

Huir procuro el encarecimiento: La poesía de Hernando de Acuña. Edición a cargo de Gregorio Cabello Porras y Soledad Pérez-Abadín Barro. Universidad de Santiago de Compostela. 2011. 460 pp.

Among the early modern writers associated with the Spanish Golden Age, the subject of the essays presented in this important collection, Hernando de Acuña (1518 – 1580), can hide in plain sight. Born in Valladolid to an aristocratic family, Acuña embodied the ideal of *armas y letras*. From a young age, his name, along with that of his older brother Pedro, appears on the lists of captains in the imperial armies. He found favor with important patrons from Alfonso de Ávalos, the Marquis of Vasto, to the Holy Roman Emperor himself. Captured in battle, Acuña composed sonnets from a French prison. Skilled with hendecasyllables and native forms alike, he translated, at the behest of the Emperor, Olivier de la Marche's *Le chevalier délibéré* into Castilian verse (the Emperor himself had translated the French poem into Castilian prose). Acuña fought with the Emperor against the Schmalkaldic League; he traveled with him to Brussels; and he was chosen for sensitive diplomatic missions in Italy and Africa. We know of these activities because Acuña described them in an extensive *Memorial*, or record of service, which he prepared for Philip II in response to a perceived lack of compensation for his labors (the victory at Muhlberg, according to Acuña, was expensive). As Gregorio Cabello Porras and Soledad Pérez-Abadín Barro note in their short, clear introduction to this volume, Acuña's attitude regarding his sovereigns ranged from youthful optimism to baroque disenchantment, before finally settling into the stoic disengagement of the retired soldier during his final years in Granada.

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The *Memorial* has served as a touchstone for generations of scholars seeking to gain a sense of the life of the imperial courtier. “*Ya se acerca, Señor, o ya es llegado,*” Acuña’s sonnet in celebration of Hapsburg world dominion, is a mainstay in anthologies of Spanish verse. And the eclogues, songs and sonnets present --to those who have read them-- nuanced reflections on the complex physical and emotional demands placed on an aristocrat in imperial service (on this topic, see the thoughtful and well-annotated essays by Maria Rosso and Ramón Mateo Mateo). How is such an accomplished witness to the changing culture of the sixteenth-century Castilian elites relegated to the critical sidelines?

One answer surely lies in historical factors, and in the priorities that shaped humanistic inquiry over the long twentieth century. Renaissance humanism was, of course, a practice founded in dialogue and scholarly exchange, but discussions of Renaissance literature, culture and politics have tended since at least the nineteenth century to place emphasis on the individual artist, monarch, poet. In Spanish letters, of course, Garcilaso de la Vega has dominated this view. The image of the Toledan as the “prince of poets” was cultivated from soon after his death, first by his close friend Juan Boscán and later by successive constellations of writers, editors, scholars, politicians, partisans and editorial houses. From one point of view, the “Garcilaso” we have inherited is a paradigmatic example of the ‘author function’, an observation which does not discount the significance of the discussions that have taken place under his aegis. The first and third eclogues, along with some of the sonnets and *canciones*, prompted classic essays on aesthetics and subjectivity. Garcilaso also inspired reflections on belatedness

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and nationalism, which --particularly in the wake of the Civil War, the Franco regime and the Marshall Plan-- furnished writers and critics with avenues through which to consider the complexity of Spanish identity, and also to reflect on the position of Spain within a predominantly northern-identified "Europe."

In contrast, Hernando de Acuña was a poet of the *network*. And arguably it is in the post-national, digitized and Wikified twenty-first century that his transnational, collaborative career comes into its own as an object of critical interest. Acuña was not yet a citizen of the late seventeenth-century republic of letters; his writings were conditioned by rivalry for favor in a culture of privilege. Nevertheless, to read his work is to encounter a burgeoning, jostling world of patrons, rivals and interlocutors, contemporary and deceased. One gains this sense simply by reading through the poems and the dedications collected in José Lara Garrido's important edition of the *Varias Poesías* (Cátedra, 1985). *Huir procuro el encarecimiento*, which is dedicated to Lara Garrido and to Gabriele Morelli, greatly expands our view of Acuña in his Spanish and Italian contexts, positioning his writings in relation to those of Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, Gregorio Silvestre, Gutierre de Cetina, Luis de Leiva, Jerónimo de Urrea, among others, in Spain. (Regarding whether the Acuña brothers had direct contact with Garcilaso there remains an intriguing question; the evidence is weighed in this collection by José Romera Castillo.)

Italians also played important roles: Petrarch, Bembo, Boiardo, Varchi and Sannzaro exercised the expected influence, as did Ovid and Vergil. But so did the members of the court of the Marquis and Marquise of Vasto (on their relationship with

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Acuña, see the essay by Morelli), and men such as Tommaso Castellani and Luigi Alamanni, whose translations and poems served as sources for Acuña's accomplished, but also strikingly independent, works of *imitatio*.

Indeed, as Menéndez y Pelayo observed long ago, Acuña's greatest talents were in the areas of imitation and translation. This characterization is quoted by Marcial Rubio Árquez in his impressive contribution to the volume, "Hernando de Acuña, traductor." Armed with a comprehensive grasp of the criticism on Acuña from Menéndez y Pelayo forward; and quoting, where possible, the attributed source texts, Rubio clarifies Acuña's relationships to earlier translators of ancient works and analyzes his methods for engaging more contemporary ones. The 'translation studies' approach to Acuña also informs essays by Ángel Ruiz Pérez, who considers the relationship between Acuña and Mosco; Antonio de Gargano, who focuses on Acuña's influences in Milan; and Romera Castillo, who re-examines the competition between Urrea and Acuña in her essay on "La lira de Garcilaso contrahecha". Taken together with important analyses by José F. Labrador Herraiz, Ralph A. DiFranco and Cabello Porras of the transmission, editing and publication of Acuña's texts, and complemented by a usefully-organized bibliography, *Huir procuro el encarecimiento* fulfills the ambitions set forth by its editors: to present "una visión actualizada, exhaustiva y rigurosa de la obra poética de Hernando de Acuña, a fin de clausurar la imagen del autor como un poeta soldado en la estela fugaz de Garcilaso" (9).

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