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Elizabeth Lehfeltdt

Cleveland State University, e.lehfeltdt@csuohio.edu

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Ideal Men: Masculinity and Decline in Seventeenth-Century Spain^{*}

by ELIZABETH A. LEHFELDT

This article examines how the experience and critique of their country's decline led Spaniards to craft a distinct discourse of masculinity in the seventeenth century. As they self-consciously examined Spain's crisis and offered political and economic solutions, these same writers also offered a scathing critique of standards of masculinity. Using the figure of the ideal nobleman as a case study, the article examines how moralists, arbitristas, and hagiographers constructed a dynamic code of manhood linked to questions of productivity, male chastity, and military performance. Further, it argues that this discourse was ultimately nostalgic and failed to adapt itself to the circumstances of the seventeenth century.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a sermon preached in 1635 in Baena, the Dominican Francisco de León makes a series of startling statements about the men of his day. "Where are there men in Spain?" he queries angrily. "What I see are effeminate men . . . I see men converted into women."¹ Using the occasion of a funeral sermon preached in honor of a renowned local nobleman, Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, León delivers a fiery attack on what he regards as compromised standards of masculinity: "These days I do not see captains, nor soldiers, nor money, nor honorable occupations in the most important duties, but rather a perpetual idleness, and pleasures, entertainments, eating, drinking, and dressing exquisitely and expensively."² He criticizes the men for their lack of proper religious devotion and decorum, saying that they waste their time in impious pursuits like the theater,

^{*}Earlier versions of this paper were presented at a meeting of the Premodern Spanish Historians Association of the Midwest at Purdue University in 2003 and the History Department Research Roundtable at Cleveland State University in 2002. My thanks to Marta Vicente and Luis Corteguera for inviting me to present this work as a seminar paper at the Hall Center for the Humanities at the University of Kansas in April 2006. I am grateful to the participants at all three of these events for their helpful suggestions. I also thank Valerie Hegstrom for her help with some of the translations contained in the article. Finally, I offer my thanks to the readers for *Renaissance Quarterly*, who offered constructive and insightful comments on an earlier draft of this piece.

¹León, 255: "Donde ay hombres en España? Lo que yo veo es Mariones . . . de hombres los veo convertidos en mugeres."

²Ibid., 254: "Aora no veo capitanes, ni soldados, ni dinero, ni ocupaciones honorosas en los de mayores obligaciones, sino una perpetua ociosidad, gustos, entrentimientos, comer, y beber, vestir precioso, y costoso."

ruinous conversation, and gluttony. They live off their land without investing productive energies in it, and, in so doing, are not the gods of the earth that one might imagine such well-endowed property owners to be. Rather, he contends, their idleness makes them seem more like demons.³

León's remarks were not the isolated ramblings of an impassioned cleric. In fact, his words highlight the key elements of a vigorous discourse in seventeenth-century Spain that tried to restore a code of proper manhood. For example, earlier in the century Juan de Santa María, a trusted advisor to Philip III (1578–1621), had warned the monarch that the ruin of a kingdom would come where there was “such a corruption of customs that men adorned and treated themselves like women.”⁴ His contemporary, Lope de Deza, railed against the “many robust young men” of his day who left agricultural labor to study law at the university. These studies, he argued, made them effeminate and signaled their rejection of “that virtuous rusticity” that feeds everyone.⁵ A host of writers joined this rising chorus and deplored the behavior and morals of their male contemporaries.

As recent scholarship has argued, masculinity, like femininity, is a mutable category. There is no universal standard of manhood that transcends time and place. Instead, these codes are socially and culturally constructed and may vary by class, age, and other factors. Recently, a host of scholars have examined the construction of masculinity in early modern Europe.⁶ Spanish scholarship on masculinity is particularly indebted to the anthropological contributions of contemporary scholars who have explored the construction of manhood in modern and contemporary Spain.⁷ Their conclusions describe a performative masculinity by which a man demonstrates and displays his ability to be sexually assertive, to provide, to procreate, and to protect the sexuality of female members of his family. The successful completion of these duties fosters his reputation as manly and virile, and earns him the respect of his community.

By recognizing the constructed nature of Spanish masculinity, these authors have produced tremendously valuable scholarship. But care needs to be taken in transposing these constructions of manhood onto an earlier

³Ibid., 244–252.

⁴Santa María, 200: “tal corrupcion de costumbres que los varones se regalan, y componen como mugeres.”

⁵Deza, 26^v: “muchos mocos robustos”; “aquella virtuosa rusticidad.”

⁶For England, see Shepard; Foyster; Kuchta. For France, see Cohen for the best-documented studies of codifying masculinity in the focus on the figure of the *honnête homme* in the early modern period.

⁷See, for example, Pitt-Rivers; Brandes; Gilmore.

period.⁸ In the case of the seventeenth-century critique of masculinity, historical context is critical. The commentary offered by León and his contemporaries is compelling and significant because it was a central part of a larger debate about Spain's experience of decline in the seventeenth century. In this period, Spaniards grappled forthrightly with the crises facing their country, and by the beginning of the seventeenth century the chief features of this decline were all too clear. Military defeat and weakness threatened Spain's prominence on the world stage. The war in the Netherlands, for example, was making little headway and continued to be an expensive drain on the royal treasury between 1598 and 1609. At home, trade imbalances weakened the domestic economy: Spain imported many manufactured goods, which hindered native industry and transferred Spain's wealth to foreign nations. Spaniards also suffered in this period under the burden of price inflation, a succession of subsistence crises beginning around 1605 and continuing through the middle of the century, and waves of epidemic disease, particularly a devastating bout of bubonic plague that raged from 1596 to 1602. At the dawn of the seventeenth century, contemporary observers confronted all of these crises and offered a host of solutions.

Not surprisingly, a prodigious amount of scholarship has examined the question of Spain's seventeenth-century decline, seeking first to verify or challenge its existence, and then to define its chief characteristics and causes.⁹ Instead of seeking to explain the roots of the crisis, this essay asks how Spaniards themselves described, understood, and sought to remedy the challenges they faced. Further, it argues that gender — specifically, codes of manhood — stood at the core of this discourse. Writers of the period crafted images of ideal men meant to provide a model that would combat the descent into decline. The *arbitristas*, a diverse group of writers who presented essays, known as *arbitrios*, on the subject of Spain's decline, led the way in this self-conscious assessment. The *arbitristas* offered a wide array of analyses and solutions as they addressed their country's decline. This literature has certainly not escaped the attention of scholars, who have used these texts as a window on not simply the perception of decline, but also what constituted its major characteristics. This research, however, has tended to focus on the economic and political solutions offered by the *arbitristas*. As such, scholars have overlooked the gender critique explicitly

⁸See, for example, the comments of Behrend-Martínez, 1074.

⁹See *The Castilian Crisis*.

articulated by these writers, even when it is embedded in this same economic and political analysis.¹⁰

The critique of masculinity in the work of the *arbitristas* achieves greater significance when read alongside other texts of the period that also articulate visions of ideal men. Sermons, moral treatises, and saints' lives all display a preoccupation with defining masculine behavior. These texts offer pointed comments on the perceived state of manhood and posit counter-models of the ideal peasant, artisan, and nobleman. We cannot, however, separate these ideal types from their historical context. The significance of these texts derives less from their clear desire to provide proper models of masculinity — all cultures strive to do this (though this is a subject that has been largely overlooked in the existing historical scholarship on early modern Spain)¹¹ — than from the link between this gender critique and Spain's self-conscious response to the perception of decline in the seventeenth century. To critique masculinity in the seventeenth century was not a novel exercise. What makes this discourse distinctive, however, is its link to the experience of decline. The critics and moralists of this period undoubtedly drew on classical, medieval, and sixteenth-century definitions of male behavior. But these were recast and adapted to meet the demands of a country grappling with a profound period of crisis, and, hence, a reassessment of its place in the world. This essay, then, will examine the seventeenth-century discourse of masculinity, seeing it not as the articulation of a static code of behavior, but as a dynamic response to Spain's experience of decline.¹² It also posits that the seventeenth-century discourse of masculinity failed due to nostalgia and a lack of creativity. Contributors to the debate could only imagine solutions rooted in late medieval and (occasionally) sixteenth-century exemplars, and failed to envision a new model of masculinity better suited to the circumstances of the seventeenth century.

2. GENDER, CLASS, AND TIME: DEFINING THE DISCOURSE

The seventeenth-century participants of this discourse made deliberate choices in defining a proper code of manhood that would counter their country's faltering fortunes and reputation. To begin with, they advocated

¹⁰See, for example, Elliott, 1989; Gordon.

¹¹The topic has received much more extensive treatment by scholars of Golden Age Spanish literature: see, for example, Cartagena-Calderón; Weber.

¹²There is considerable debate about the extent to which gender relations as a historical subject is a narrative of continuity or change: see, for example, Foyster, 207–20, who argues for a combination of the two.

several models of masculinity, differentiated primarily by class. It lies beyond the scope of this essay to examine all of these ideal types. Instead, I will focus on the figure of the ideal nobleman as constructed in seventeenth-century texts.¹³ However, in so doing it will be necessary to look comparatively (if briefly) at the figures of the ideal peasant and artisan. Through the definition of masculinities — a range of acceptable models of behavior for men — authors acknowledged the diversity of their hierarchical society. If proper masculine behavior was part of the solution to Spain's decline, then all men would need to be told how to behave, or the entire edifice of masculinity would falter.

Even if particular behaviors posed a universal threat to manliness, the proper defense against such a threat might vary by class. The *arbitrios* and treatises of the seventeenth century uniformly condemned idleness and decried its dangers. For example, in a treatise of 1600, Gaspar Gutiérrez de los Ríos couched his position against the backdrop of decline and argued that this laziness had led to "the great damages" from which his country suffered.¹⁴ But, as will be discussed in greater detail below, the proper antidote for a nobleman's idleness was not the same as that for a male peasant. A peasant could be urged to work the fields: what, however, could a nobleman do to countermand the deleterious effects of idleness when his very station in life was defined by his rejection of manual labor?

Often these class distinctions were also intertwined with questions of gender. Masculinity was defined in relation to gendered categories such as *manly* and *womanly*. While the texts under examination here praise men who were *varonil* (manly), they are equally likely to critique men who were too *mujeril* (womanly). As Francisco de León's sermon notes, compromised masculinity had resulted in men being converted into women. This supports David Gilmore's observation that masculinity is often defined through a critique of what men lack.¹⁵ More subtly, as Michèle Cohen notes, the discourse of masculinity may also represent the other, not as feminine or homosexual, but rather as effeminate.¹⁶ The seventeenth-century discourse bears this out as well: Pedro de Guzmán, for example, worried that the theater effeminized men.¹⁷

¹³For an interesting examination of class distinctions in models of masculinity in early modern Spain, see Martínez-Góngora. Shepard is also very attentive to the role of social status in determining meanings of manhood.

¹⁴Gutiérrez de los Ríos, 256: "grandes daños."

¹⁵Gilmore, 32.

¹⁶Cohen, 9.

¹⁷Guzmán, 282.

Although gender is constructed relationally, gender distinctions within a particular class — in this case, the nobility — still matter. Certain trademark virtues, such as moderation and prudent stewardship of resources, might apply to both noblemen and noblewomen.¹⁸ We should be careful, however, to examine closely how these expectations might be fulfilled and performed. For example, seventeenth-century moralists asked both noblemen and -women to exercise chastity. Yet, in a culture that assumed a woman's greater carnality, did the expectation of chastity and its exercise mean the same thing for both sexes?¹⁹ The fulfillment of such ideals would have gendered variations. For example, a noblewoman's chastity was thought to be threatened by her presence in the public sphere. Male aristocrats, on the other hand, could move freely outside the home — indeed, the performance of other components of their masculinity required that they do so — without contemporaries questioning their ability to guard their sexuality. Differences in the cultural construction of male and female chastity, as well as other desirable virtues, were also linked to material reality. As recent studies have shown, although masculinity was certainly a cultural construct, male physiognomy was also a component of manhood.²⁰ An unchaste man might be accused of wasting his seed, whereas the violation of a female body had different physical implications. In all of these ways, then, even an ideal such as chastity, which cut across the gender divide, might be understood and realized in both culturally and biologically gender-specific ways.

These types of gendered distinctions, even within the same class, are manifested in the texts under examination here. Often the intentions of many of the authors discussed in this essay were clear: they expected something particular of male aristocrats. For example, the sermon that began this essay uses the funeral of a nobleman as a deliberate opportunity to speak directly to the male aristocracy and to condemn its behavior. Luisa de Padilla's *Idea de nobles y sus desempeños en aforismos* exclusively engaged the question of the behavior and virtues of noblemen. Other treatises make these distinctions based upon the different circumstances between men and women of the noble class. For example, male aristocrats were expected to fulfill particular martial roles that women would never be asked to play. As will be demonstrated below, various authors worried that Spanish noblemen were not properly meeting their military obligations. This was felt, of course, with particular acuteness as their country fought wars across

¹⁸See Nader, 2004, 1–21.

¹⁹Perry explores this assumption within early modern Spanish society.

²⁰Behrend-Martínez.

Europe in the seventeenth century, which saw both renewed hostilities with the Dutch after 1621 and the Thirty Years' War. In short, the *arbitristas* and moralists of the seventeenth century singled out noblemen both for reasons of class and gender.

Just as the participants of this discourse sought to make class- and gender-specific arguments, they also deliberately employed the past as a source of models and guidance as they crafted an image of noble masculinity. For example, the classical past provided cautionary tales and object lessons. In his *Varias noticias importantes a la humana comunicaci3n* (1621), Crist3bal Su1rez de Figueroa offers a series of historical vignettes that portrays the dangers confronting empires that allow themselves to become too self-indulgent and complacent. Citing the case of the Persians, he argues that after the rule of Darius the court and the nobles in attendance had become hedonistic and effeminate. Their affectations made them vulnerable to military attacks.²¹ When Luisa de Padilla discusses the sartorial habits of noblemen, she urges them to adopt the simplicity of the robes worn by senators of the Roman Republic.²² As one would expect from these well-educated authors, their treatises were peppered, and in some cases heavily annotated, with references to classical authorities such as Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, Cato, and Seneca.²³

Contributors to this discourse also imagined that their own Spanish past held the keys to reinvigorating aristocratic manliness. They selectively appropriated this past for two reasons: first, they needed models that could be used to counter the urgent sense of decline in the seventeenth century; second, the past was a conflicted script. They would need to make deliberate choices, scouring the past to find examples that would best suit their purposes. Spain's late medieval past offered fertile ground for this exercise.²⁴ For example, Luisa de Padilla suggests the example of the medieval figure of Don Iñigo L3pez de Mendoza, Marquis of Santillana, as the ideal nobleman.²⁵ She lauds him for his virtue, martial skills, and dedication to Christianity. Additionally, she acknowledges as one of her sources for his life story a collection of biographical sketches by Fernando de Pulgar, the

²¹Su1rez de Figueroa, 52f.

²²Padilla, 1637, 173.

²³Many of the authors discussed here shared the concerns of authors such as Cato, who wrote about what they perceived as the declining morals of their day. See, for example, Gutierrez de los R3os, 269, which quotes Cato extensively.

²⁴Lamenting their nation's decline, many writers of the seventeenth century located Spain's Golden Age around the time of the reign of Isabel of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon: Elliott, 1989, 250–51; Feros, 148.

²⁵Padilla, 1644, 8.

Claros varones de Castilla (1486). This work and Fernán Pérez de Guzmán's *Generaciones y semblanzas* (ca. 1450) offer brief vignettes of the accomplishments of famed medieval Spanish aristocrats of this period; as Padilla's case demonstrates, they continued to inform early modern assessments of masculinity. The biographies emphasized virtue, moderation, and military prowess. Yet by making him an exemplar, Padilla remakes López de Mendoza in the image that she needed for the seventeenth century. Although celebrated as an aristocrat of virtue and military skill, the marquis was also a politically fickle, manipulative troublemaker. In 1420 he allied with partisans in the Kingdom of Aragon and participated in the attempted kidnapping of Juan II, the young King of Castile (1405–54). Later he frequently refused to support the monarch unless he was awarded titles and land.²⁶ These are details Padilla chooses not to recount.²⁷

Complementing these biographical works, the genre of chivalric romances, which recounted the martial heroism of medieval knights, was enormously popular.²⁸ Chief among these works was the early modern bestseller *Amadis de Gaula*, first published in Spain in the early sixteenth century. Other texts, such as *El vitorial* — a chronicle of the exploits of Don Pero Niño, written in the fifteenth century by his standard-bearer, Gutierre Díaz de Gámez — and the poetry of Jorge Manrique, rounded out the array of works that celebrated the medieval knight. These texts were, of course, idealized portraits of the medieval nobility: thus, the seventeenth-century resurrection of the virtues their protagonists embodied was fraught with complications. These were exactly the complications explored with poignant comic detail in Cervantes' (1547–1616) *Don Quixote*.

These writers also drew heavily on the courtesy and conduct literature of the sixteenth century, which directed its upper-class readers in matters of etiquette and ethics. Conduct literature offered a straightforward model of noble masculinity. Works such as Antonio de Guevara's *Relox de príncipes* (1521) instructed young noblemen to live virtuously, avoid immoderation, and receive proper military training. Notably, Guevara's work circulated in several seventeenth-century editions, attesting to its popularity and its ability to inform the discourse under examination here. Arguably, the most

²⁶Nader, 45–51.

²⁷Padilla does not engage at all with López de Mendoza's literary career. Her treatises do, however, address more generally the tension for male members of the nobility between the pursuit of arms and the study of letters. She notably advocates a balance between the two: see Padilla, 1644, 92; Padilla, 1639, 172–73, which counsels that the nobility has abandoned the study of letters to its detriment.

²⁸For a discussion of the popularity of these works among the reading public of early modern Spain, see Nalle.

famous courtesy manual, and one that enjoyed popularity in Spain, was Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*.²⁹ As it did throughout Europe, the *Courtier* inspired other works of conduct literature in Spain, such as Luis Milán's *El cortesano* (1561), set in the court of Valencia. Also quite popular was Giovanni della Casa's *Galateo*, which, in addition to circulating in Spain, was also translated into Spanish by Gracián Dantisco ca. 1586.³⁰ This genre consistently emphasized a particular model of noble manhood. Noblemen were trained in the customary activities of their class, such as hunting and fighting. The ideal noble also behaved with virtue, moderation, and control. Perhaps most importantly, he was supposed to act with comportsment but without artifice or any evidence of effort, embodying Castiglione's famous concept of *sprezzatura*. In *The Book of the Courtier* Castiglione advises his readers to "practice in all things a certain nonchalance [*sprezzatura*] which conceals all artistry and makes whatever one says or does seem uncontrived and effortless."³¹ Affectation was frowned upon; true nobility and virtue required the bearer not to try too hard.

But here, too, the script was not unambiguously positive. Despite his embodiment of numerous ideals, the model courtier was also a potentially effeminized figure because of his association with court life and his required subjection to his lord. Court life, as we shall see below, was consistently portrayed as decadent, and thus threatening to masculinity. In the move from the late medieval to the early modern period, the Spanish court had ceased to be itinerant and had instead become an increasingly robust and elaborate institution. With the creation of the capital of Madrid in 1561 and the growing urbanization of the city, the court became a permanent fixture: access to the king required that the nobility leave their estates and be present in the city.³² This resulted in their exposure to the fashions of court life, fashions whose excess would be critiqued in the seventeenth century as an effeminizing distraction from the proper role of noblemen. For example, the visit from the Prince of Wales in 1623 plunged Madrid into a spending frenzy whereby sumptuary legislation meant to curtail extravagant expenditures was summarily disregarded.³³ Leaving their estates

²⁹For the circulation of this work throughout Europe, see Burke.

³⁰For a modern scholarly edition, see Morreale.

³¹Castiglione, 67.

³²Kamen, 243.

³³Similarly, in *Don Quixote* Cervantes critiques the figure of the courtly knight. At various points, Don Quixote draws a marked distinction between himself as a knight errant — one who actively fights wrongs and makes them right — and other knights, who waste their time in the frivolous distractions of the court. See Cervantes, 683–96, 729–35.

and going to the court also underlined the subservient status of these men, who had to seek the king's permission to marry and mortgage their estates.³⁴ While one component of a nobleman's masculinity was his loyalty to his king, demonstrating this loyalty often meant sacrificing his autonomy and independence; he assumed a "posture of dependency."³⁵ Thus, as the king's subject, dependent upon his goodwill and favors, the nobleman's masculinity was compromised.³⁶

Because of the courtier's vulnerable masculinity, I will argue that seventeenth-century authors gravitated more frequently toward the models rooted in the late medieval period, when the Spanish court was itinerant and the nobility more autonomous. They would, however, borrow on the concept of *sprezzatura*, urging upon noblemen the appearance of effortlessness and the rejection of excess. Thus, the late medieval — and, to a lesser extent, sixteenth-century — past was used selectively, mined for reconstructed exemplars of manliness that became the cornerstone of the seventeenth-century critique of masculinity. Whether these authors looked to the fifteenth or the sixteenth century, they did so carefully, choosing those models that would offer the best remedies for decline. But this nostalgic model could not solve the problems at the heart of Spain's decline in this period. The discourse, however vigorously advocated, did not work.

3. THE IDEAL NOBLEMAN

Overall, Spanish writers of the seventeenth century had access to a rich tradition that informed their assessments of masculinity. Their challenge came in adapting these texts and exemplars to the experience of decline. The past — classical, medieval, and sixteenth-century — offered models, but these would need to be modified. How would this legacy of masculine comportment be read against the backdrop of Spain's deepening crisis? When Spaniards looked critically and self-consciously at their country in the first half of the seventeenth century, they saw a country plagued by a diminished population, a weakened economy, and an overdependence on foreign goods. Not surprisingly, then, their remedies focused on issues of labor and productivity.³⁷ For example, Jerónimo de Ceballos championed artisanal labor and its natural complement, agriculture: according to his treatise of 1623, these are "the two poles and pillars on which the entire

³⁴Lynch, 180.

³⁵Kelly, 45.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 44–45.

³⁷See MacKay, 2006, for an insightful analysis of the complications and constructed meanings of labor and honor in this period.

edifice of the republic is founded."³⁸ In the words of Lope de Deza, Spaniards "run away from virtuous work . . . and they want to eat without laboring."³⁹ Echoing these observations, Gutiérrez de los Ríos states that depopulation was only a temporary setback to agricultural productivity: the real dilemma was idleness and a consequent unwillingness to work the land. He even extends the sexual metaphor of productivity to encompass the characterization of Spanish soil: the problem was not the sterility (*esterilidad*) of the land, but, again, the idleness that led men to turn away from virtuous labor.⁴⁰ A reliance on foreign manufacturing also jeopardized artisanal production. As Pellicer de Tovar writes, "the commodities produced abroad caused inactivity and created idlers in Spain."⁴¹

The humble peasant San Isidro (ca. 1070–1130), the unofficial patron saint of Madrid (he was officially canonized in 1622), became a powerful figure in this discourse. According to one hagiographer, he was a "simple laborer . . . only occupied by his work, without any ambition of other offices or responsibilities."⁴² This saint's life underscored his centrality to the efforts to elevate the status of agriculture: "There are no labors more well-spent than those that are taken in the cultivation of the land: because they are good, honest, just, healthy, beneficial, and necessary . . . they are labors that belong to everyone, and that exercise the body of the laborers, and that protect and keep the soul away from many vices, and they provide sustenance and maintenance to the whole republic."⁴³ Isidro, then, was the ideal male peasant who embodied the agricultural virtue that many believed would provide the key to Spain's recovery.

Isidro had a counterpart in the figure of Saint Joseph. Saint Joseph offered a powerful antidote to the perceived abandonment of virtuous artisanal labor. Portrayals of this saint underwent a striking transformation in the early modern period, one that closely links Joseph to the attempt to

³⁸Ceballos, 142: "los dos polos, y pilares en que se funda todo el edificio de la Republica."

³⁹Deza, 23: "huyen del trabajo virtuoso . . . y queremos comer sin trabajar."

⁴⁰Gutiérrez de los Ríos, 285–87.

⁴¹Pellicer de Tovar, 31: "Las mercaderias labradas estranjerias causaron ocio, i criaron holgacanes en Espana."

⁴²Bleda, 98: "simple labrador . . . solo ocupado en su labranca, sin ambicion de otros officios, ni cargos."

⁴³Ibid., 182: "No hay trabajos mas bien empleados que los que se toman en cultivar la tierra: porque son buenos, honestos, justos, saludables, provechosos, y necesarios . . . son trabajos que tocan a todos, y que exercitan el cuerpo de los labradores, y conservan y apartan el anima de muchos vicios, y proven de sustento y mantenimiento a toda la Republica."

reinvigorate Spanish codes of masculinity. Before the mid-sixteenth century, artistic and literary depictions of Joseph presented him as a frail old man who was an unlikely candidate for husband, father, and provider.⁴⁴ However, by the seventeenth century Joseph was increasingly portrayed as young and vigorous, even virile, and was clearly identified with his livelihood as a carpenter. For example, the title vignette of Andrés de Soto's hagiography portrays him as a bearded young man holding the infant Jesus with his carpenter's tools at his feet. Saints' lives produced during this era emphasized Joseph's masculine devotion to his artisanal calling. As de Soto notes, "he practiced his art and occupation in order to sustain himself and to live by the work of his hands, occupying himself also in acts of charity and mercy."⁴⁵ One hagiographer also drew attention to Joseph's labor, emphasizing its demanding nature: there was no time for laziness and Joseph was constantly on his feet, carrying heavy things.⁴⁶ Joseph was the ideal male artisan, offering his productive labor as evidence of his virtue and devotion.

The figures of Isidro and Joseph, then, offered a possible blueprint of masculinity. They were defined by their productivity and virtue. They enriched Spain with the fruits of their labors and inspired their fellow countrymen with their moral example. Yet, as argued above, masculinity was often defined in class-specific terms. Particular behaviors were expected of noblemen that differentiated them from their peasant and artisan counterparts. Further, this model of noble comportment was inextricably linked to the experience of decline. Certainly the nobility had been critiqued for its failings before, but a condemnation of noble inefficacy in the seventeenth century was grounded in the circumstances of crisis. In this historically-specific context, what was the critique of aristocratic masculinity? What could these men offer to stop, or at least slow, their country's decline? Francisco de León, whose words begin this essay, spoke at the funeral of a renowned nobleman, and undoubtedly intended his words to reach aristocratic ears. As we have seen, he deplored the nobility's idleness and impiety, their abandonment of their martial responsibilities, and their indulgence in excessive consumption. All of these shortcomings "converted them into women," the ultimate failure of masculinity.

As clear as the lessons of Isidro and Joseph were, seventeenth-century authors struggled to fashion a code of masculinity for the nobility. What,

⁴⁴Black, 650.

⁴⁵Andrés de Soto, 336: "exercitava su arte y officio para sustentarse y vivir del trabajo de sus manos, ocupandose tambien en obras de charidad y misericordia."

⁴⁶Gracián de la Madre de Dios, 158.

for example, was the measure of noble productivity? The nobility defined itself only in part by its actions. The most critical components of its distinctiveness as a class resided passively in lineage and in the active demonstration of virtuous attributes. Outside of its military service (a role that was itself in crisis in this period), the nobility offered itself as an estate characterized not by the tangible products of its labor, such as Isidro's crops or Joseph's carpentry, but rather by the intangible, unquantifiable qualities of status and virtue. Farmers could be urged to work the land and artisans to busy themselves in their workshops: outside of highlighting their place within the social hierarchy, finding a defining purpose for the nobility proved to be more vexing and elusive.⁴⁷

Thus, contributors to the discourse struggled to offer remedies that addressed both the passive and active components of noble masculinity and that would articulate a role for these men. It was perhaps easiest to remedy questions of comportment and appearance, parts of noble manhood that were performed or displayed. For example, sumptuary legislation offered assurances of proper appearance and sartorial conformity. While the authors were certain that particular behaviors — such as going to the theater too often, or wasting time playing dice and card games — threatened noble manhood, they were harder pressed to offer a viable alternative. Grasping at medieval examples of Reconquest knighthood, these critics struggled to identify a mobilizing force that could unite the nobility and give it a well-defined place within the shifting social circumstances of the seventeenth century. They appealed to late medieval examples of brave knights proving their virtue, prowess, and Christian devotion on the field of battle. However, the models they chose often seemed hollow, ill-suited to the circumstances of the seventeenth century. In seeking to diagnose the problem and prescribe the cure, older definitions of noble behavior confronted seventeenth-century circumstances, revealing a rupture between the two. The most acute crisis of masculinity in Spain may have been the inability of these authors to craft a systematic and coherent model of noble manhood that could be realistically embodied by seventeenth-century men.

Echoing the medieval models presented by the biographical sketches of Pérez de Guzmán and Pulgar, all agreed that the nobility offered comportment as the first sign of virtue and right behavior. Comportment began with status, and nobility rested on the assertion of lineage. Yet the core of

⁴⁷MacKay, 86–89, 2006, notes that the stereotypical notion of the Spanish nobility as vehemently unwilling to dirty their hands with labor is inaccurate. Nonetheless, in struggling to find a defining purpose for the nobility and despite decrying noble idleness, the discourse under examination here never identifies productive labor as a remedy.

the medieval and early modern discourse on nobility was the recognition that noble status was conferred only in part by bloodline. Being born noble was not enough: one also needed to demonstrate the signs of noble virtue. According to a confessor's manual of 1610, true nobility is gained "with its own virtue," not granted by ancestry.⁴⁸ At midcentury the Jesuit Andrés Mendo argued that the nobility conferred by blood ancestry would slip away if it were not also demonstrated with its own virtues.⁴⁹ Luisa de Padilla argues for a nobility of character, stating that it is "better to be noble than to descend from nobles."⁵⁰

For many writers, the heart of noble virtue rested in one's devotion to Christianity. In the late medieval texts of writers like Pérez de Guzmán and Pulgar, subjects demonstrate their ardent Christianity through their participation in the Reconquest campaign against the Muslim Kingdom of Granada. Pulgar lauds the actions of López de Mendoza, who happily accepted the king's commission to fight in the Reconquest and immediately distinguished himself by winning many battles.⁵¹ Yet by the seventeenth century a unifying religious cause and obvious religious-cultural enemy was less evident, and this absence was keenly felt by those seeking to codify a martial Christian nobility. In 1492 the Spanish monarchs completed the reconquest of the Kingdom of Granada and expelled the Jews; even more recently, the Moriscos had been expelled in 1609. Spain had rid itself of any internal religious foes. Externally, of course, the battle between Protestant and Catholic provided a viable rallying cry, but these wars were scattered, enmeshed in larger economic and geopolitical concerns, and lacked the well-defined geographic and conceptual contours that the Islamic Kingdom of Granada had possessed for its medieval challengers.

So when seventeenth-century authors sought the embodiment of the ideal Christian nobleman, they were unable to place him on a readily identifiable field of battle and, instead, condemned his irreverence and lack of piety. Francisco de León's sermon laments the blasphemous behavior of noblemen in church. According to him, they treated the churches like public theaters (*corrales*), played impiously with the holy water, and let their gazes wander when they were supposed to be praying.⁵² These observations only underline his later point that these men had turned from

⁴⁸Avila, 716: "con propias virtudes."

⁴⁹Mendo, 15.

⁵⁰Padilla, 1644, 53: "mejor es ser Nobles, que descender de Nobles."

⁵¹Pulgar, 21.

⁵²León, 251^v.

the proper pursuit of military distinction. Some critics emphasize the emptiness of external shows of piety. For example, Luisa de Padilla criticizes seemingly crass financial acts of devotion, such as endowing chaplaincies and oratorios.⁵³ She picks up where Pulgar left off in the fifteenth century and celebrates her exemplar, Don Íñigo López de Mendoza, for his various accomplishments, nostalgically emphasizing his devotion by writing of his "most zealous" dedication to the faith, fighting the Moors with "Christian valor."⁵⁴

Seventeenth-century writers also reiterated the expectation, set out by their medieval predecessors, that the nobility observe another component of noble virtue: moderation. In the late Middle Ages, Pérez de Guzmán lauded Juan de Velasco for being discreet and well-reasoned, character traits that allowed him to administer his household and estate in an orderly fashion. In contrast, Alvar Pérez Osorio was condemned for his lack of control over his estate, which resulted in its disintegration.⁵⁵ Aristocratic consumption of food and drink was supposed to be controlled and not excessive.⁵⁶ Pérez de Guzmán also discusses the amorous exploits of these men. Yet even this sort of prowess had limits: nobles were not supposed to engage in so many affairs of the heart that the situation became untenable and unreasonable. Although both Pero López de Ayala and Diego Hurtado de Mendoza are identified as having loved many women, López de Ayala loved more women, according to Pérez de Guzmán, than was suitable for such a wise knight. Thus, while praising the privileges and wealth conferred by nobility, writers like Pérez de Guzmán valued the nobleman's ability to conduct himself with order and moderation.

Consistent with these medieval examples, Luisa de Padilla urges nobles to govern their vassals prudently, choose their friends wisely, and always be led by the virtue of moderation.⁵⁷ Even within the private space of the home, this controlled comportment was essential. In his *Consejos políticos y morales*, Juan Enríquez de Zúñiga offers uxorial advice. Husbands, he argues, have a natural right to dominion over their wives, but they have to exercise this with moderation, avoiding excess and tyranny.⁵⁸

⁵³Padilla, 1639, 103–04

⁵⁴Padilla, 1644, 12: "zelosissimo"; "christiano valor."

⁵⁵Pérez de Guzmán, 20, 25.

⁵⁶Excessive drinking could be portrayed as effeminate in the late Middle Ages: see Karras, 96.

⁵⁷Padilla, 1644, 280–99, 500–17.

⁵⁸Enríquez de Zúñiga, 29'–31'.

For many authors the core of this seventeenth-century code of masculine moderation lay in the observance of sexual restraint, and even marital chastity. Men were urged to avoid the sins of fornication, adultery, and illicit affairs.⁵⁹ Alongside the prevalent condemnation of female sexuality that we tend to more readily associate with the early modern period, Luisa de Padilla attacks men's lack of restraint and their tendency to indulge in adultery.⁶⁰ According to her, male adultery destroys virtues, engenders all vices, and is "the most ugly sin."⁶¹ The follies of love encourage foolish behavior unworthy of men.⁶² But Padilla and other moralists take things one step further in their discussions of chastity, suggesting that sexual restraint is also necessary within the bonds of marriage. According to Nicolás de Avila, excessive love, even when it is licit, is dangerous and worse than illicit love.⁶³ Enríquez de Zúñiga instructs husbands to express their love for their wives carefully, taking care to avoid "amorous passion."⁶⁴ Padilla argues that marital continence sanctifies body and soul and fortifies husband and wife to face the demands of running their household and raising their children.⁶⁵

Further, this excessive passion is often represented by the figure of Cupid. Writers often characterize him as a lascivious and imprudent troublemaker with effeminized features that signify weakness. For example, Pedro de Guzmán identifies Cupid as the "son of idleness." Guzmán suggests that men who have too much time on their hands are easily distracted into sexual vices that stem from the emotion of love. He condemns love as "the passion of an idle soul," indicating that the man who rejects idleness breaks the bow of Cupid.⁶⁶ Luisa de Padilla describes Love as a child with wings (like Cupid), inconstant and frivolous. The figure's nudity is a sign of its lack of honor, health, and wisdom. Finally, she gives her Cupid figure frizzy curled hair, a trait readily identified in this period with effeminacy.⁶⁷

In this insistence on amorous restraint we find a radical departure from the medieval men of Pérez de Guzmán's catalog, who were celebrated for

⁵⁹See Alcocer; Francisco de Soto.

⁶⁰Padilla, 1639, 406. Regarding early modern attitudes toward female sexuality, see Perry, 53-74, 118-36.

⁶¹Padilla, 1639, 422: "el pecado mas feo."

⁶²Ibid., 262, 422. See a parallel example cited in Foyster, 56.

⁶³Avila, 57-58.

⁶⁴Enríquez de Zúñiga, 43^v: "amorosa passion."

⁶⁵Padilla, 1642, 658-59, 696-97.

⁶⁶Pedro de Guzmán, 77-78: "hijo del ocio"; "passion del animo ocioso."

⁶⁷Padilla, 1639, 267.

loving many women. It is also a break with the code of masculinity that prevails in modern anthropological studies of Spanish masculinity.⁶⁸ Although their medieval forebears were supposed to exercise prudence in their love affairs, what had changed by the seventeenth century was the degree of moderation. Seventeenth-century noblemen were urged to demonstrate a more extreme form of constraint. This observation should, in turn, prompt a consideration of the often overlooked category of male chastity. Early modern scholarship has focused primarily on female chastity and honor. Men figure in this equation only as the guardians of female sexuality and, hence, family honor. Yet male chastity could also be a virtue, one that demonstrated a man's ability to control, and even master, his body. This conquering of the body signified a virtuous strength, drawing the man closer to God and the life of the spirit. Male chastity demonstrated a dominance over the material and the carnal, categories more readily associated with women and thus potentially effeminizing to men.

Wealth, the nobility's most significant mark of distinction, could also threaten its ability to maintain standards of masculine virtue, order, and moderation. The critics of the period applied seemingly paradoxical expectations to the nobility's procurement and enjoyment of prosperity. On the one hand, the nobility did not work with its hands, and thus did not produce tangible goods: they were expected to derive their wealth from the labor of others working their land. On the other hand, this did not absolve them of responsibility for their comportment and for how they used their wealth. Many lamented the laziness that resulted from the nobility's passive accumulation of riches, fearing that this lassitude threatened masculinity itself: in the throes of idleness "the spirit is numbed . . . energies are weakened, and the aptitude of all the members of the body . . . withers."⁶⁹ In a similar vein, the Jesuit Andrés Mendo condemns the luxuries and indulgences that inactivity encourages, writing that they "effeminize the spirits,

⁶⁸This is also a different code of male sexual behavior than the one that Martínez-Góngora identifies in her article. In her examination of the class differences in codes of masculinity, she argues that some authors of the sixteenth century identified erotic expressions of sexuality within the bonds of marriage as a distinctive feature of the masculinity of noblemen, distinguishing them from their bourgeois counterparts. Notably, though, her argument is based on sixteenth-century texts. Her evidence, coupled with that contained in this essay, may reveal competing discourses of male sexuality. It is also possible that the discourse described here is closely rooted in the changed circumstances of the seventeenth century: the perceived urgency of decline may have been shifting the discourse of male sexuality in the nobility.

⁶⁹Enríquez de Zúñiga, 101: "se entorpece el animo . . . se enflaquecen las fuerças, y la aptitud de todos los miembros del cuerpo . . . marchita."

thin the courage, and dishearten the thoughts" of men.⁷⁰ Idleness was certainly the antithesis of the productive behavior that many critics believed was necessary to halt Spain's decline, but the despair over noble idleness took on a different character, one inextricably linked to the question of noble wealth. While no one would have denied the nobility its right to accumulate wealth, the sources, character, and use of that wealth could and did come under attack. According to the *arbitristas* and others, the sources of the nobility's wealth deprived other men of their productive contributions, contributed to the overall decline of the Spanish economy, and fostered excessive indulgence — and thus effeminacy.

By the seventeenth century a significant portion of the wealth of the Spanish nobility was tied to two types of annuity contracts, known as *censos* and *juros*. *Censos* were a credit mechanism whereby lenders bought the right to collect annuity payments from a borrower, who in turn received the principal sum.⁷¹ *Juros* were annuity contracts issued by the royal government. In return for fixed annuity payments, the crown borrowed money from its citizens. In practice, they became forced loans extended to the government, in which the nobility was deeply invested. The crown made its annuity payments at interest — typically around seven percent — by mortgaging state revenues.

By the late sixteenth century these annuity contracts were drawing fierce criticism. For example, the *arbitrista* González de Cellorigo captured well their seductive, yet passive and indulgent, character: "*censos* are the plague and ruin of Spain. For the sweetness of pure profit from *censos* the merchant leaves his trading, the artisan his employment, the peasant his farming, the shepherd his flock; and the noble sells his lands so as to exchange the one hundred they bring him for the five hundred the *juro* brings."⁷² In other words, the nobility was sacrificing its traditional, acceptable derivation of wealth from the land for the lure of annuity contracts. Others condemned them because they preyed upon the lower classes, which were often unable to repay these debts and lost their property to these lenders when they defaulted. As Lope de Deza writes, "In the end this annuity seems to me the invention of a lazy and covetous rich man, and a miserable and needy poor man."⁷³ When the nobility profited from *juros*

⁷⁰Mendo, 137–38: "afeminan los animos, enflaquecen los brios, y abaten los pensamientos."

⁷¹Phillips, 61.

⁷²Quoted in Kamen, 249.

⁷³Deza, 31: "Al fin me parece este censo invencion de un rico holgazan, y codicioso, y de un pobre miserable, y necesitado."

issued by the royal government, their behavior contributed to other perils by prolonging the crown's fiscal crisis. With each infusion of capital these contracts generated, the royal government only mortgaged its future that much more extensively, thus virtually guaranteeing its declarations of bankruptcy. Murcia de la Llana crystallizes the disruptive character of annuity contracts in his *Discurso político del desempeño del Reino* (1624) when he quotes a "Doctor Navarro" who says that *censos* "are the cause of the disorders" plaguing the country and that they "add expenses to expenses, debts to debts."⁷⁴ Thus the nobility's reliance on these contracts as the source of their wealth contributed directly to their country's disordered economy and decline. Surely it was not very masculine to foster the financial ruin of one's country.

However, as a failing of individual noble masculinity, these annuity contracts posed additional threats. How the nobility used this wealth was also critiqued. Many believed that *censos* and *juros* led to the passive accumulation of excessive wealth, which in turn enabled a listless and effeminizing indulgence in frivolous entertainments and habits of consumption. The easy comfort of annuity payments encouraged the nobility to behave in ways that violated the codes of order and moderation that defined their estate and masculinity. Lope de Deza not only faults the existence of *censos* as part of what plagues Spanish finances, he also avers that for the rich beneficiaries of these contracts, *censos* lead to "idleness, and the vices that follow from it."⁷⁵ Pedro de Guzmán worries that idleness created opportunities for overindulgence in games, the theater, and food. Men given over to this kind of unwarranted leisure would fritter their time away at the *comedias*, bullfights, parties, diceplaying, cards, and dances.⁷⁶ These pursuits were not simply a bad use of leisure time; they also threatened masculinity. For example, according to Guzmán, men are effeminized by attending the theater.⁷⁷ Cristóbal Suárez de Figueroa warns that the vanity of music and dancing is effeminizing to the noblemen who find them entertaining.⁷⁸ Allowed free rein to enjoy the prosperity these contracts created, noble masculinity was threatened.

Moralists also objected to how the nobility used the wealth acquired

⁷⁴Murcia de la Llana, 1: "son causa de las desordenes"; "anaden gastos a gastos, deudas a deudas."

⁷⁵Deza, 31: "la ociosidad, y vicios que de ella se siguen."

⁷⁶Guzmán, 82-83, 191.

⁷⁷This was a very standard critique of the early modern Spanish theater: see Cartagena-Calderón, 27-28; Cotarelo y Mori.

⁷⁸Suárez de Figueroa, 74.

from sources such as annuity contracts to indulge particular habits of dress and grooming. Attacking the nobility's sartorial habits, however, was fraught with complexity. On the one hand, the clothing of the nobility necessarily differentiated their estate from other members of Spanish society: they literally had to dress a certain way in order to be who they were. On the other hand, many believed that this use of their wealth had fostered an indulgence in excessive — and, as a consequence, effeminate — habits of dress and grooming. In his attack on *censos*, Murcia de la Llana argues that those who profit from them simply pour their wealth into vain luxuries.⁷⁹ The superfluity of dress and adornment threatened the expectation of masculine control and moderation. Ornately adorned clothing, long curly hair, and frilly neck ruffs appeared excessive, and were thus evidence of affectation, a clear violation of *sprezzatura*.

The influential *arbitrista* Fray Juan de Santa María argued that it was the king's responsibility to set an example by avoiding excessive spending on clothes and by discouraging vanity and ostentation. He put little stock in sumptuary legislation, believing instead that the imitation of the king's example was the best cure. The king and his ministers should offer themselves as a mirror (*espejo*) to the people. Ultimately, Spanish kings ignored much of his advice. The court continued to indulge in expensive and excessive habits of dress, and the kings issued waves of sumptuary legislation, instructing their subjects to do as they said, not as they did.⁸⁰

Whether or not the king could be persuaded to enforce standards of masculine dress, the *arbitristas* fought the battle vigorously. As a class, the nobility was expected to dress in ways that suited a certain place in society: their clothes were supposed to be sumptuous and expensive. Yet while the nobility defined itself by indulging in this type of conspicuous consumption, their critics believed that there was a fine line between how the nobility performed this role and the moments when these habits threatened masculinity. The danger lay in crossing that line. The measure of this danger was excess, whether excessive spending on fashion or excessive habits of dress. Excess was effeminate and thus compromised masculinity.

It was not necessarily unusual to critique the fashions of the nobility, but these effeminate habits of dress were a particularly urgent matter for seventeenth-century authors because they overlapped with significant economic and military issues. Many of these fashions were produced abroad and imported into Spain. Domestic production in seventeenth-century

⁷⁹Murcia de la Llana, 1.

⁸⁰On the relationship between sumptuary legislation and Golden Age theater, see Kennedy, 91–97.

Spain was floundering, and many saw this at the core of Spain's decline: thus many regarded foreign goods with suspicion. According to Lope de Deza, they corrupt "the noble simplicity of Spaniards."⁸¹ More specifically, Mateo Lisón y Viedma laments the nobility's reliance on the materials from abroad that made the construction of the *cuello* (an extremely fashionable high starched collar) possible.⁸² Even in those instances where goods or services were provided within the country, many believed that this was a poor use of native labor. They urged instead more honest occupations than supplying the nobility with excessively fashionable items. Further, the issues of fashion and the military also became intertwined in this period, giving the critique of the sartorial habits of the Spanish nobility historical specificity and distinguishing it from earlier, similar critiques. Fashion came to be viewed as an expensive distraction from the true calling of the nobility: military service.

Luisa de Padilla warns her readers to dress simply and cleanly, avoiding the frivolity of extensive colors and adornment. She offers as a model the sumptuary legislation of the Roman Senate, which forbade its citizens to wear silk.⁸³ Others worry that male fashions are "delicate and womanly," and ultimately rob the wearers of their "manly vigor."⁸⁴ The Marquis of Careaga argues that men are, if anything, trying to outdo women in their excessive clothing, exquisite finery, rings, and fashions, which makes them appear more like women than men.⁸⁵ Writers also linked these clothing styles with other affectations and effeminate practices. Tomás Ramón criticizes men who wear makeup in the manner of loose women (*mugercillas*), and Luisa de Padilla warns that the use of perfumes is effeminizing.⁸⁶ The escalating demands of fashion had become too feminine and were thought to pose a grave danger to the preservation of masculinity.⁸⁷

Much of the concern with the dress code of the male nobility coalesced around a curious feature: the *cuello*, or neck ruff. In this instance, male fashion became a lightning rod for the overlapping concerns of gender, economics, and foreign policy. This feature of male fashion had, in the eyes of many, become excessive: it was several inches high, tinted with powders,

⁸¹Deza, 23^v: "la noble senzillez de los Españoles."

⁸²Lisón y Viedma, 35^{r-v}.

⁸³Padilla, 1637, 173.

⁸⁴Careaga, 10^r-11^r: "delicados i mugeriles"; "el vigor Varonil."

⁸⁵Ibid., 15^r.

⁸⁶Ramón, 45-46; Padilla, 1637, 175.

⁸⁷Spaniards were certainly not the only Europeans to critique immoderate dress as a source of effeminacy. For England, see Shepard; see especially Kuchta, who examines the discourse about clothing and effeminacy in England in the seventeenth century.

and had to be washed and starched daily.⁸⁸ Many tried to achieve greater and greater heights for their *cuello* by using an undergirding support, the *alçacuello*. Increasingly regarded as an indulgence of dandies, the crown had since the late sixteenth century legislated against these costly ruffs, in no small part because the powders used for dyeing them were being imported from Spain's enemy, the Netherlands.⁸⁹ In 1600, the government of Philip III tried to curb the excesses associated with the ruffs, requiring that they be a certain width.⁹⁰ By 1623, patience in these matters had worn thin, and Philip IV (1605–65) issued a decree doing away with the *cuello* altogether and offering as an alternative the *valona*, a low, flat collar.⁹¹

The debate over the *cuello* crystallized the link between fashion and compromised manhood. The money expended on their upkeep was profligate. Frittering away money on these items signified a lack of control and moderation, which were highly prized masculine attributes. *Cuellos* also required tremendous effort. As they reached greater and greater heights, they announced to all who could see that the wearer had invested tremendous labor and expense in their mere existence. Both the expense and the excessive heights of the *cuellos* signified exertion, the very antithesis of effortless *sprezzatura*.

For many authors, men's hairstyles demonstrated an even greater measure of compromised masculinity. The fashion of the day was for men to wear their hair long, a style referred to as *guedejas*, which is sometimes translated as "ponytails." In keeping with the excessive clothing of the day, men also indulged in complicated hairstyles that required curling and frizzing. All of these practices raised the ire of those critiquing Spanish masculinity, who thought of them as excessive and effeminate distractions. The Marquis of Careaga calls long hair "an abominable abuse." He accuses men who cultivate curly or long hair of being "effeminate and womanlike."⁹² Alonso Carranza agrees: for him, men's obsession with long hair, and the care they put into curling and frizzing it, can only be read as contributing to the degeneration of their sex.⁹³ As Tomás Ramón indicates, men who grow their hair long "voluntarily" wanted to lose the "honor owed to them as men."⁹⁴ *Sprezzatura* was again compromised by these

⁸⁸Anderson, 4.

⁸⁹See, for example, *Premática en que se manda guardar*.

⁹⁰*Premática en que se prohíben*.

⁹¹Anderson, 5.

⁹²Careaga, 1': "abominable abuso"; 19': "afeminada i mugeril."

⁹³Carranza, 31'.

⁹⁴Ramón, 51–52: "voluntariamente"; "la honra que por ser hombres se les devia."

fashionable hairstyles. The excess and effort that they signified stood in direct opposition to the effortless, unaffected appearance and comportment that was supposed to be the hallmark of masculine presentation.

Further, long hair was a sign of submission and weakness. Some associated it with slavery and lasciviousness.⁹⁵ According to the Marquis of Careaga, slaves in ancient Rome were not allowed to cut their long hair until they had been manumitted. Such submission and weakness, he implies, would work to the advantage of Spain's enemies. A country full of men such as these would be regarded as effeminate, and thus an easy target.⁹⁶ Finally, this same author identifies long hair as "one of the signs of those that are tainted by the dirty and abominable sin" of sodomy.⁹⁷ Long hair was thus the ultimate signifier of weakness, passivity, and effeminacy.

In 1639 the royal government gave further voice to these diatribes, issuing another law that spoke out against the scandals caused by the long, curly hairstyles so popular with men.⁹⁸ The decree threatened men with a fine of 20,000 *maravedís* and ten days imprisonment if they wore their hair past their ears. Subsequent offenses resulted in ever harsher penalties, including ones levied against barbers who provided these coiffures. Finally, the law forbade men with such hairstyles from entering the presence of the king and his councils.

Preoccupations with styles of dress and hair signaled an effeminized lack of *sprezzatura* and also distracted men from their defining purpose: military service. Here again, the seventeenth century was a critical moment in this debate. From the late 1620s onward, a rising tide of treatises against noble excess began appearing as Spain's military fortunes began to wane.⁹⁹ At this time, Spain faced a costly and faltering war against the Dutch, a point driven home by Piet Heyn's capture of a Spanish silver fleet in 1628. From 1628 to 1631 the crown embarked upon an unprofitable war to seize Mantua, and in 1635 France declared war on Spain and entered the Thirty Years' War. These military misfortunes were quickly followed by four vigorous diatribes, which have already been discussed, against noble excess: Francisco de León's sermon (1635), Tomás Ramón's *Nueva prematica*

⁹⁵Carranza, 25'-26'.

⁹⁶Careaga, 21', 25'-26'.

⁹⁷Ibid., 19': "una de las señales de los que estan tocados del pecado sucio, i nefando." It should be noted that such a reading came in a period when the Spanish Inquisition tried a greater number of sodomy cases than in the previous century.

⁹⁸*Pregón . . . el abuso de las guedejas.*

⁹⁹Kamen, 207-10, charts Spain's military fortunes.

(1635), Alonso Carranza's *Discurso* (1636), and the Marquis of Careaga's *Invectiva* (1637). The Marquis of Careaga provides a telling example of how fashion and military service were linked in the minds of these authors. He warns of the dangers of men devoted to curling and adorning their hair, and to other distractions that cause them to abandon the instruments of war.¹⁰⁰ Certainly the nobility had been criticized before for its lack of military devotion, but in the conjunction of military vulnerability and a critique of noblemen's fashions we find a discourse specific to the seventeenth century.

Therefore, as they despaired of the excessive and effeminate behaviors of noblemen, these same authors also vehemently tried to rejuvenate the ideal of military service, arguably the defining obligation of the nobility.¹⁰¹ The critique of the nobility's neglect of its primary vocation encompassed many of the concerns with masculine standards that have already been explored. For example, the Marquis of Careaga tells the story of King Darius, who sent his spies to report on the enemy. They discovered that the enemy soldiers were given over to obsessive concern with their hair and moustaches. Darius determined that this was a good time to launch an attack against them and had no trouble succeeding, since he was "fighting with effeminate enemies."¹⁰² In short, these authors believed that the nobility was a weak and unprepared target. Yet in seeking to restore military standards, they would ultimately embrace a nostalgic code based on medieval models that had little currency by the seventeenth century.

Writers began by faulting the absence of military training among noble youth, and then attacked what they believed was an effeminate court. Luisa de Padilla believed that all young men should be able to ride horses using two different types of seats, wield arms, and shoot an arquebus and crossbow well. Her ideal young nobleman would receive an education in the military arts that included studying squadrons and fortifications.¹⁰³ Her model, again, is the medieval knight Don Iñigo López de Mendoza, who learned how to wield all kinds of arms and was the most skilled jousting knight. But

¹⁰⁰Careaga, 10^v.

¹⁰¹This critique echoes earlier ones of Jews, who were ridiculed or condemned for their lack of participation in defining military endeavors like the Reconquest: see Mirrer, 70–71. In the context of the seventeenth century this might be linked in turn to anxieties about the presence of Portuguese converso financiers in Spain. The Count-Duke of Olivares (1587–1645), especially, had supported these men being invited into Spain. But his support was not shared by all and many of these men became targets of the Inquisition: see Lynch, 194–95; López Belinchón.

¹⁰²Careaga, 26^r: "peleando con enemigos afeminados."

¹⁰³Padilla, 1637, 211; Padilla, 1644, 10.

Padilla and her contemporaries also believed that this training was often absent because young men who lived at court were instead encouraged in the vain entertainments of dancing, music, and the theater. She worries that men at court traded the exercise of arms, horses, and the hunt, for attending comedias and indulging in idle conversations.¹⁰⁴ In his series of historical cautionary tales, Cristóbal Suárez de Figueroa carries the critique even further, attacking the court as an effeminate institution. Writing of the downfall of the Persian Empire, he indicates that the youth grew up in "an effeminate court" that was "feeble, vain . . . full (as in our age) of makeup, of affectations."¹⁰⁵ At court, men comported themselves more as women, indulging in feminine behavior and styles.

Here, too, concerns about fashion, effeminacy, and the military coalesced, making this discourse particular to the seventeenth century. Despite the occasional issuance of sumptuary laws and attempts to curb conspicuous consumption, the reigns of Philip III and Philip IV were marked by an extravagance that some perceived as decadent. Most strikingly, Philip IV's construction of the Palace of the Buen Retiro was an extravagant — and, as a consequence, heavily criticized — building program that became a stage for elaborate spectacles, theater, and musical productions.¹⁰⁶ Its construction in the 1630s came at a time when Spain's military fortunes were beginning to wane. Many questioned the wisdom of investing in an elaborate palace against the backdrop of decline. Finally, the plays staged at court and those being performed in Madrid's public theaters featured cross-dressed men playing the roles of women.¹⁰⁷ In its fashions, expenditures, and entertainments, the court itself was promoting the excess that many linked to compromised masculinity. More specifically, the masculine standard of military preparation was itself threatened by the effeminacy of the court and by the city where young noblemen received their preparation for adulthood. And this, of course, returns us to the dilemma identified earlier in this essay regarding the potential threat to masculinity posed by the arena of the court.

This lack of early military training sowed the seeds of future ruin. Andrés Mendo believed that the state of the republic hung in the balance. Faced with the prospect of battle, noblemen would flee since they had never learned the military arts. Vanity would further threaten their ability

¹⁰⁴Padilla, 1639, 162.

¹⁰⁵Suárez de Figueroa, 52: "Corte efeminanda"; "floxa, vana . . . llena (como en nuestra edad) de afeytes, de melindres."

¹⁰⁶Brown and Elliott.

¹⁰⁷For a discussion of some of these plays, see Donnell.

to answer their obligations: they would not want to mess up their carefully adorned hair by wearing a helmet.¹⁰⁸ When it came time to go to war, Suárez de Figueroa argues, it was the men, and not their horses, who had been broken to the point of timidity.¹⁰⁹ In his cautionary treatise against the dangers of the popular games of the day, Francisco Luque Fajardo laments, "it causes great pity . . . to see a great solider (whom God himself dressed with his arms at baptism) defeated" by the chance to play cards.¹¹⁰ Even the increasingly popular and seemingly innocuous aristocratic fashion of riding in carriages was highlighted as symptomatic of this problem. In a diatribe against the luxurious excesses of the nobility, Tomás Ramón rails against the use of carriages, calling them effeminate and unnecessary since "the horse is the symbol of war" and men would do better to ride these instead.¹¹¹ Mateo Lisón y Viedma echoes these sentiments and complains that the fashionable coaches distract men from learning to ride horseback *al la jineta*, a military riding style that had been introduced into the peninsula by the Muslims.¹¹² Finally, Murcia de la Llana complains that noblemen take the money they receive from their *censo*s and spend it on luxuries, not on horses and the exercise of arms.¹¹³

Aside from desiring to restore the nobility to its military duties as a way of curbing immoderation, idleness, and indulgence, the despair expressed by these authors was undoubtedly rooted in the tremendous constraints faced by Spain's military in the early modern period. Spaniards believed that military defeats and a shrinking ability to defend their imperial possessions demonstrated all too clearly Spain's overall decline as a European and world power. At the close of the sixteenth century and the opening of the seventeenth, Spain had faced a serious inability to adequately raise and supply troops to fight its various enemies. A series of peace treaties relieved some of this pressure during the reign of Philip III (most notably the truce signed with the Dutch in 1609). However, by the time Philip IV took the throne in 1621, he faced renewed hostilities with the Dutch, the wearing on of the Thirty Years' War, and other skirmishes across the globe.

¹⁰⁸Mendo, 135.

¹⁰⁹Suárez de Figueroa, 52'.

¹¹⁰Luque Fajardo, 105: "Gran lastima haze . . . ver un gran soldado (a quien el mismo Dios vistio de sus armas, en al bautismo) rendido."

¹¹¹Ramón, 304-07: "El Cavallo es simbolo de la guerra."

¹¹²Lisón y Viedma, 36. This style used shorter stirrups, requiring the rider to bend his legs at a sharper angle to the knee.

¹¹³Murcia de la Llana, 1.

In this literal call to arms, these authors drew on a longstanding tradition within Spanish culture that defined the nobility through, among other ideals, military prowess. In this instance it was clear that seventeenth-century writers were seeing the remedies for decline through medieval lenses. Biographies of medieval noblemen emphasized their early preparation and clear predilection for military prowess. The virtues of self-control and well-reasoned behavior also served these men on the field of battle. Perez de Guzmán celebrated their force and military skill. Additional evidence of the medieval celebration of the nobleman's military prowess comes from Díaz de Gámez in *El vitorial*, where he praises his master for his martial accomplishments, and for his recognition that where some are called to work in the fields, a nobleman's chief responsibility is to dedicate himself to nothing else but "the calling of arms, the art of chivalry and every noble labor."¹¹⁴ Fernando de Pulgar glorifies Don Fernand Alvarez de Toledo, Count of Alba, for being wary on the field of battle and for being able to inspire his troops to rally against the Muslims in the Reconquest battle for Granada.¹¹⁵

As comforting as it might be to call the nobility back to its traditional role, what precisely did this mean in the context of seventeenth-century Spain? Philip IV's *privado*, the Count-Duke of Olivares, agreed wholeheartedly with assessments that found Spain's nobility lacking in military preparation. In 1634 he created the Junta de Obediencia to better secure the obedience of the Castilian nobility, whom Olivares characterized as lazy and extravagant. Philip himself worried that the nobility had forgotten "how to ride horseback, along with other military actions and exercises."¹¹⁶

However, the military crisis facing Philip IV and Olivares was deeper than the mere restoration of the nobility's training. While members of the nobility continued to serve in Spain's army, their role on the battlefield had been eclipsed by necessity. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the growing use of firearms on the battlefield meant that the mounted knight was being replaced by the infantryman.¹¹⁷ While some nobles enlisted in the infantry, doing so was a departure from the traditional role on the field of battle articulated by authors such as Padilla and Suárez de Figueroa, who

¹¹⁴Díaz de Gámez, 42.

¹¹⁵Pulgar, 27.

¹¹⁶MacKay, 1999, 103.

¹¹⁷Parker, 1996, 24. For the declining role of the nobility in the Spanish army, see White: my thanks to Allyson Poska for bringing White's work to my attention.

clearly emphasized training and service on horseback.¹¹⁸ Further, the size of the armies that Spain required and subsequently raised grew dramatically over the course of the early modern period, leading to other changes in its composition.¹¹⁹ Although the government exerted tremendous pressure on the nobility to raise troops, this was often ineffective. In 1634 the Council of State tried to revive the practice of having the nobility appointed as officers who would meet the expenses of maintaining regiments.¹²⁰ Noblemen resisted, claiming inadequate funds, and many were dismissed from the court as a consequence.

The Spanish government was forced to seek other ways of raising troops. Foreign soldiers came to form a sizeable contingent of the army. Within Spain, recruitment campaigns were commonly used to raise troops. Although members of the nobility sometimes enlisted, many recruits came from decidedly more modest backgrounds, but these campaigns became compromised as staffing demands increased. Early campaigns sought to enlist unmarried able-bodied men. Beginning in the 1630s the crown required royal towns to raise a specified number of troops. Towns employed a draft lottery (*quinta*). This unpopular practice and the individual attempts to avoid its obligations — by paying someone else to serve in one's stead — only increased the pressure on the towns, leading the government to ignore previous exemptions from service based on age, marital status, and occupation.¹²¹ Overall, as the Spanish nobility abandoned its previous dedication to military endeavors, the burden fell more heavily on other sectors of the population, both native and foreign.

All of these changes, wrought by the necessity of improving the effectiveness and increasing the size of Spain's military force, created the circumstances in which the nobility's traditional martial role faded from view. The figure of the medieval nobleman mounted on horseback no longer epitomized Spanish military might. Times had changed to the point that the nobility could no longer practice its customary defining role. Yet as quickly as this role was fading, seventeenth-century authors were grasping to reclaim it.

4. CONCLUSION

Returning to the passionate sermon that began this essay, we find León's angry calls for reform grounded in frustration. He and his contemporaries

¹¹⁸Parker, 2004, 34.

¹¹⁹Parker, 1996, 24.

¹²⁰Elliott, 1986, 509.

¹²¹Parker, 2004, 38–39.

watched their once proud and powerful country experience profound decline. In their estimation a reinvigoration of proper standards of manhood — perceived to be in a deep state of crisis — could help to arrest these escalating misfortunes. So they urged their noble listeners to exercise virtue and restraint in all matters, curtail their investments in parasitical annuity contracts, direct their wealth toward honorable pursuits, abandon affectation in their styles of dress and adornment, and, finally, to demonstrate their military prowess.

However vigorously argued, the solutions proposed to restore the masculinity of the nobility were not always tenable. While virtue and moderation were achievable, other elements were less so. Annuity contracts dominated the Castilian economy, sumptuary legislation went largely unheeded, and the military revolution and financial exigencies forever transformed the nobility's role on the battlefield. Because these critics adopted a nostalgic posture and drew their inspiration largely from the Middle Ages, they looked backward to a romanticized past. While they may have believed that masculinity was in crisis, the more acute crisis facing the gender order in Spain may have been the inability of these critics to forge a new paradigm of noble manhood. Unfortunately, the *arbitristas* and moralists of the seventeenth century had not created a model of ideal men: they had instead nostalgically fashioned idealized men whose existence would remain illusory.

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