

Talking and Text:
Essays on the Literature
of Golden Age Spain

by

ELIAS L. RIVERS



Juan de la Cuesta
Newark, Delaware

Table of Contents

PREFACE.....	9
INTRODUCTION	
EMILIE L. BERGMANN.....	11
Problems of Genre in Golden Age Poetry.....	19
The Horatian Epistle and its Introduction into Spanish Literature.....	37
Interplay of Syntax and Metrics in Garcilaso's Sonnets.....	61
The Pastoral Paradox of Natural Art	83
Nature, Art and Science in Spanish Poetry of the Renaissance	103
Some Ideas about Language and Poetry in Sixteenth-Century Spain.....	121
Talking And Writing In <i>Don Quixote</i>	131
Cervantes' Art of the Prologue	147
Cervantes and the Question of Language	155
On the Prefatory Pages of <i>Don Quixote</i> , Part II.....	169
Genres and Voices in the <i>Viaje del Parnaso</i>	179
Language and Reality in Quevedo's Sonnets	201
The <i>Comedia</i> as Discursive Action	221

Preface

IT WAS ANNE CRUZ who first told me about Richard Helgerson's impressive essay entitled *A Sonnet from Carthage: Garcilaso de la Vega and the New Poetry of Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). He was already an expert on this new poetry as written in French by Du Bellay and Ronsard and in English by Sidney and Spenser when he belatedly discovered, in 2002, the corresponding Spanish poets, Boscán and Garcilaso, and by 2005 he had begun to write an original and wide-ranging study of the new Renaissance poetry of Spain, France, and England. That project was tragically, and almost immediately, cut short by the diagnosis of an inoperable pancreatic cancer; he was able to complete only a brief sample of a major new book before his death in 2007, at the age of 65.

Helgerson's slender volume made Anne and me realize that three fundamental Renaissance documents in Spanish were unknown to comparatists who do not read the language; the documents are the prefaces written by Juan Boscán and Garcilaso de la Vega for Boscán's translation into Spanish (1534) of Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, and Boscán's preface (1543) for the new Italian-style poetry written by him and by Garcilaso. More than fifteen years ago Ignacio Navarrete (in Chapter 2 of his *Orphans of Petrarch*, University of California, 1994) had clearly explained in English the significance of Spain's early appropriation of Castiglione's prose and of the Italian hendecasyllabic line in poetry. Anne and I soon prepared a bilingual edition of these three prefaces for the "Little-Known Documents" section of *PMLA*.

As a different project, Anne persuaded me, and our friend Tom Lathrop, to republish, as a collection, a dozen of my old, and occasionally redundant, articles. No attempt has been made to

bring them up to date. Anne also, with my consent, invited Emilie Bergmann to write the following introduction, which has turned out to be far too generous in its praise. I have been kindly granted permission by the original publishers to reprint these articles, and to them I hereby express my gratitude. And so, dear reader, I hope you will be usefully entertained by this immodest volume put together by an aging Hispanist.

ELIAS L. RIVERS
15 July 2009
Coral Gables

Introduction

EMILIE L. BERGMANN

THE ARTICLES IN THIS collection represent more than half a century's exploration of literary texts and the social history of language by an extraordinary scholar. Throughout his career, still remarkably productive long after retirement, Elias L. Rivers has addressed the work of the greatest authors of Spain's cultural Golden Age: Garcilaso de la Vega, Miguel de Cervantes, Luis de Góngora y Argote, Francisco de Quevedo, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Since these are also some of the language's most difficult authors, Elias's lucidly written interpretations of renaissance and baroque stylistic labyrinths have become recognized as classics whose usefulness continues to grow over the years since their first publication. Like Elias's best graduate seminars, which I had the privilege of attending in the early 1970s, they present the broad sweep of literary history from classical antiquity to Petrarchist poetics and Derrida's theorizing of writing and speech, tuning the reader's ear to resonances of classical and Italian texts in the poetic production of early modern Spain, in a distinctly contemporary key. Elias's profound interest in sociolinguistics lends immediacy to the voices of poets who wrote for elite audiences in imperial Rome and Castile. His perspective is particularly effective for teaching heritage speakers who have learned about diglossia from personal experience, becoming skilled in an official, written language while speaking a "mother" tongue at home.

A sociolinguistic approach shapes Elias's 1983 survey of Hispanic literature, *Quixotic Scriptures: Essays on the Textuality*

of *Hispanic Literature*, a volume meant for non-specialists and students. Beginning with the *jarchas* and ending with Borges, Cabrera Infante, and Vallejo, his commentary on each text highlights the unique historical circumstances of diglossia in Spain and the Americas, from the official Latin of imperial Rome to the effect of written Spanish in the Quechua language communities of the Andes. A more specialized study, *Muses and Masks: Some Classical Genres of Spanish Poetry* (1992) focuses on the “literally literary” aspect of poetic genre in texts written in Madrid, Barcelona, Naples, Seville, Mexico City, and Lima during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, examining the semantic consequences of the formal and functional distinction between poetry and prose in an imperial cultural context.

Elias’s editions of selected poems of Fray Luis, Quevedo, and Sor Juana provide useful introductions to specific writers, but the text that has opened the door to the study of early modern Spanish lyric for generations of undergraduate and graduate students is *Renaissance and Baroque Poetry of Spain*, published in 1966. Before I met him, or even thought about graduate studies, he welcomed me to the study of early modern Spanish poetry through his prose translations, lively renditions of the diverse registers of usage in the poetry of the period. In addition to conveying the wit and beauty of the poems while making them linguistically accessible, the first Dell edition was available for an absurdly low price, accessible to student budgets. The collection is still in print, now in a larger format, but I treasure that pocket-sized anthology. Elias’s inclusion of verses by the Mexican *criolla* poet Sor Juana in *Renaissance and Baroque Poetry of Spain* contributed toward the study of her poetry in the U.S., at a time when colonial Spanish American cultural production was studied in isolation from early modern peninsular literature. Decades later, with his brilliant wife, the late Georgina Sabat-Rivers, he collaborated on a major critical edition of the principal works of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, published in 2004. It includes works discovered since the appearance of Alfonso

Méndez Plancarte's heavily annotated four-volume edition in the 1950s; the careful selection of notes makes this edition uniquely valuable.

The 1966 anthology guided me toward my choice of specialization and, a few years later, one of the articles in this collection, "The Pastoral Paradox of Natural Art," suggested the topic of my doctoral dissertation on ekphrasis, poetic descriptions of visual works of art. Other aspects of this article, however, have made it a perennial favorite of my graduate and undergraduate students. It has been published in Spanish translation and excerpted in *Historia y crítica de la literatura española* (1980-84). An obviously useful aspect of the article is its graphic presentation of the structural symmetry of the eclogue. Although post-modernity may have dispelled romantic notions of the relationship between life and art, the bias toward realism in literature can be an obstacle to students' appreciation of the pastoral. Most important, for this reason, is Elias's discussion of the ways in which Garcilaso self-consciously addresses questions of conventionality in poetry, and the distancing of emotion through the poet's reference to the Greek painter Apelles's depiction of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, known only through Pliny's description. According to the text, the greatest intensity of grief was represented by the artistic illusion of the completely concealed face of Iphigenia's father, Agamemnon. Thus the Spanish renaissance poet does not convey his grief for the death of a beloved woman in any simple way; rather, he creates a work of art that makes full use of his literary resources and his lived experience.

Elias established his authority in the field with a major edition of Garcilaso's *Obras completas con comentario*, published in 1974. This monumental accomplishment is particularly impressive considering that the painstaking comparison of variants among earlier editions was accomplished before the existence of computer technology. The design of the text is ideal for diverse kinds of reading, keeping the scholarly apparatus, exhaustive at the time of