

COLONIZING NAPLES: RHETORIC OF ALLURE AND THE 17TH CENTURY SPANISH IMAGINARY

Yolanda Gamboa and Noemi Marin, Florida Atlantic University, USA ygamboa@fau.edu.com nmarin@fau.edu

After some years of French and Aragonese rule, Naples became part of the Spanish Empire with its annexation in 1503, during the reign of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castille. From that time until 1707 Naples functioned as viceroyalty, where the viceroy governed the province in the name of and as representative of the Spanish monarch. Naples, thus, was to become one of the most desirable political assignments for Spanish governors but also the site of political controversy. By the seventeenth-century this viceroyalty (and its palace) was the post of Spanish grandees such as the Count of Lemos, a patron of the arts. The succession of the Count of Lemos by the polemical Duke of Osuna, and subsequently by two family members of the Count Duke of Olivares, who lived lavishly, were some of the reasons that angered Spain's grandees and brought the conspiracy and subsequent downfall of the Count Duke of Olivares, minister to king Philip IV, as well as the Neapolitan revolt of 1647.¹

The Neapolitan court became famous throughout Italy for its refined chivalric habits, as well as a center of studies and culture, even though

¹ The political intrigues of this time are well documented in John Elliot's biography of the Count Duke of Olivares.

Naples' social problems were great from the start of the viceroyalty due to the exploitation of Neapolitan finances that Florentine and Catalan bankers caused, its closer links to the Vatican, and the subsequent taxation imposed by the Spanish viceroys. With the passing of centuries, Naples as a city experienced population growth, changes, becomes a center for creative arts, and revolted in 1647 against what was perceived as a foreign, oppressive rule. A site of military support, contributing to the Spanish grandeur and an indicator of prestige (Brancaforte 151), Naples remained the epitome of the Empire's glory and an alluring place in the Spanish Imaginary.²

In fact, the different place occupied by the American colonies and by Naples in the Spanish 17th century Imaginary points to a colonizing process that is by no means homogeneous and that relies on the rhetorical construction of a locus of otherness, an inviting locus open to new participation for its possible subjects. If "the key to reconstructing Neapolitan past could only be found by tracing the Spanish heritage," as Benedetto Croce realized, (Brancaforte 327), likewise, a reconstruction of the Spanish past is to be found in the city of Naples as a place for a new colonizing narrative.

How then do the Spanish writers engage with Imaginary Naples and create a powerful and alluring place outside of Spain, yet engaged fully with Spanish life and national identity? By looking at some literary examples, the paper examines some rhetorical strategies used by Spanish writers of the 17th century to invoke Naples as a discursive place of allure, a place where narratives of the outside join the Imaginary ethos to create the political and social life in the viceroyalty of the time. Viewing rhetoric as a contextual art where social and culturally-recognized meanings illuminate how writers negotiate in literary texts' rhetorical space, the paper explores Burke's perspective on identification and myth as image as related to Naples and its place in the Spanish Imaginary of the 17th century.

² Although this article is based on references to Naples encountered in selected Spanish literary pieces of the 17th century, Naples remained a location of allure in later centuries as in the Spanish "zarzuela," musical plays written in the 19th century. We thank Domingo Plácido for his comment as well as for his indication regarding the emerging field of Italo-Spanish relations among current historians.

Naples: Between Political Entity and Imaginary Colony

References to the elegant vice royal Neapolitan court abound in the literary works written in Spain in the 16th and 17th centuries, also known as the Spanish Golden Age. Represented by means of lavish settings, parties, and refined courtesans, Naples is not only a locus of historical importance or a mere "literary topos." Naples of the 17th century Spanish literature becomes an alluring and complexly constructed commonplace for the critique of the excesses of the colonial enterprise as we can see in works by Lope de Vega, Leonor de la Cueva y Silva, Tirso de Molina, and María de Zayas.

Spain being a colonizing power, Naples is constructed in most literary works as an "Other to be desired," a locus encouraging those wishing to progress or 'deseosos de medro" (in José Antonio Maravall's words), as a place of allure and a political space, a literary and rhetorically persuasive image for cultural development, economic progress, and flourishing arts.

Naples is the setting of Lope de Vega's El perro del hortelano [The Dog In The Manger (1618). The title of the play, which literally translates as "The Peasant's Dog" alludes to a Spanish saying "the peasant's dog neither eats nor lets you eat" which is also referred to within the play (1.3071). Both title and plot allude to the attitude of the protagonist, beautiful Neapolitan Countess Diana of Belflor who plays with the emotions of the suitors she rejects and particularly her servant, Teodoro, whom she desires and eventually ends up marrying. Whereas on the one hand, it points at the idleness of the Neapolitan courtiers embodied in the countess, on the other hand it also points at the possibility of love despite class differences. Note that both Neapolitan idleness and love free of class constraints happen in Naples as the setting removed from the Spanish Court and where "the exotic spatial axis provides the possibility of a paradigmatic difference" (Yoon 417). In other words, locating the play on a place on the outside allows for a critique of the Spanish mores.

Naples is not only an idyllic place, full of beauty and grandeur, as one character says "Tiene hermosura y grandeza/Nápoles" (1 2775-6), it is also the place where you can find a hit man for a price "Que hay en Nápoles quien vive/de eso y en oro recibe/lo que en sangre ha de volver" (1.2405-7) [There are people in Naples who live/of that and receive in gold/what in blood they will turn]. As it is customary with this popular playwright, whose plays were the entertainment of the masses, very

much in the way Hollywood movies function today, his critique is subtle, his message doubtful, and the greatness of Naples is tempered with its inherent conflicts.

Less subtle than Lope de Vega, Leonor de la Cueva y Silva depicts the lavish Naples in her play *La firmeza en la ausencia* (c.1647) [Faithful Despite Absence] as the place for a sensual and alluring action, a site of promises of luxury and critical insight into the court of the Neapolitan Viceroyalty.³

A los dichosos años que cumplía El rey ordena Justas y torneos Donde Nápoles muestra en bizarría Su belleza, su amor y sus deseos; Aquí suena la dórica armonía Allí canciones que, afrentando Orfeos, Eran dulce recreo a los sentidos, En tantas variedades suspendidos.

On the occasion of his birthday the king orders jousts and tournaments whereby Naples shows its youth, its beauty, its love, and its desires; Here the Doric harmony plays there, songs competing with Orpheus are heard, sweet solace to the senses, in so many delights suspended.

The description of this scene, a festive setting ordered by the king, is followed by the description of different participants in the joust (the king, Armesinda, and other nobles), paying attention to the detail and color of the dress. Tarantos's prince wears an outfit "de tela verdegay vestido airoso/sobre nácar," [of green silk and mother of pearl](1. 67-8) Visiniano's "con recamos de plata" [with silver thread] (1.82), and Salerno's "todo de fina plata guarnecido" [adorned in fine silver] (1.92), in fact, all of the outfits are embroidered either in silver or precious stones like "nácar" [mother of pearl]. These descriptions are not to be

³ Unless otherwise noted the translations in the text are our own. To our knowledge, there is no English translation available of *La firmeza en la ausencia*.

taken as a reflection of the customary clothing of the time but rather as symbolical, as several women writers contemporary to De la Cueva y Silva use clothing as a rhetorical device. If colors may be employed to represent the emotions of the characters, as Amy Kaminsky argues, the excessive richness and details in the clothing described may be pointing to a critique of the Neapolitan courtiers. They represent the lavish Neapolitan court where expenditure in festivities appears to be affordable and condoned by the viceroy. However, underlying this opening scene and in relation to the plot (where the king of Naples, in love with Armesinda, a lady from the Court, sends her lover to war, only to have her prove her faithfulness) is a critique of the licentiousness of a class who believes to have power over the Others. Written by a woman after the Neapolitan revolt of 1647, this play may be a political allegory echoing the sentiment present in a certain group of nobles in Spain who saw the excesses of the Neapolitan viceroyalty and brought the downfall of Count Duke of Olivares. A Richness and excess in the descriptions of Naples function thus as a critique of political mores.

Another writer whose complex critique relies on the world of allusion is Tirso de Molina. In his trilogy commanded by the Pizarro family to glorify its members and the colonial enterprise, he includes a subtle critique by means of his references to "chocolate," a term alluding to the excesses of the aristocracy as well as to the "consumption" of the colonies by means of the cocoa trade.⁵ While references to the colonial enterprise may be present in this trilogy, Tirso de Molina's use of the Naples viceroyalty as a locus for social and cultural critique is to be found both in *El condenado por desconfiado* [Mistrusting and Condemned] (1635) and El burlador de Sevilla [The Trickster of Seville and The Stone Guest] (c.1630), the work that initiates the legend of Don Juan.

⁴Teresa Soufas indicates that the play was probably written around the midpoint of the playwright's life and that it is set in the 16th C, the time of the French invasion contained by the Spanish troops, a moment of Spain's strength, in order to offer contrast with the time of the revolt of Naples.

⁵ See Yolanda Gamboa's article regarding the colonization of Mexico in terms of the consumption of the Other. Note that Mexico becomes an alluring place as well in the Spanish imaginary. Besides the allusion to colonizing the palate, an important aspect of the "civilizing process" carried out by the Spaniards, it is also a promise of continued riches for those involved in the colonial enterprise, very much like Naples.

El condenado por desconfiado is a play about redemption, organized around the lack of trust in the word of God, falling prey to evil, and free will. It centers around the conflicts of Paulo, a hermit, who in a moment of weakness is tempted by the devil who asks him to go to the city of Naples by following sinner Enrico. Notable in this construction is that the setting for falling into evil is Naples, a city that, as we saw previously in Lope's play, is known both for its beauty and its danger. As an imaginary place of the outside, its "exoticism" is a double edged sword. A tempting location for the Spanish aristocracy, the richness it promises leads to licentiousness and abuse of the colonized Others.

Tirso's well-known *El burlador de Sevilla* presents Naples in a more lighthearted way but still as a critique of the licentiousness of the Neapolitan court. It opens up with a scene in which Don Juan has a sexual encounter in the dark with Duchess Isabella of Naples under the pretense of being her lover. The setting is where Don Juan resides at the beginning of the play, and where he is exempt from punishment due to his aristocratic lineage and his uncle's position in the court as ambassador and king's guard. Don Juan will flee from Naples and will continue his amorous exploits in different locations and with women of different social status.

A very poignant passage of this play is what is known as the Loa of Lisbon (1.721-857), a long alluring description of the natural and created riches of Lisbon which Don Gonzalo de Ulloa, "comendador mayor," reports to the king of Naples after returning from his embassy. The hyperbolic and delightful language used by don Gonzalo leads the king to say "Más estimo, don Gonzalo, escuchar de vuestra lengua/esa relación sucinta, que haber visto su grandeza" (1.858-61) [I rather, don Gonzalo/listen in your own words/this brief relation/that see its greatness]. This passage has given the critics much to think about, though mostly it is agreed that the description of the greatness of Lisbon contrasts with the corruption of Seville and, I will add, to that of Naples. Don Juan's presence in Naples points to his social and political mobility, which is possible only for a small sector of the Spanish population at the time.

Contemporary of Lope de Vega, and a popular, well-known writer, Maria de Zayas y Sotomayor wrote two collections of framed short novels containing ten novels each, namely, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (1637) [The Enchantments of Love: Amorous and Exemplary Novels], and *Desengaños amorosos* (1647) [The Disenchantments of

Love]. Multiple references to Naples, together with those to the Count of Lemos in her novels are likely to be direct references to her stay in Naples and not mere literary topos. However, as Zayas' researchers have noted, these two collections differ in tone, especially regarding the position of women, the first being more humorous and the second being more critical of her time. The same is true of her allusions to Naples, as the analysis of the references to Naples in three different novels will show. Research into the Neapolitan politics can throw light into the biographical details of María de Zayas.

Naples is the setting of the fifth novel in her first collection, namely, "La fuerza del amor" [The Power of Love]. Her description of Naples, the city where the main character is born, conforms to the alluring descriptions we have seen in the works of other contemporary writers of Zayas:

> En Nápoles, insigne y famosa ciudad de Italia por su riqueza, hermosura y agradable sitio, nobles ciudadanos y gallardos edificios, coronados de jardines y adornados de cristalinas fuentes, hermosas damas y gallardos caballeros...

> Naples, a famous city in Italy, is renowned for its wealth, noble citizens, splendid buildings, pleasant location, and great beauty. It is crowned with many gardens and adorned with crystalline fountains, lovely ladies, and elegant gentlemen. (Enchantments 159)

However, aside from a reference to the importance of witchcraft in Naples where, "como no hay el freno de la Inquisición y los demás castigos, no les amedrentan" [there's no restriction by the Inquisition or other punishment sufficient to frighten them] (Enchantments 173), which contributes to the common place of Naples as place where evil lurs, the rest of the references allude to the entertainment at the rich and idle Neapolitan court: "es uso y costumbre en Nápoles ir las doncellas a los saraos y festines que en los palacios del virrey y casas particulares de caballeros se hacen" [It was the custom in Naples for maidens to attend parties and soirees given in the viceroy's palace and in other private homes of the nobility](Enchantments 160)]; "úsase en Nápoles llevar a

⁶ Both of Zayas's collections are available in English translation by Patsy Boyer. The translations included here are Boyer's.

los festines un maestro de ceremonias, el cual saca a danzar a las damas y las da al caballero que le parece" [Another custom in Naples was that at the parties there was a master of ceremonies who would lead the ladies out to dance and give them to a gentleman chosen by him] (Enchantments 161); "tomó un arpa en que las señoras italianas son tan diestras" [She took up her harp, which Italian women play very well] (Enchantments 168).

References to Naples in the Zayas' second collection are not merely descriptive but include a veiled political critique of the Spanish colonial enterprise, as they tend to become more specific. For instance, in the first novel, "La esclava de su amante" [Slave To Her Own Lover], Manuel, the character with whom the heroine is in love, departs to Naples in the service of Castille's Admiral, who, according to Alicia Yllera, the editor of the collection, seems to be Juan Alfonso Enríquez de Cabrera. He uses his relationship with a servant friend of his to get a position as a "gentilhombre de su cámara" (150), however pompous it may sound, a man-servant position. Naples is a desirable post, even as a servant. The other reference is in the eighth novel, "El traidor contra su sangre" [Traitor To His Own Blood], where Alonso, the main character, departs for Naples after having brutally killed his sister. Naples seems to be a place where a well-off Spaniard can escape with impunity, because the character's father writes letters in his favor to don Pedro Fernández de Castro, Count of Lemos and Naples viceroy to grant him a place as soldier (385-6). Alonso's criminal behavior will continue in Naples, partially due to his association with a "hijo de español y napolitana, hombre perdido y vicioso" [a Neapolitan, son of a Spaniard who was a wastrel and a degenerate, debauched in every way, helped lead him more deeply into vice] (Disenchantments 289). The view of Naples changes in Zayas' novels in the ten years distance between her novels, probably due to political circumstances.

In Zayas' works other references to Naples relate to the Count of Lemos, as found in the first *Desengaño*. Zayas writes glowingly about him in the fifth of her *Novelas*:

Don Pedro Fernández de Castro, Conde de Lemos, nobilísimo, sabio y piadoso príncipe, cuyas raras virtudes y excelencias no son para escritas en papeles, sino en láminas de bronce y en las lenguas de la fama.

Don Pedro Fernández de Castro, count of Lemos. He was a very noble, wise and devout prince whose rare virtues and outstanding qualities should be written on bronze plaques and on the tongue of fame rather than just on paper]. (Enchantments 178)

Zayas' subservient attitude in this passage, together with her admiration towards the Count seems to indicate, on the one hand, a relation of patronage, and on the other hand, the presence of Zayas within the Count's entourage. Pedro Fernández de Castro, seventh Earl of Lemos was indeed Neapolitan viceroy from 1610 to 1616. He is known to have favored the arts and letters and supported the literary academies, like "academia degli occiosi" which started in 1611. He also continued building the royal palace, spent on ceremonies, and built the university (Green 297). This aspect is of great importance because it throws light into her allegiances in a time of political intrigues since the Count of Lemos was involved in the conspiracy that brought about the downfall of the Count Duque of Olivares. Zayas' presence in the literary circles of the Count of Lemos may very well be an initial stage of her later participation in the aristocratic and political circles of opposition to the Count Duke.

In fact, literary references to the lavish Neapolitan Court are, in all likelihood, veiled political references to Olivares' relatives and their abuses at Court. That critique of nobility living in excess, in part by the oppositional aristocratic literary group, constitutes a relevant portion of the Spanish imaginary and of a world of literary (as well as political) allusion.

Rhetoric and Space as an Argument of Allure

A cultural metropolis during the Aragon rule (1442-1503) historical Naples flourishes in the 15th and 16th century as a center for urban and cultural development. However, the discovery of the New World displaced the economic center of the Spanish Empire towards the Atlantic and Naples was exploited with taxes but was no longer the center of attention. From a literary and rhetorical perspective, Naples of the 17th century remains a location of allure, yet regarded as a place for the "excessive," therefore associated with licentiousness, and even evil dangers.

The rhetorical problem underlining this research is how Spanish literature of the 17th century engages Naples as the cultural colony of choice. The Vice royal Neapolitan court is the epitome of the Empire's glory in Spanish Imaginary, where elegant and lavish settings depict primary alluring qualities for an important site of luxury outside of mainland Spain.

While the first part of the paper features Naples as a literary presence, rhetorical approaches can offer additional insight into cultural reconstitution of place as an argument of allure. Rhetorically, the Spanish writers of the Imaginary invoke the cultural legitimacy of the Spanish colonizing powers by locating Naples as a meta-narrative of Otherness. As depicted by Maria de Zayas and Leonor de La Cueva y Silva, Naples embodies Spanish promises of a most alluring Outside, a discursive setting where colonization happens with evocative force, a mythical site of legitimation for luxury, for an abundance of mores, and, of course, for culture. As such, Naples embodies a literary Outside from where audiences can view the Spain of the 17th century, its history and its powers, its colonizing legitimacy and its locus for prosperity and politics.

Such a rhetorical move shares with exilic discourse relationships between outside and inside, between presence and absence of allure, between public memory arguments of past and present political power. Utilizing the rhetorical space of the outside, like many writers of exile, the writers presented in this paper create a literary Naples as a favorable site for the discourse of Spanish cultural life. The significance of such reinvention of space is the negotiation of locus against and within political power. Legitimacy, however, implies a social, political, and cultural context within which space re-enacts power. This requirement proposes a notion of rhetoric that *interpellates* the rhetor to legitimize his or her culture through discourse.

⁷ The use of the Outside spelled with capital letter is borrowed from Andrei Codrescu's work on poetic exile (Codrescu, 1990).

⁸ Joseph Brodsky, the famous exiled poet, points out in his works on exile as a literary home the nostalgic qualities of the place, a discursive site where past and present evoke a cultural locus of pertinent participation in the public life of a city/country/space (Brodsky, 1994).

⁹ Charland (140), borrowing the term from Althusser, defines "interpellation" as an active term, stating that: Interpellation occurs at the very moment one enters into a rhetorical situation, that is, as soon as an individual recognizes and acknowledges being addressed. An interpellated subject participates in the discourse that addresses him. . . . Note, however, that interpellation does not

And yet Naples is not a mere place of the Outside, (political, cultural and/or poetic) as exilic sites often are in literary works. 10 Rather, all mentioned writers construct the Neapolitan court of the 17th century as an argument of allure, legitimizing discursive, political and historical significance outside of mainland Spain. Distinct from literary works on exile where place functions as an external and alienated locus, depictions of Naples of the Imaginary vector arguments from the inside (Spain) into the outside (Neapolitan Viceroyalty) as a legitimate colonizing action.¹¹

Looking at rhetorical strategies, literary authors like Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, Leonor de la Cueva y Silva, and María de Zayas engage Naples as argument of allure in order to create an evocative identity of the colonized Outside, thus interpellating both culture and context within discourse. As a locus of elegance, glory, but also a possible setting for danger and sin, Naples appeals to audiences, carrying important rhetorical force and public legitimation in relation to 17th century Spanish politics. Naples is not an Italian colony, but an extension of Spain, a legitimized court where promises of luxury, political mores, and cultural practices of 17th century aristocracy, all legitimize an alluring and alluding locus of glory for Spain of the Outside, a glorified colony.

According to Kenneth Burke, symbolic action (language) constitutes human reality by, through, and within which, humans instantiate political, social, and cultural paradigms of discursive action.¹² Viewing rhetoric within a dramatistic approach, Burke looks at language (and rhetoric) as an intricate locus of dialectical relationships for social action. Rhetoric for Burke is "rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic and continually born anew; the use of language as symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols" (43). Simultaneous "identification-with and division-from" that occurs when writers (rhetors) address an audience constitutes the dialectical relationship that governs a main aspect of rhetoric (46). Burke explains that identity represents one's "uniqueness as an entity" and identification constitutes in rhetoric an "acting together;

occur through persuasion in the usual sense, for the very act of addressing is rhetorical.

¹⁰ See Marin's argument (73-115) about Codrescu and poetic exile.

¹¹ Marin (2007) 157-169.

¹² Burke's entire work is written under the assumption of "language as symbolic action," which he articulates overtly in The Philosophy of Literary Form and in Language as Symbolic Action (Burke [1941] 1-138, 3-44). See also Foucault (1972) 215-37.

and in acting together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them *consubstantial*" (21).

Burke's relationship between identity (as national Spanish identity in this case) and identification reveals a rhetorical perspective called for by an alluring cultural colonizing site such as Naples of the Imaginary Spain.¹³ His perspective on identity and identification appears useful in that it reveals how the discourse of the Imaginary Outside engages with constructs of identity, with cultural dimensions of space, and with the public sphere.¹⁴ While Burke develops much less the concept of identity in his writings on rhetoric, identification focuses on a dialectical process in which the speaker draws on shared interests to establish "rapport between himself [herself] and his [her] audience." Burke views identification in relation to persuasion, since "a speaker persuades an audience by the use of stylistic identifications; his act of persuasion may be for the purpose of causing the audience to identify itself with the speaker's interests; and the speaker draws on identification of interests to establish rapport between himself [herself] and his[her] audience."¹⁵ Accordingly, Burke's emphasis on identification as a rhetorical strategy supports how the mentioned writers depict the Imaginary Naples in relation to Spanish identity and public/political voice in the land of the Outside. Depicted as alluring (in all of the writers chosen), but also as dangerous (in Lope, Tirso's El condenado por desconfiado, and Zayas), Naples as a colony does not carry only political and literary identity in the 17th century. Naples of the Imaginary becomes more than a colony of the Spanish Empire, transforming itself into what Burke calls "myth," since it gravitates to the side of image, invoking imagination, rather than reason to explicate political or cultural identity.¹⁶

All of the writers examined depict Naples of the Imaginary as a discursive site of identification, a rhetorical place to exercise, criticize and/or revisit Spanish mores of high-class society. A rhetorical nexus of identification and persuasion for writers and audiences alike, Naples expands into a critical site for audiences to reflect, view and identify the Spanish political and cultural power in the Outside. Rhetorically, the choice of Naples as the literary setting for the works mentioned assists audiences to view such Spanish viceroyalty as THE discursive and legitimate locus for all Spanish court events inside and outside the

¹³ Burke (1955) 19-29, 43-46.

¹⁴ Burke (1955) 21-46.

¹⁵ Burke (1955) 46.

¹⁶ Burke (1947) 195.

country. In other words, Naples becomes a rhetorical site that legitimates colonization as a performer of genuine Spanish identity while in the Outside, a salient and legitimate colony where luxury and Spanish lavish lifestyle interact with political corruption and power.

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