

Ruinations: Petrarch in Rome, Navagero in Granada

Barbara Fuchs
(University of California, Los Angeles)

Petrarch's 1341 letter to his friend Giovanni Colonna, detailing their walks through Rome during a visit to the city (*Familiars* 6.2), has long been regarded as a founding document of the European Renaissance, capturing the moment when ruins first led, in Thomas Greene's evocative phrase, to the discovery of history (Greene 90). In his letter, Petrarch conjures a proliferation of text from the evanescence of the ruins, as words supply the Rome that is so poignantly absent. In this powerful account, the poet's contemplation of Roman ruins becomes the birth of historical self-consciousness—the past, however desirable and appealing, becomes fixed in its alterity (Choay 38). Petrarch's view of the ruins thus encapsulates his “radical difference from the world of the past” (Mazzotta 25). Moreover, he sees the ruins not as the justified punishment of pagans but as “la permanence fragile d'une grandeur qu'il sait disparue mais rêve de retrouver” (“the fragile permanence of a grandeur that he recognizes as lost but dreams of recovering”) (Forero Mendoza 39). No mere walking tour, then, Petrarch's gaze on the ruins of Rome proclaims a new way of constructing the past and positioning the humanist observer in relation to it. Although scholars on both sides of the medieval/early modern divide have productively complicated the periodization that Petrarch self-consciously inaugurates, the ruin remains a powerful heuristic, reifying and fixing not only a distant past but periodization itself (Summit and Wallace).

This essay locates the ruin in a broader methodological and disciplinary context, as I explore how our privileged narratives of the Renaissance focus on the contemplation of Roman ruins to the exclusion of other, more historically proximate remains. By juxtaposing Petrarch's hypercanonical humanist gaze upon the ruins of Rome with the Venetian ambassador Andrea Navagero's less often considered contemplation of new ruins in Granada, I show how the periodization and conceptualization of early modernity has privileged the Roman connection over other more pressing and immediate ruinations, such as Al-Andalus.

Old versus New Ruins

*Roma quanta fuit, ipsa ruina docet*¹

Petrarch's letter simultaneously reconstructs his walk with his friend Colonna in 1341 and the ancient ruins that they observe or imagine:

... nec in urbe tantum sed circa urbem vagabamur, aderatque per singulos passus quod linguam atque animum excitaret: hic Evandri regia, hic Carmentis edes, hic Caci spelunca...

¹ Renaissance commonplace, roughly translatable as: “How great Rome was, its very ruins show us.” All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

... we would wander not only in the city itself but around it, and at each step there was present something which would excite our tongue and mind: here was the palace of Evander, there the shrine of Carmentis, here the cave of Cacus... (Petrarch 1.617/1.291)

In an ekphrastic tour-de-force, the letter continues in this vein for eighty lines or so. Petrarch collapses time and space, conjuring not only significant places but also specific moments of Roman history, from “miserabilis Lucretia ferro incumbens” (“the wretched Lucretia lying upon her sword”) to “Hic ninxit Nonis Augusti” (“where it snowed on the fifth of August”) (Petrarch 619/291, 621/293). A final stop at the Baths of Diocletian leads to further contemplation of ruins: “Et euntibus per menia fracte urbis et illic sedentibus, ruinarum fragmenta sub oculis erant” (And as in our travels through the remains of a broken city, there too, as we sat, the remnants of the ruins lay before our eyes” (Petrarch 623/294). No matter how much Petrarch may have identified or conjured, what lies before him is ruination.

Critics have recognized the intense imaginative projection that allows Petrarch to read so much into what was in many cases overgrown rubble. Greene underscores the hermeneutic force of the humanist gaze: “Petrarch essentially read an order into the Roman wilderness, intuited a plan beneath the shattered temples and grazing sheep...” (88). Giuseppe Mazzotta, for his part, emphasizes the pathos of the exercise: “Petrarch recognizes the pastness of the past in the sense that the monuments of the past appear to him as taciturn shadows of a shattered historical discourse, obscure signs of the withdrawal of what men have made into the opaque surface of the ground” (31). Despite the historical discontinuity that Petrarch identifies, or indeed precisely because of it, the gaze upon the ruins becomes the source for poetic and intellectual creation, with the poet’s imagination as “custodian of memories” (32). As Andrew Hui has recently pointed out, the focus on ruins is a heuristic of sorts: like philological inquiry, it involves the study of fragments as synecdoches for a lost whole (11-12).²

In the Petrarchan version, which will animate poetic musings on Rome well into the sixteenth century, ruins involve longing and the desire for a lost past, on the one hand, and the claim of continuity with Rome, on the other. The Italian humanist attitude to ruins is desirous—perhaps best exemplified in the mysterious *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499), which as Patricia Fortini Brown has noted, offers a rapturous version of time-travel with ruins. Moreover, the humanist goal is to restore the ruins, whether by mending them, adding missing parts, recreating them pictorially, or recycling them as spolia (Fortini Brown 221). Humanists experience an intense connection to ruins and to their original inhabitants, imaginatively conjured as interlocutors for figures such as Petrarch himself, Machiavelli, or any number of Renaissance thinkers.

Yet while Roman ruins play a crucial role in the narrative of how Renaissance humanism spread across Europe, and of *translatio imperii studiique*, they were not the only kinds of ruins that Europeans encountered in the period. The religious conflicts that racked Europe over the course of the long sixteenth century—the fall of Granada and expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, the protracted wars between Catholics and Protestants in the German lands and France, the destruction of Catholic institutions in England, the increasing repression of Moriscos in Spain until their expulsion in 1609-14—as well as

² On modern and contemporary “ruinophilia,” see Boym.

Europeans' violent encounters with New World populations, produced their own sets of ruins across Europe and on both sides of the Atlantic.

Byron Hamann, in his article of the same title, introduces the useful concept of “ruinas nuevas” (new ruins) to compare Muslim and indigenous religious spaces destroyed by Christians in Valencia and New Spain, respectively (140-154).³ Hamann is primarily interested in the relationship between conversion and iconoclasm as it signified for Catholics, Muslims, and Mixtecs in the sixteenth century. In order to understand the social life of religious ruins, he argues, we must attend to the specific meanings of iconoclasm and the status of ruined religious buildings for the different belief systems. He notes that while for Christianity the sacredness of a building was quite fragile—i.e., a church could lose its status due to any number of profanations—Muslims and Mixtecs both believed in the sacred character of the ruins themselves. Thus *fatwas* dictated over the centuries indicated the precise uses to which the stones that had made up a mosque could and could not be put, given the enduring nature of their sacredness. In New Spain, long-standing traditions of venerating older ruins may have influenced how more recent ruins were regarded, so that even structures or spaces overwritten with Christian buildings nonetheless preserved their sacred power in the eyes of indigenous communities (Hamann 152-153).

Although Hamann is primarily concerned with sacred buildings, his account suggestively reconfigures the force of the ruin, whether sacred or secular, in the period. Particularly when juxtaposed with truly ancient ruins, recent ruins complicate the models of supersession and imperial *translatio* on which humanist historiography relied. Still warm and connected to present-day concerns, a ruin that cannot safely be consigned to a distant past represents a recent loss, rather than a safely inert monument unearthed by the antiquarian. Given its temporal proximity, the new ruin is less easy to seize or reimagine. In recalling a more immediate ordeal, it serves also to raise questions about the populations associated with the ruination, and their fate in the wake of destruction. The pathos associated with the emptiness—or emptying—of the new ruin concerns extant populations, only recently displaced, and thus invokes far larger questions of how to manage ongoing, competing processes of resistance and assimilation.

Empty Palaces

This dynamic is perhaps clearest in the Venetian ambassador Andrea Navagero's description of his travels through Spain, as he oscillates between antiquarian description of Roman vestiges and a more proximate witnessing of new ruins in Granada. A scholar, poet, and antiquarian, Navagero (1483-1529) was part of the great generation of Italian humanists that included his friends Pietro Bembo, Baldassare Castiglione, Girolamo Fracastoro, and Giambattista Ramusio. In Venice, he collaborated with Aldus Manutius as an editor of the classics at his Aldine press and was a patron of Titian; in Rome, he frequented the circle of the painter Raphael. In 1523, he was named Venice's ambassador to the court of Charles V in Spain, at a particularly delicate moment in intra-European rivalries. Before Navagero could occupy his post, Charles had defeated Francis I at the

³ On postcolonial ruins, see Stoler. She notes the importance of “revis[ing] what constitutes the archives of imperial pursuit, to reanimate ‘arrested histories,’ to rethink the domains of imperial governance and the forms of knowledge that evaded and refused colonial mandates to succumb, “civilize,” and serve” (“Introduction” 4).

battle of Pavia (February 24, 1525), taking the French king prisoner and upsetting Venice's delicate equilibrium as it played one threatening power against the other. Undaunted by the political situation, Navagero traveled widely across Spain during his four years there, often in the company of Castiglione, who was the Pope's envoy to Charles. Given the tense relations between Venice and Charles in the period, Navagero's account of his travels is short on explicit political commentary, yet includes rich descriptions that more obliquely reflect on Spain's place within Europe.

Perhaps most striking throughout Navagero's *Viaggio fatto in Spagna et in Francia* (Venice, 1563) is his attention to the traces of ancient Rome. From his very first descriptions of Spanish landmarks and cities, Navagero stresses the names under which the Romans knew them, or their earlier incarnations as Roman settlements: Barcelona's Montjuich is the same mountain, some say, that Pomponius called Mons Jovis (4r); Lérida is the ancient Ilerda (4v); Zaragoza was known by the ancients as Cesarea Augusta (5r), and so forth.⁴ With constant, almost mechanical references to the ancients, Navagero's palimpsestic humanism overwrites the imperial threat of contemporary Spain, revealing it again and again as a former Roman province.

While there are other Italian diplomatic relations for this period, Navagero's *Viaggio* is unique in its detailed description of Granada (Fletcher 18-19). In 1526, Navagero spent several months in the city with Charles's court, on the occasion of the Emperor's marriage to Isabella of Portugal. He thus experienced Granada at a certain remove from the Christian conquest in 1492, but before the major wave of building with which Charles would transform the face of the city in the 1530's, including his own Renaissance palace in the Alhambra (Chueca Goitia 286).⁵ The city he encounters still bears the scars of the conquest, which he chronicles in great detail.

Navagero offers an extensive, almost ecstatic description of the Nasrid complex of the Alhambra, with its waterworks and gardens (18r-20r), and concludes with a moving evocation of its emptiness:

in somma al loco non par a me che vi manchi cosa alcuna di bellezza et piacevolezza, se non uno che'l cognoscesse, & godesse, vivendovi in quiete, & tranquillità in studii, & piaceri convenienti a huomo da bene, senza desiderio de più... (20r)

(in short, it seems to me that the place lacks for nothing in its beauty and pleasantness, except for one who might know and enjoy them, living in quiet and studying in tranquility, with all the pleasures appropriate to a virtuous man, and longing for nothing else...)

The only thing lacking, in short, is habitation—the subjunctive “uno che'l cognoscesse, & godesse.” Haunted by its recent inhabitants, almost uncanny in their silence, these ruins are a far cry from Petrarch's indistinct rubble.

There is in fact enough left of the ruins to indicate what life was like in the Alhambra and in other palaces in the area: “vi sono alcuni palazzi & giardini mezzi ruinati

⁴ I have consulted the online edition of the Bibliothèque Nationale: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k134878x/f7.image>. All subsequent references are to this edition.

⁵ Charles's palace was begun in 1526 yet never finished. Chueca Goitia describes it as the most Italianizing building constructed in Spain in the era.

che erano di detti Re mori, ma si vede però qualche poco in pie, & il sito sicognosce [sic] bellissimo: et pur ui si veggono anchora de i mirti & naranci” (“there are some half-ruined palaces and gardens that belonged to the said Moorish kings, though you can see something of them still standing, and the place appears most beautiful, and you can still see some myrtles and orange trees,” 20v). Navagero recognizes the metonymic function of the ruin: it serves to invoke the broader culture so rudely excised from its previous location: “perilche da tanti vestigii di *luochi dilettevoli*, si puo giudicare, che quei Re Mori non si lasciavano mancare cosa alcuna alli piaceri, & vita contenta” (“from the traces of so many *pleasing places* one may conclude that those Moorish kings lacked for nothing that contributed to pleasures and a contented life,” 21r, my emphasis) (Cabanelas Rodríguez, 132).⁶ The description of ruined Moorish palaces as *loci amoeni*—a construction generally associated with idyllic nature rather than emptied spaces (Curtius 195-200)—grafts them onto the classical tradition even as it emphasizes what has been lost. Moreover, as he conveys the pathos of the emptied spaces, Navagero seems to identify with the past inhabitants of the ruins, as though their shared capacity for an idealized aristocratic *otium* speaks to him across any religious difference.⁷

Not all Moorish ruins in the *Viaggio* make this kind of claim on the viewer. Navagero’s account of the recently abandoned structures in Granada contrasts with the way he describes the medieval *mudéjar* palace of Galiana outside Toledo:

...in questo piano ui è un palazzo antiquo rovinato, che dicono di Galiena figliola d’un Re Moro, della qual dicono molte cose o historie ò fabule che si siano, nel tempo de’ Paladini di Francia, ma come si sia quell mostra di esser stato un bel palazzo, & è in sito molto bello, & piacevole... (8r)

(...on this plain there is an ancient ruined palace which they say is that of Galiana, daughter to a Moorish king, of whom they tell many things, whether histories or fables, supposedly from the time of the Paladins of France, but whatever the case may be it was clearly a fine palace, and in a very beautiful and pleasant place...)

Although this older ruin is also imagined as *piacevole*, it remains safely distanced in a time of paladins and fabulous romance, rather than impressing upon the viewer the immediacy of its desolation. Communal memory and fabulous tales fill the gap of time, offering a sense of the past very different than the recent history of Granada. Galiana’s palace has become part of the local color, gesturing to Spain’s Moorish past while safely ensconced therein. Navagero’s distinctions between an immediate past of new ruins and a more distant time of fable are particularly striking in light of later descriptions of Spain, such as Washington Irving’s *Tales of the Alhambra* (1832), where all of Spain’s Moorish past becomes remote and fanciful.

In his account of Granada, Navagero belatedly recognizes the break of the conquest as that which changed everything. “Al tempo de i Re mori” (“in the time of the Moorish kings,” 20r) becomes in the text almost a refrain, marking a time of plenitude in stark

⁶ Navagero may have been contemplating empty and abandoned buildings as much as completely ruined ones. As scholars have long noted, efforts to protect and restore the Alhambra began as soon as the city fell, in an effort to preserve evidence of the culture the Christians had conquered.

⁷ I am grateful to my colleague Javier Patiño for this observation.

contrast to the ruins of the present: “hora il tutto quasi è ruinato: ne si vede altro che pur alcuni pezzi anchor in piedi, & le peschiere senza acqua, per esser rotti i condutti, et i vestigii dove erano i giardini, & da i canti delle strade, anchor che tagliati, pur repullulano i mirti da radice (“now everything is ruined: you can only see some pieces still upright, and the fish-ponds with no water, for their pipes are broken, and nothing but traces where the gardens used to be, and from the edges of the paths, although they have been cut down, myrtles sprout from the root,” 20v). The image of the *mirti* sprouting from their roots is striking, given both Navagero’s particular interest in gardens, and the metaphoric implications of the deep rootedness of Andalusian culture in Spanish soil. (As metaphor, it is also almost uncannily premonitory: the Moriscos as “raíz escondida” or “mala raíz” [hidden or evil root] would become a recurrent image in anti-Morisco pamphlets at the end of the sixteenth century, so frequent as to be ironized in the Morisco Ricote’s speech in *Don Quijote II*, ch. 65).

The evocation of ruined beauty is rudely interrupted as Navagero considers the recent history of Christian-Muslim conflict. Now focused on the physical landscape, he notes the caves “dove dicono che tenivano i Mori i schiavi Christiani in prigione” (“where they say that the Moors kept the Christian slaves imprisoned,” 21r), as well as the newer neighborhoods made up of populations displaced by the recent war.⁸

Ultimately, Navagero cannot avoid his description of place becoming a reflection on historical events: the incredible fertility of Granada, which is what he seems to find most striking, is but a pale image of what it must have been before the conquest, and the Christians’ ongoing conquests keep them from restoring Granada from the ruins:

...non è però dissimile tutto il resto del paese intorno Granata, si i colli, come il piano, che chiamano la Vega: tutto è bello: & tutto è piacevole a meraviglia; tutto abbondante di acqua: che non potria esser piu: tutto si pieno di arbori fruttiferi...da ogni parte in torno Granata, tra i molti giardini che vi sono, si nel pian come ne i colli se vi veggono, (anzi sono anchor che non si veggono per gl’ arbori) tante casette de moreschi sparse quì & là , che messe insieme fariano un’ altra città non minor di Granata : vero è che il più son piccole, ma tutte hanno sue acque, & rose, moschete, & mirti, & ogni gentilezza, & mostrano che a tempo ch’era in man di mori, il paese era molto più bello di quel che hora è. Hora vi sono di molte cose ruinate, & giardini andati da male, secondo che i moreschi più presto vanno mancando, che crescendo; & i moreschi sono quelli che teneno tutto questo paese lavorato: & piantano tanta quantità d’arbori quanta vi è. I Spagnoli non solo in questo paese di Granata, ma in tutto’l resto della Spagna medesimamente, non sono molto industriosi, ne piantano, ne lavorano volontieri la terra; ma se danno ad altro, & piu volontieri vanno alla guerra, ò alle Indie ad acquistarsi facultà ... (24v-25r)

The rest of the area around Granada is no different, be it the hills or the valley, which they call the Vega. Everything is beautiful and marvelously pleasant. Water abounds everywhere; there could not be more. It is all full of fruit trees... everywhere around Granada, among the many gardens, on the plain as on the hills,

⁸ On occasion, Navagero’s careful descriptive eye fails him, as when he claims that Muslims live on top of each other, without considering the displacements of populations that might have led to such living arrangements, and which he has himself noted just a few lines earlier.

one can see little houses of the Moors scattered here and there (and there are many one cannot see for the trees), which if they were put together would make a city no smaller than Granada. It's true that most of them are small, but they all have their water, and their roses, sweet briars, and myrtles, and every refinement, thus showing that when it was in the hands of the Moors, the country was much more beautiful than it is now. Now there are many ruined things, and gardens gone to seed, as the Moors are decreasing rather than increasing; and the Moors are the ones who worked that entire region and they planted the great number of trees there. The Spanish, not only in this region of Granada but equally in the whole rest of Spain are not very industrious; they neither plant nor work the soil willingly, but dedicate themselves to other things, and more willingly go to war or to the Indies to make their fortune.

Navagero's imaginative reconstruction of Moorish gardens from the new ruins conveys his deep admiration for them. Moreover, however much Navagero attempts to avoid the political in his description, the ruins of Granada invoke the broader contemporary European picture of a conquering Spain more interested in war than in orchards.⁹ Anti-Spanish prejudice—frequent among Italians in this period—is confirmed by the new ruins Navagero sees before him, not so far gone that they could not again be made whole and productive, but abandoned by the Christians who once strove to take Granada and now fight elsewhere.

Navagero goes even further, identifying the tensions in contemporary Granada that adumbrate his description of the glorious palaces and fruitful valley. The forcibly converted Moriscos, he tells us, speak their “*antica & natia lingua morescha*” (“ancient and native Moorish tongue,” 25r), continue to practice their own customs and dress, and have hardly been assimilated: “*o sono si mori come prima, o non credono in fede alcuna. Sono molto nemici di Spagnuoli, dalliquali ancho non sono molto ben trattati,*” (“they are either as Moorish as before, or they do not believe in any faith. They are great enemies of the Spaniards, who do not actually treat them very well,” 25v). Although Navagero does not make the connection explicit, this is the population that belongs in those ruined palaces and orchards, and whose absence is so sorely felt amid the desolation.

As he concludes, Navagero's description brings him to an unavoidable present. Despite the promises made to the vanquished at the fall of Granada, Navagero explains, the Inquisition has finally come to the city. In fact, he leaves the city at a turning point: “*il dì inanzi che io mi partisse vi entrono l'Inquisitori. Il che potria facilmente ruinar quella città, se voranno severamente inquirir & proceder contra moreschi*” (“the day before I was to leave the Inquisitors came. This could easily ruin that city, if they should wish to inquire severely and proceed against the Moors,” 26r). Navagero thus recognizes the broader ruination, beyond that of palaces and orchards, that still threatens Moorish culture in Granada. Although the full effect of the Inquisition's severity would be delayed until the 1560's, the new ruins of Granada speak to the ongoing consequences of the destruction that had been wrought upon them, which would mark Spain throughout the century and beyond.

⁹ Spanish authors also incorporate this topos of Spaniards more occupied with war than with the pursuits of peace. See for example García Matamoros.

Humanist Avoidance

Juxtaposing Petrarch in Rome with Navagero in Granada might seem perverse and yet, as scholars of the Spanish Renaissance will surely recognize, literary history makes the connection for us. Navagero is perhaps best known to the field as the figure who points Boscán—and, by extension, his more renowned friend Garcilaso—to Petrarchism, in an exchange that supposedly occurred in the gardens of the Generalife, amid the ruins of Granada. In his famous manifesto of sorts, the letter to the Duchess of Soma included in his first publication of his works, Boscán recalls: “estando un día en Granada con el Navagero... tratando con él en cosas de ingenio y de letras y especialmente en las variedades de muchas lenguas, me dixo por qué no provava sonetos y otras artes de trobas usadas por los buenos autores de Italia,” (“when I was in Granada one day with Navagero... discussing with him matters of wit and letters and especially the differences among many languages, he asked me why I did not attempt sonnets and the other poetic arts that the good authors of Italy used”) (85).

Well beyond the specificities of measure and rhyme, the poets’ turn to Petrarchism represents the introduction of Renaissance poetics to Spain. As Alicia Colombí-Monguió enthusiastically observes: “No se trataba simplemente de introducir un verso nuevo, sino de aquél donde retoñaba en lengua castellana la vida de la poesía clásica; el cauce por donde corría la sangre ilustre que de ahora en adelante habría de fluir por la nuestra,” (“It wasn’t just a question of introducing a new verse form, but of one through which the life of classical poetry could sprout in the Spanish language, the channel through which flowed a noble blood that from then on would flow through ours”) (147). With metaphors such as *retoño* (sprout) and *cauce* (channel), this scholar emphasizes Spain’s vibrant connection to a living tradition of classicism in the Renaissance—the very opposite of a ruin.

Yet critics have also noted the degree to which Boscán and Garcilaso’s choice to turn to Italian forms involves an avoidance of the native and of the genealogical anxieties that characterized sixteenth-century Spain. Boscán is quite explicitly concerned with the question of poetry’s provenance, and emphasizes the murky origins of Spain’s own verse: “Vi que este verso que usan los castellanos, si un poco asentadamente queremos mirar en ello, no hay quién sepa de dónde tuvo principio,” (86)—this despite Juan del Encina’s claim, in his *Arte de poesía castellana* (1496), that “nuestra manera de trobar” came from Italy.¹⁰ Boscán’s claim for the mystery of the past of Spanish poetry contrasts with the lengthy genealogy he musters for Italian poetry, moving backwards from Petrarch to Dante to the Provençals, and beyond them to Greece and Rome.¹¹ As Ignacio Navarrete points out, “By seeking a legitimate Greco-Roman ancestry for Spanish poetry, he betrays the ethnic preoccupations that lay behind Spanish alterity... For him, Spanish literature is not only inferior to Italian; it will remain so until Spanish poets forsake their native tradition and adopt the new, imported genres” (71). In Boscán’s tortured equation, Navarrete suggests, Spanish verses are like New Christians, whose origins cannot be traced, while Italian poetry offers a satisfying genealogy (61). Javier Irigoyen-García goes further, noting that the specific time and place of the exchange between Navagero and Boscán directly link the latter’s suspicion of Castilian verse forms to “the anxiety about Arabic cultural

¹⁰ I am grateful to Javier Patiño for this reference.

¹¹ Menocal complicates and enriches many of the lines of transmission imagined in Boscán’s schema, on both the Spanish and the Provençal side of the equation.

influence in Spain” (16). Not only is the recommendation to turn to Italy voiced literally in the face of the Andalusi presence in Spain, it also comes just as Charles prepares to enforce cultural assimilation, as Navagero’s ominous comment about the Inquisition reminds us.

Paradoxically, it is the role of Navagero, more interested in the international projection of Spain’s power than in how the nation negotiates its Moorish past, that allows us to recognize the avoidance in Boscán and Garcilaso’s turn to Greco-Roman classicism and Renaissance humanism. Navagero’s extensive account of Granada as a new ruin, freshly desolate and insistently unresolved, reveals the poets’ turn to Italy as a kind of surrogation, as they replace the proximate and uncomfortable reality of Granada with the safely distant ruins of Rome. Modern critics’ construction of that choice as a new point of origin for Spanish literary production, however vigorous it might prove, replicates the strategies of avoidance that characterized the humanists themselves.

Love among the Ruins

As critics have noted, Garcilaso’s own poems often evince a pronounced self-estrangement in relation to not just the erotic longing of the lyrical I but the imperial project on which the soldier-poet is embarked (Rodríguez García 151-170; Helgerson 13 and *passim*). In one of his most remarkable sonnets, “A Boscán desde la Goleta,” which both José María Rodríguez García and Richard Helgerson have read in illuminating detail, the lyric I contemplates the 1535 conquest of Tunis by Charles V, in which Garcilaso took part, invoking the longer purview of Roman empire. The sonnet frames the exchange between the two poets in classicizing terms, while contemplating ruins that are a palimpsest of new and old:

Boscán, las armas y el furor de marte
que con su propia fuerça el africano
suelo regando, hazen que el romano
imperio reverdezca en esta parte,
han reduzido a la memoria el arte
y el antiguo valor italiano,
por cuya fuerça y valerosa mano,
África se aterró de parte a parte.
Aquí donde el romano encendimiento,
dond’ el fuego y la llama licenciosa
solo el nombre dexaron a Cartago,
buelve y rebuelve amor mi pensamiento,
hiere y enciend’ el alma temerosa,
y en llanto y en ceniza me deshago. (152-153)

As Rodríguez García argues, by repurposing Castiglione’s sonnet on Roman ruins (“che’l nome sol di Roma anchor tenete”) to address the destruction of Carthage (“solo el nombre dexaron a Cartago”), Garcilaso “aligns himself emotionally with the vanquished enemy of Rome” (154). In effect, he also supplements old ruins with the new, as he contemplates destruction now proximate instead of safely ensconced in the past. This roundabout operation suggests how the classicizing thrust of the imperial analogies breaks down in the

face of more immediate destruction—in Tunis, Garcilaso’s witnessing of ruination effectively confronts Petrarch with Navagero.

At the same time, as Helgerson points out, even as the sonnet invokes Carthage at the site of the conquered Tunis, it elides those medieval and romance traditions that foreground the religious difference at the heart of the Charles V’s expedition (28-30). Whatever rhetoric of crusade or of fighting the Moors might have been available to Garcilaso, he leapfrogs over Islam to invoke instead the Roman conquest of North Africa. While this classicizing move and its contradictions undergird the sonnet, there is as much to be learned from what they occlude. Garcilaso does not invoke a medieval romance framework of fighting Moors or Saracens because, as Ariosto so gleefully points out in his *Furioso*, Spaniards were the Saracens, at least in Italy’s perception.¹² The Spanish poet’s turn to Roman models for empire thus aligns perfectly with his rejection of indigenous verse forms in favor of Italianate ones (“el arte... italiano”)—both elide what is specific to Spain vis-à-vis a broadly European classicizing impetus: its experience of Islam, and its ensuing anxiety about that history.

As Helgerson notes, even erotic enchantment aligns the poet with the imperial tradition via the invocation of Aeneas and Dido (15). Yet the soldier-poet is completely undone (“me deshago”) for a love that remains unspecified. Certainly there is a strong transvestite identification of the poetic voice with Dido, as Rodríguez García (158 and *passim*) and Helgerson (53-55) both note.¹³ Given the poet’s earlier voicing of the imperial project, however, might the sympathy for Carthage not stem also from loving Dido, or her equivalent among the new ruins, thus rewriting Aeneas’s abandonment of her? Who is the poet’s Dido, or his Laura, here? The sonnet does not say, and yet a much later recreation of the lovelorn poet in Tunis offers an answer of sorts. A curious interlude in Cervantes’s “El amante liberal” (1613) imagines two soldier-poets in Goleta, writing *coplas* together to a Petrarchan “mora” with golden hair, presented to the emperor “en la campaña y en su tienda” (1.164-65). Cervantes’s scene provides the missing love-object in Garcilaso’s sonnet, while also insisting upon the particular intimacy that characterized Spanish relations with Muslim subjects. Whether it is love or pity that connects them, Garcilaso’s sonnet cannot quite speak their particular affinity, yet gestures to them nonetheless. An astute reader such as Cervantes can name the love among the ruins.

What are the larger implications of Navagero at Granada, and of the new ruins that he contemplates there? Juxtaposing Navagero in Granada with Petrarch in Rome—and Garcilaso in Tunis—reminds us that there are other stories of Europe’s engagement with its past to be told, and that the triumphalist, centripetal narrative of a Renaissance return to the classics can productively be complicated from the geographical margins, as well as on its own grounds. Granada, like Tunis, undoes the neat periodization on which the humanist evocation of ruins depends: there, the past is still present, in uncomfortable and unresolved ways. Not only are the ruins freshly spoiled, but the population that abandoned them must still be grappled with. The domestic problem of how to deal with a past that is not past—the quandary that would vex Spain for the rest of the sixteenth century—also colors Spain’s relation with other pasts—the classical tradition, Rome as empire—in the broader European context. Recontextualized in this light, Spain’s relation to its Roman heritage

¹² On the complexities of incorporating romance traditions in Spain, see Fuchs.

¹³ Helgerson notes also Garcilaso’s ventriloquizing of Dido’s voice in “O dulces prendas.”

and to the Renaissance poetic tradition that Petrarch represents appears constructed, deliberately chosen, through complementary operations of excavation and erasure (Irigoyen-García 113 and following).

In addition to the salutary recent complication by both medievalists and early modernists of Petrarch's own periodization, which infamously gave us "the dark ages," it may behoove us to consider what is at stake in narratives of classicism more broadly. What kinds of community, and of forgetting, does the commemoration of Rome imply? Who remembers together? What are we to do with ruins that are more intrusively present, and less malleable, than those that inspired Petrarch? How can we use them to dismantle—or at least reconfigure—the imperial narratives that philology has bequeathed to us? An alternative heuristic, the new ruin underscores the contingency of the national past, undoing the teleology of its future.

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