresses the anger of this poem through a completely different rhetorical strategy. Instead of an allegorical narrative, this poem is a series of questions that suggest the kind of spiritual self-examination found in religious treatises from the Middle Ages through Lope's era. The most famous and influential of these is of course the devotional manual, *Ejercicios espirituales*, of St. Ignatius Loyola, which he completed in 1534 and which was approved by Pope Paul III in 1548. The second of these exercises includes a series of implicit questions that closely resemble those in Lope's poem.

In a series of "punctos," St. Ignatius exhorts himself (and his reader) to compare his existence to that of others and to that of God:

3.<sup>o</sup> punto. El tercero: mirar quién soy yo disminuyéndome por ejemplos: primero, cuánto soy yo en comparación de todos los hombres; 2.<sup>o</sup> qué cosa son los hombres en comparación de todos los ángeles y santos del paraíso; 3.<sup>o</sup> mirar qué cosa es todo lo criado en comparación de Dios: pues yo solo ¿qué puedo ser?; 4.<sup>o</sup> mirar toda mi corrupción y fealdad corpórea . . .

4.<sup>o</sup> punto. El cuarto: considerar quién es Dios, contra quien he pecado, según sus atributos, comparándolos a sus contrarios en mí: su sapiencia a mi inorancia, su omnipotencia a mi flaqueza, su justicia a mi iniquidad, su bondad a mi malicia . . .

Coloquio. Acabar con un coloquio de misericordia, razonando y dando gracias a Dios nuestro Señor, porque me ha dado vida hasta agora, proponiendo enmienda con su gracia para adelante. Pater noster. (172)

In this section of the exercise St. Ignatius reviews and considers the evil nature of his sins, humbling himself through a series of questions, comparing himself to other men and to God; he finishes by giving thanks and promising to mend his ways. Over and over he urges himself to see ("mirar"), which is what Lope's protagonist has been unable to do because he is blind ("ciego") to God's light. The pattern of this section of the exercise is essentially the same one we find in Lope's poem, in which the protagonist implicitly compares himself to others and finds himself a great sinner, compares his misguided human nature to the divine truth that is God, and finally asks God to help him be like Christ.<sup>14</sup>

Lope's questions reveal a series of binary oppositions that pervade the *Rimas sacras*—blindness/sight, darkness/light, earth/heaven, fame/salvation, death/life, *engaño*/*desengaño*, lie/truth, man/God (Novo 68). These last two oppositions surprise us in the final stanza when, following the anaphoristic introduction of the first three stanzas with the same phrase ("¿Quién sino yo"), Lope shifts the focus of the poem away from the speaker by altering the question to: "¿Quién, sino quien es verdad." This startling, dramatic reversal in the form of the question moves the focus away from the speaker to God and stresses the contrast between man and God, lie and truth. In the end this man, no matter how misguided and daring in his errors, receives the help of God and realizes that the hope of earthly fame is a lie. The "yo tan atrevido" portrayed in the first three stanzas finally reaches truth through God.

In this poem Lope identifies the nature of the error much more specifically than he does in Sonnet I. Here the speaker regrets the misuse of his own art. Instead of dedicating his work to God, he has

sought to crown himself with earthly laurels. The reference to "abril florido" (v. 5) suggests the flower he rejected—the Easter lily, in favor of the "caduco laurel," associated with the pagan god Apollo, his son Orpheus (the archetypal player of the lyre), and the earthly fame of poets. This rejection of earthly songs harks back to the original conception of the palinode as a second ode that recants a primary one. The speaker regrets his previous work, regrets his profane song, regrets having used the sacred lyre to play for the "babilonio vil." Just as Stesichorus recants his song against Helen, just as Ovid and Petrarch recant their poems on profane love, just as John Donne recants his *Songs and Sonnets* with his *Holy Songs and Sonnets*, here Lope recants *Rimas* with his *Rimas sacras*.<sup>15</sup>

The speaker in this poem represents himself as an Orphic figure, a musician who charms others with his voice and his lyre. The error he recants—performing for the wrong purpose (fame) and the wrong audience (man instead of God)—recalls the Renaissance discourse on the relationship between eloquence and truth. Principal sites of this discourse are the emblem books of the period, with their many representations of *Eloquentia* and *Veritas*. Emblems often portray truth as a beautiful woman, nude (Ripa, *Iconologia*, 1603) or in some cases lightly clad (Alciati, *Emblemata*, 1577), and they idealize her as the symbol of Faith (*Fidei symbolum*). In contradistinction to truth, eloquence is portrayed as an equally beautiful woman, richly dressed and often given the logo, *Ornatus persuasio*. Virtually all such emblems make clear that eloquence serves, or should serve, truth.<sup>16</sup> The speaker in Lope's sonnet chastises himself because he has strayed from this ideal, because rather than serve divine truth with his powers of eloquence, he has served his personal earthly goals. He has misused his Orphic gift.

The phrase "babilonio vil" alludes to the opening lines of Psalm 137 (Vulgate 136):

Junto a los ríos de Babilonia nos sentábamos  
y llorábamos acordándonos de Sión  
De los sauces que hay en medio de ella,  
colgábamos nuestras cítaras:  
Allí los que nos tenían cautivos nos pedían canciones;  
los que nos habían llevado atados, alegría:  
"Cantadnos algunos de los cantos de Sión."

Clearly, Lope has altered the meaning of the biblical psalm to serve his own purposes. Whereas the psalm laments a time during the exile of the Hebrews when they were forced to sing songs about their lost homeland, Lope fashions it to lament the singing of earthly

rather than divine songs. If the Israelites hung up their lyres, Lope's singer took down the holy lyre, the lyre of Zion, and used it to play music for the "vil babilonio." He now regrets and recants performing that profane music.

Lope's use of the past subjunctive in the quatrains and the first tercet contrasts abruptly and dramatically with the present tense verb in the final tercet that describes not the past action of the protagonist, but the being, the existence of God: "¿Y quién, sino quien es verdad, la ira." "Es" is the only verb in the present tense and the only one that refers to essence instead of action. While the protagonist has done or not done various things in the past, God simply *is* the truth. Moreover, while the previous verbs have helped form questions, the phrase describing God is a statement of fact ("es verdad") within a question. The use of the present tense in this last stanza forms a kind of axis against which the other verbs in it are arranged. "Templara" suggests the past action of God to help the speaker, and the phrase "porque al morir dijera" suggests the future moment when the speaker will die. Thus, the last two lines of the poem represent a palinode within a palinode in that they foreshadow the self-awareness and regret the protagonist will experience at the end of his life. He now expresses regret for pursuing worldly fame, and he realizes that in the hour of his death he will express the same regret, that he will say that the search for fame "fue mentira." Another possible interpretation, of course, would be that the speaker sees himself at the edge of death as he composes the poem. In either case, he finds himself not only in the position of seeing his past and present clearly, but of foreseeing the future.

In spite of the fact that the only verb in the present tense is "es" in the final tercet, Sonnet VII reflects more immediacy than Sonnet I, which exists in a kind of continuous present modulated by the word "cuando." The meditation that Sonnet I expresses happens again and again, whenever the speaker pauses to contemplate the past. The time-frame of Sonnet VII, on the other hand, is the immediate present implied by the questions being asked. The immediacy of these questions gives the reader the role of participant in a dialogue rather than listener to a narrative, and casts the speaker as interrogator of himself and of the reader. In characterizing the speaker in this way, Lope moves away not only from Petrarch, Garcilaso, and Sebastián de Córdoba, but also from his own earlier poem. The different emotion, rhetorical strategy, and time-frame of this poem demonstrate how deftly and dramatically Lope has again modified the palinode tradition.

*Lope's Sonnet XV*

The phrase "¿Quién aguardara / a que con tantas voces le llamara" in Sonnet VII touches on a common theme in *Rimas sacras*—the speaker's repeated indifference to the entreaties of Christ, which is the theme Lope explores in much greater depth in Sonnet XV. The opening line recalls the one cited above, having the same theme of indifference, the same verb ("llamar"), and a rhyming echo ("cuantas veces" - "tantas voces"):

¡Cuántas veces, Señor, me habéis llamado,  
y cuántas con vergüenza he respondido  
desnudo como Adán, aunque vestido  
de las hojas del árbol del pecado!  
Seguí mil veces vuestro pie sagrado,  
fácil de asir, en una cruz asido,  
y atrás volví otras tantas atrevido  
al mismo precio en que me habéis comprado.  
Besos de paz os di para ofenderos;  
pero si, fugitivos de su dueño,  
hierran, cuando los hallan, los esclavos,  
hoy que vuelvo con lágrimas a veros,  
clavadme vos a vos en vuestro leño,  
y tendréisme seguro con tres clavos. (323)

In this poem, however, the speaker does not directly address himself, but Christ. The whole poem is an apostrophe to Christ in which he reveals his sins and his attempts to repent.

Despite the difference in rhetorical strategy—the use of an apostrophe to Christ, instead of self-interrogation or narrative—Lope develops the meanings here, as in the other sonnets, through the interplay of binary oppositions. The central one is made up of allusions at the beginning and the end—to Adam's "árbol del pecado" in the first quatrain and to Christ's "leño" in the final tercet. The speaker associates himself with Adam through the first allusion, and the choice of Adam reflects Lope's predilection for daring figures. In drawing a parallel between the protagonist's disobedience and Adam's disobedience, Lope compares him to the first man to disobey God—Adam. Yet by the end of the poem the speaker asks to be joined with Christ through the act of the Crucifixion—"clavadme vos

a vos." By organizing this sonnet around the image of Adam—the first man, fallen from grace—and that of Christ, who became a man to redeem mankind, Lope is making use of the Christian tradition of typology, "the understanding of past events as types foretoking other future events" (Chydenius 11). Typology most often involves the interpretation of people, actions, and statements in the Old Testament as prefigurations and prophecies that are fulfilled in the life of Christ. An extreme example can be found in the non-canonical *Epistle of Barnabas*, in which

the offering of Isaac is a type of the death of Christ on the cross. The driving out of the scapegoat into the desert is a type of the suffering of the innocent Christ. The sacrifice of a heifer typifies the slaying of Christ by sinful men. The victory that was won by Moses, his hands outstretched, serves as a representation of the death of Christ with his hands outstretched on the cross. (Chydenius 19)

Such linking of the Old and New Testament was a common element of Spain's religious culture long before Lope's day, and the poet uses this old and well-known tradition to describe the *yo poético* in this poem. The protagonist sins and thus associates himself with Adam and the "árbol del pecado," and then expresses his desire to place himself on the cross and become like Christ. He goes from being the rebel to being (or at least wanting to be) the perfect man; he moves from the tree of sin to the tree of redemption. Lope's reference to the "árbol" and the "leño" play on the common belief of the era that the cross on which Christ was crucified was made of wood from the tree that led to Adam's fall in the Garden of Eden.

The details that Lope selects from the biblical tale have special significance in that they create an image of the speaker that specifies some of Adam's characteristics and omits others. Like Adam, the protagonist experiences shame, realizes his nakedness, tries to cover himself but only covers himself with the evidence of his own sin. Lope does not, however, portray a hapless man who blames his wife for his sin, nor does Lope's Adam hide from God. Lope's *yo poético* regrets his sin but responds to God in spite of it. This is completely consonant with the speaker developed throughout *Rimas sacras*, the man who confesses his sins but never stops reaching out to God.

The protagonist is a decision maker as well as a wanderer, and in the final tercet he decides to stop wandering and turn back to Christ. He also takes the daring step of making a demand on his savior. In an attempt to refashion his life and emulate Christ, he asks the Lord to nail him to the cross. If the protagonist has been daring in his wanderings away from the cross, he is now equally daring in expressing his desire to put an end to these wanderings. He is in essence asking Christ to crucify him. This request sounds, once again, much like St. Ignatius, who recommends this kind of request in his First Exercise: "La demanda ha de ser según subiecta materia, es a saber, si la contemplación es de resurrección, demandar gozo con Christo gozoso; si es de pasión, demandar pena, lágrimas y tormento con Christo atormentado" (169).

In this poem, even more than in Sonnets I and VII, the protagonist participates in his own salvation as he reaches out toward redemption. While ultimately he cannot achieve this goal on his own, Lope casts him as an active and sincere petitioner. Lope's representation of this figure reflects Stephen Greenblatt's assertions that Renaissance people came to "an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process" and that "the recurrent model for this . . . fashioning is Christ" (2). Lope's protagonist does not wait tremulously for something to happen to him, like those portrayed by Petrarch and Garcilaso. He makes a definite attempt to change himself, to emulate Christ. The oppositions between darkness and light, blindness and vision do not appear directly in this poem; however, they are subtly recalled in the first line of the final tercet when the speaker turns toward Christ to see him: "hoy que vuelvo con lágrimas a veros." Through his use of the verb "ver," Lope contributes to the wonderful alliteration of "v" sounds that highlights and dramatizes the final lines and also connects this poem to the other palinodes in which seeing the light is a central image. Similarly, his use of the term "atrevido" in line seven echoes the term in other palinodes of *Rimas sacras* as well as in the general characterization of the palinode persona as a daring character. In all these ways Lope ties together the poems of *Rimas sacras*, makes the poems echo and reinforce one another.

Lope also uses this linking technique within the poem itself. The “v” alliteration of the final stanza, for example, links to the “v” sounds of line seven, which is the only other place in the poem where we find the verb “volver.” In the last stanza, however, Lope uses the term with a different meaning that demonstrates the reversal the speaker has longed for. If before he turned away from the cross (“y atrás volví otras tantas atrevido”), he now turns toward him (“hoy que vuelvo con lágrimas a veros”). The use of the same verb for the contrasting actions of flight and return, in conjunction with the echo of the “v” sounds in both lines, underscore the change in the speaker from “atrevido” to penitent. This phrasing also echoes Lope’s use of the verb “volver” in the last line of Sonnet I.

Lope concludes the poem with a phrase that contains the complete word that it rhymes with in the last line of the first tercet: “tres clavos” includes “esclavos.” This pun has special meaning because in the course of the poem the speaker has expressed the desire to be, like one of the errant “esclavos” he imagines, attached to Christ, who is symbolized by the “tres clavos” of the Crucifixion. Linguistically, then, in a play on words similar to that of San Juan’s “amada en el amado transformada,” the speaker achieves the oneness with God through Christ that he longs for. Here, as in many poems from the mystical tradition, the line blurs between longing to be and being united with God, between the desire expressed by the *yo poético* and the linguistic fulfillment of that desire within the poem. Although Lope’s sonnet ends with the expression of desire for union, the words he places in the mouth of the speaker prove powerful enough to bring about that union at least within language—“esclavo” becomes “clavado” within the phrase “tres clavos.” Once again, Lope highlights the power of the speaker.

In *Rimas sacras* Lope revitalizes the palinode tradition in many ways as he departs from the paradigm set by Petrarch and Garcilaso, but particularly in the way he characterizes the *yo poético*. He changes the hapless victim introduced by his predecessors into an active protagonist who sins but continually struggles to change himself and find the way toward enlightenment and salvation. As the three sonnets we have examined indicate, *Rimas sacras* is the vivid and poignant story of a man with all the resourcefulness of Theseus



who nevertheless needs God to help him slay the monster within himself, a man with Orphic eloquence who feels he has misused this gift by not serving divine truth, a man with all the imperfections of Adam who nevertheless strives to emulate Christ. In the development of this persona, Lope varies his rhetorical strategy again and again, using allegorical narrative, self-analysis through monologue, self-revelation within an apostrophe to Christ, and other techniques. He starts with an allusion to Garcilaso, to the tradition handed down to him, but that is merely his starting point. With his vast erudition and sensitivity, Lope brings elements into the tradition from classical mythology and philosophy, *The Bible*, Christian treatises on meditation, and typology. He turns down a different road, finds his own way to a new kind of palinode.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Daniel L. Heiple addresses this issue in "Garcilaso's Critics and the Question of Sincerity," the opening chapter of his *Garcilaso de la Vega and the Italian Renaissance*. After examining Garcilaso criticism within a wide-ranging and insightful discussion of the history and theoretical implications of "sincerity" in literature, he concludes that it "has been a false criterion for judging all of Garcilaso's poetry" (27). I would argue that sincerity is a dangerous and misleading measure of Lope's poetry as well because, although he constantly takes the everyday events of his life and turns them into poetry, Lope's objectives are ultimately artistic and not autobiographical. Thus, the best of the critical-biographical works, such as Trueblood's *Experience and Artistic Expression: The Making of La Dorotea* and Francisco Márquez Villanueva's *Lope: Vida y valores*, are helpful because they use Lope's biography in a general way as a revelation of "the nerve centers of his *poiesis*" (Trueblood 4), because they focus on the process of Lope's transmutation of life into art.

<sup>2</sup>In spite of Randel's hesitations about biographical criticism of Lope, she points out that his poetry seems to demand such an approach through its obvious, self-conscious inclusion of details from the poet's life: his poems "often disconcert us because they do not stand alone either in art or life (. . .) In the series of veilings and unveilings, of maskings and unmaskings which go on in his poems, we are constantly taunted by the spectre of the 'real' persona, only to be frustrated in our search for the genuine lyric self. We can

know the poet's 'real' voice only as that energy which carries him from one pose or one voice to another" (224, 242).

<sup>3</sup>For a detailed morphology of the sonnets in *Rimas sacras*, see Novo 13-127.

<sup>4</sup>"El factor de cohesión textual más evidente en una primera aproximación al libro es el temático y de perspectiva anímica del yo poético" (Novo 35).

<sup>5</sup>Bruce Wardropper, in his anthology *Spanish Poetry of the Golden Age*, argues that the immense popularity of Garcilaso's palinode caused it, instead of the Petrarchan original, to fix "the paradigm for other poets working within the narrow tradition of retrospection" (50). Edward Glaser has studied Garcilaso's palinode and its tremendous influence in Spanish letters in his seminal article, "*Cuando me paro a contemplar mi estado: Trayectoria de un Rechenschaftssonett.*"

<sup>6</sup>Fernando de Herrera, in his annotations of Garcilaso's "Soneto I," is the first to point out the Petrarchan sonnet as the poet's model (Glaser 61), and his idea is seconded by el Brocense (Rivers, ed., *Garcilaso, Obras completas*). Rafael Lapesa disagrees, however, arguing that "fuera de la consideración retrospectiva inicial, los dos sonetos divergen" (211, n. 95). He suggests a few other Petrarchan possibilities but concludes that the most likely source is Dante, probably because the speakers in both poems look back at the "steps" they have taken: "Cosi l'animo mio, ch'ancor fuggiva, / Si volse a retro a rimir lo passo / Che non lascio giammai persona viva" (Lapesa 81-82). Certainly the comparison of Dante wandering in the selva oscura and Garcilaso's speaker feeling lost and looking back are suggestive. Nevertheless, while questions of source such as this are highly problematic and can rarely be proven one way or another, I am inclined for three reasons to agree with Garcilaso's contemporary commentators (and also with Grieve, Heiple, and Randel) that Garcilaso was inspired by Petrarch's poem. First, the similarity of the opening lines of Petrarch and Garcilaso is greater than that which would link Garcilaso to Dante. Second, there is nothing strange about Garcilaso taking a few lines from Petrarch to create a substantially different poem, for that is exactly what Lope and many other poets do with Garcilaso's opening lines. Indeed, as Randel argues, in this poem Lope "engages the verses of his model in order to move away from them" (226). Third, Lope deliberately invites us to compare the first sonnet of *Rimas sacras* with the first one of his earlier volume *Rimas*, which "clearly glosses the first line of Petrarch's opening sonnet, 'Voi ch'ascoltate in rime sparse il suono'" (Grieve 415, n.4). In view of Lope's profoundly self-conscious linking of the opening poems of his *Rimas* and *Rimas sacras*, it would seem natural for this linking to include the use of Petrarchan models for both poems.

<sup>7</sup>The day that Petrarch refers to in the final tercet is April 6th, the day (he tells us in several poems) that he met Laura in 1327 and the day she died in 1348. These dates and other details of the love story in the *Canzoniere* "indi-

cate Petrarch's reliance on traditions established by the three preceding schools of love poetry: the Provençal, the Sicilian, and the *dolce stil nuovo*. Love at first sight, the contrasting aspects of the lover's state, the remarkable coincidence of dates, the lady as a guide to heaven, the final renunciation—none of these is original in Petrarch. With the exception of the renunciation, we can find them all in Dante's *Vita Nuova*. And even the renunciation had been fixed by Andreas Capellanus as a recognized part of the convention" (Mortimer 2). I would argue that the conventionality of these dates and details suggests that they form part of a conventional "rhetorical strategy of sincerity" (Heiple 20) that predates even Petrarch. Therefore, it is mainly within this context that we should consider what is or what purports to be biographical detail in the work of all these poets.

<sup>8</sup>In order to facilitate comparison between this and other poems that I have cited from editions with modernized spelling, I have taken this poem from Elias L. Rivers, *Renaissance and Baroque Poetry of Spain*, 34-35. I have made one emendation ("han" instead of "ha" in verse 2), however, because Rivers made that same emendation in his later critical edition of Garcilaso, *Obras completas con comentario*.

<sup>9</sup>I have modernized this text from Glen R. Gale's critical edition (93). The third verse reads "me ha traído," undoubtedly because of the typographical error in the edition of Garcilaso that Sebastián de Córdoba used to create his versión a lo divino. The emendation "me han traído" was first suggested by El Brocense in 1574, but we can assume that it had not come to the attention of Sebastián de Córdoba by the time his edition appeared in 1575.

<sup>10</sup>For the sake of simplicity I have identified this sonnet in the rest of this article with a Roman numeral, but it is important to note that Lope differentiates it from the other sonnets by using an ordinal rather than a cardinal number ("Soneto primero"). This title also has the effect of stressing the sonnet's link with Lope's "Soneto primero" from his earlier volume, *Rimas* (1609). Grieve demonstrates the "active intertextual exchange" between these two collections, arguing that *Rimas sacras* is a "poetic response to" and "an intellectual mirror image" of *Rimas*.

<sup>11</sup>In an otherwise perceptive article comparing the same poems by Garcilaso, Sebastián de Córdoba, and Lope, Darci L. Strother fails to see this vital difference between Lope's speaker and the other two, arguing that in all three poems "el caminante . . . no ha controlado sus propios pasos, porque, cuando se entregó, dejó de actuar según su albedrío personal, y abandonó su futuro en manos ajenas. Declara, entonces, su pasividad, y acepta la voluntad de otro/a" (66).

<sup>12</sup>Editions of this poem before Blecua's did not always place a comma after "engaño" in the final tercet, which allowed for another possible reading: "monstro" could be the subject of the transitive verb "vuelve," thus meaning that "the slaying of the monster of my self-deceit returns reason, which has strayed, to its homeland."

<sup>13</sup>While there is no way to prove that Lope had Plato's *Republic* in mind here, we know that Lope knew Plato's work. Trueblood, for example, cites various explicit references within Lope to *Symposium* and *Phaedo*. Furthermore, even if Lope did not have Plato's Cave in mind, he participated in the rationalist tradition that pervaded European philosophy and that stemmed ultimately from Plato. His emphasis on "razón" in this context suggests Plato whether or not the poet intended his imagery to be allusive or not.

<sup>14</sup>Julián Olivares demonstrates Quevedo's use of Ignatius's work in his article, "Toward the Penitential Verse of Quevedo's *Heráclito cristiano*," and Louis L. Martz has written an extensive study of the influence of meditational works by St. Ignatius and others in English religious literature of the seventeenth century, *The Poetry of Meditation*.

<sup>15</sup>Grieve, who deals extensively with this issue, argues convincingly that the whole of "*Rimas sacras* functions as a collective repudiation or revision of *Rimas*" (420).

<sup>16</sup>See the appendix to Steadman.

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