CHAPTER FOUR

ITALIAN LITERATURE IN THE HISPANIC WORLD DURING THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD (SEVILLE AND MEXICO CITY)

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In 1526, immediately after marrying Isabella of Portugal in Seville, Charles I moved with his court to Granada, which had been taken from the Muslims 34 years earlier. There, the Venetian ambassador Andrea Navagero maintained a conversation with two poets traveling with the royal entourage, the Catalan Juan Boscán and the Castilian Garcilaso de la Vega, which was to become famous due to its great importance for Spanish literature.1 In the course of this conversation Navagero encouraged the Spanish writers to adopt Italian verse and metrics, which they both did, soon becoming more successful than any of their predecessors. The assimilation of Italian models to Spanish poetry resulted in the publication in Barcelona of Obras de Boscán con algunas de Garcilaso in 1542, after the death of both authors. These poems, and especially those by Garcilaso, which were also published piecemeal from 1569, became a swift success among the most cultivated readers, and were soon imitated and annotated.2 Garcilaso not only adopted Italian metrics but took the imitation of Italian models much further, leaving a deep imprint apparent in later Spanish poetry.3


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2 Las obras del excelent poeta Garcilasso de la Vega / agora nueuamente corregidas de muchos errores que en todas las impressiones passadas auia (Salamanca: Matías Gast, 1569). The book Obras de Garcilaso de la Vega con anotaciones de Fernando de Herrera, published in Seville in 1580 and dedicated to the Marquis of Ayamonte (at the time governor of Milan), confirmed Garcilaso as the model poet in the Spanish language. For the role played by aristocrats such as Boscán and Garcilaso in the dissemination of the Italian style in Castile, see Bartolomé Yun (dir.), Introduction to Las redes del Imperio. Élites sociales en la articulación de la Monarquía Hispánica, 1492–1714 (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 209).

This encounter in Granada and its results are well known, as is the overall influence of Italian authors on all genres—not only poetry—of Spanish literature, which had in fact begun before the fifteenth century. The present chapter, however, focuses not on the authors (Italian or Spanish) or their work, but on their audience, with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the impact of Italian influences on Spanish culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. My objective is also to go beyond previous studies focusing on the Spanish readership by comparing Spanish with American audiences, especially in the Viceroyalty of New Spain. In this regard, the aim of the present paper is to explore the phenomenon of Italian influence on the Spanish world from an Atlantic perspective. In order to achieve these ends, we shall be comparing readers from two cities, Seville and Mexico, and the impact that Italian culture may have had on their readings between 1560 and 1630.

The cultural relationship between the two great Western Mediterranean peninsulas was already very close during the Middle Ages, and continued to be so throughout the Modern Period due to a number of factors: the extensive Spanish colony in Italy, further reinforced by the control of several Italian territories by the Spanish crown, the exchange of ambassadors and, finally, the arrival of Italian book merchants, printers and sellers to Spain. The latter factor was particularly significant in Seville, which saw the arrival of many and important book professionals, especially throughout the sixteenth century (Monardes, Lavezaris, Robertis, Pescioni...). In the cosmopolitan Seville of the Spanish Golden Age, the Italians easily outnumbered alien residents from other nations. In fact,

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6 Manuel Peña Díaz, ‘Las relaciones culturales entre España e Italia en la época del Gran Capitán’, in I Jornadas de la Cátedra Gran Capitán (Córdoba: Montilla, 2003), 55–79. For a better understanding of this relationship, see the classic work by Benedetto Croce, España en la vida italiana del Renacimiento (Seville: Renacimiento, 2007).