

ORIENTALISM AND TRANSVESTISM:
GÓNGORA'S
"DISCURSO CONTRA LAS NAVEGACIONES"
(SOLEDAD PRIMERA)

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A glance at recent Gongorine scholarship reveals an increasing tendency to foreground the author's manipulation and subversion of traditional gender roles. In a psychoanalytic study attempting to identify a rebellion by the poet against incest prohibition, for example, Malcolm Read spotlights many instances—such as the feminization of Acis (*Polifemo*, vv. 275-279)—where conventional boundaries between male and female are transgressed or confused. Perhaps most notably, Paul Julian Smith has demonstrated a parallelism between Góngora's conflation of the *genres* of the epic and lyric, and his defiance of prevailing demarcations between *genders*. Such interpretations have done much toward overcoming the "critical idealist tradition" Read identifies (29).

The danger of this type of reading, however, lies in its tendency to disregard the political implications of Góngora's gender typing. Even in an article dedicated to so socio-historically specific a text as the "Discurso contra las navegaciones," Mary Gaylord Randel's attention to gender remains on the level of universalities, reducing each episode to the natural cycles of birth and death. In the present study, consequently, we shall attempt to restore to Góngora's gender typing in the passage its full political implications and to analyze, as Carroll Johnson has convincingly done in relation to the poet's "Contra una roma," the strategies by which the political other is contained through an association with the feminine. Góngora's inversion of gender roles, it will be argued, serves here a specific ideological function, which is not (as has been claimed) to subvert but rather to legitimate the Spanish imperial project.

The "Discurso" has long been a politically problematic text. Very shortly after its composition, Juan de Jáuregui writes that it would "[hacer] dar de cabeza por las paredes a cualquier hombre de juicio" (Gates, *Documentos* 126), and Salcedo Coronel, in 1636, repeats his frustration: "no dejaré de culpar a don Luis pues atribuye a la codicia, y no a una ambicion prudente la dilación de la Monarquía Española" (97). Contemporary criticism has attempted variously to problematize these judgments. On the

one hand, scholars have sought to mitigate the negativity of Góngora's *serrano* through reference to the literariness of the "Discurso." Merkl, for example, attempts to distinguish the character's views from the poet's, while Dámaso Alonso dismisses the former's trenchant tone, suggesting that the latter "se dejaba llevar por un ejercicio retórico con evidentes modelos clásicos" (*Estudios* 415). Taking the approach to an extreme, Hitchcock characterizes the "Discurso" as "an exercise in equivocation" which, constructed on hyperbole, is "couched in terms such that it cannot be taken seriously." His argument that "the phrase 'anegó en lágrimas' is a deliberate, though muted hyperbole" (87), however, borders on the oxymoronic, and other exaggerations he attempts to identify are regrettably more muted than hyperbolic. A second approach to the "Discurso," on the other hand, seeks to redefine the target of its attack deflecting attention from that traditionally understood, namely, Spanish foreign policy of the early modern period. Lía Schwarz Lerner and Melchora Romanos signal instead the poet's hesitance toward an emerging capitalist order, while Rivers and Sasaki see in Góngora's negativity an attempt to debunk official history and to reinstate a consciousness of "intrahistoria cotidiana" (Rivers 857) or the "unchroniced and deleted landscape of loss" (Sasaki 163).

The most common and perhaps most accepted modern judgment of the "Discurso," however, is undoubtedly that which centers most on its ambivalence. Beverly, in a seminal study, is at once conscious of "the temptation of the distant and dangerous" and "the tragic hubris of the Conquest, its illegitimacy, its power to make men the captives of false and cruel values" (67); and Romanos cites the *serrano's* simultaneous rejection of change and sense of "la atracción que la grandeza de los acontecimientos encierran en sí mismos" (49). Not dissimilar is the "actitud contradictoria" ("Historia" 60) identified by Jammes, who writes of a poet torn between "l'intensité de ses réactions à une certaine forme de pensée plus ou moins 'officielle'" (*Études* 144) and an "admiración" ("Historia" 59) or "visión exaltante de la belleza del planeta" (60).

The present analysis will attempt to problematize this ambivalence by proposing its conflictive discourses to be considerably more complex than has hitherto been allowed. We shall suggest that they respond less to personal irresolution as to the value of the expeditions than to a political program the poet subtly encodes through the manipulation of gender tropes. This program, it shall be argued, is concerned with the definition and strengthening of national identity and constructs towards its end a cultural alterity against which such collective sense of self might be forged. Differentiating rigidly between the conquests of East and West, Góngora engages in practices akin to those of the "Orientalism" Edward Said has identified and studied at length: he projects upon the East a vision which

“has less to do with the Orient than it does with ‘our’ world” (Said 12). As with many writers Said examines, moreover, Góngora’s will be seen to be a sensual, erotic and feminine Orient which contrasts directly with a more virile, potent and dominant West.

At the same time, however, we shall posit that the poet’s creation of a broad “Occidentalism” through opposition to a projected East works at the service of a more specific political agenda: the articulation of the value of the Spanish over the Portuguese. This corollary to the initial thesis rests on two considerations. First, Góngora appropriates the idea of accommodating the Horatian topos of the condemnation of “qui fragilem truci commisit pelago ratem primus” (“who first committed his frail bark to the angry sea”) (Carmina I, 3) to the contemporary discoveries from the *propemptikon* (farewell address) of Canto IV of Camoens’s *Os Lusíadas*. The “Discurso,” that is, represents a conscious response by a poet of imperial Spain to the national epic of Portugal. Second, the differentiation between the Spanish and Portuguese is supported by Góngora’s strict relegation of the West to Spain and the East to Portugal, despite historical overlaps (i.e. the Portuguese in Brazil). Both factors, we shall attempt to demonstrate, place the passage in dialogue with an other whose difference is foundational to Spanish national identity.

Orientalism in the “Discurso”

Hitherto, Gongorine scholarship has taken little note of this dichotomy and regarded the explorations, to cite Gaylord Randel, as “a single story, repeated over and over” (102). While Jammes advances somewhat with his affirmation that “La increpación se hace más directa y vehemente, por el paso al vocativo, con la evocación de las navegaciones portuguesas” (“Historia” 56), he never explicitly recognizes the structural importance of this distinction. The “Discurso” divides around verse 435 into two parts, each of seven groups of verses and of an almost identical number of lines. The initial half describes the exploits of the first sailor and of the Spanish expeditions of Columbus and Balboa, while the second deals with those of explorers of Portuguese origin, namely, Dias, Da Gama and Magellan.¹ This organizational principle accounts for the achronological presentation of Balboa (1513) before Dias (1488) and da Gama (1497-1498), which Gaylord Randel notes but does not resolve (101).

The Spanish expeditions and the voyages of the first sailor with which the former are by contiguity affiliated are marked for their virile, aggressive and violent character. The “marino monstruo” introduces “armas” into the sea in an act compared to the devastation occasioned by the Trojan horse (vv. 374), and his ship is likened to a scavenging bird who

preys on islands (vv. 394-96). In the first half of the speech, the metonymic replacement of ship by the aggressive image, tree, is repeated seven times; such substitution later occurs but once, with Magellan's "glorioso pino," and this, returning without its leader, is degraded to mere "nave" in verse 477.² The reference to the columns of Hercules in verse 402, similarly, creates a sense of assault.³ Columbus' subsequent penetration of the straits over which they preside marks a violent transgression of the paternal proscription which assures the stability of natural hierarchy; that is, he appropriates for mankind, the patriarchal position in the order of things. The most explicit act of virile, self-assertion over the father, however, is performed by Columbus' caravels, which "Abetos suyos tres aquel tridente / violaron a Neptuno" (vv. 413-14). Such overt rape of a father figure encapsulates the inversion of power structures and the empowerment of man over nature which come about with the advent of the new age. Reflecting this virile and violent coup, almost everything described in the first set of voyages is masculine or aggressive, from Neptune to the Lestrygonians, and their arrows to the sun and the "sierpe de cristal" (v. 426).

The *serrano's* presentation of the East, in contrast, is markedly more feminine and sensual. The verses, "los reinos de la Aurora [...] cuyos purpúreos senos perlas netas, / cuyas minas secretas hoy te guardan su más precioso engaste" (vv. 457-60), evoke the female body as erotic object and recall the sensuousness of Góngora's "La dulce boca que a gustar convida" (LXX) which also features Dawn's "purpúreo seno." To this depiction of the female body and of the feminine as secret, the poet couples an intensified use of sensory and sensual imagery such as "aromática selva" (v. 461), the rainbow-like plumage of the phoenix (vv. 462-64), "la escarlata, / tapete de la aurora" (vv. 475-76) and Diana's limbs as "de mármol pario / o de terso marfil" (vv. 488-89). The feminine East, like Cleopatra or Dido, exhausts her male visitor in sensuous dissipation and reduces his control and manliness: her very secretiveness—suggested by "secretas minas"—underlines the limits and impotence of his rationality before certain phenomena. The importation of spices from the East is characterized in the "Discurso" as a cause of the decadence of Rome and of the weakening and corruption of the *virtus* embodied by Cato and Lucretia. Actaeon, in lands such as these, falls prey to a female, the goddess Diana (vv. 486-90), and Tityos is foiled in his attempt at raping her and ultimately victimizes himself (v. 502). Entry into these lands, it is suggested with these mythological subtexts and the reference to "minas secretas," implies an attempt to penetrate the forbidden, an attempt which invariably backfires and results in the explorer's subjugation to the mysterious, threatening, feminine force.

At two points in the "Discurso," West and East are juxtaposed and contrasted. The first occurs with Balboa's discovery of the Pacific and the

beginning of the East, a journey which permits the importation of not only "las blancas hijas de sus conchas bellas, / mas los que lograr bien no supo Midas / metales homicidas" (vv. 432-34). The opposition between the violence inspired by Peruvian gold and the sensuality of the pearls summarizes the distinction between East and West in the "Discurso." The second figure who provides Góngora with an opportunity to contrast the two regions is Magellan, who abandons the realms entered through the columns of Hercules (v. 475) in order to reach "la escarlata, / tapete de la aurora" (v. 475-76). The imposing character of the Atlantic, associated with an omnipotent, virile hero, contrasts sharply with the luxuriousness of the Pacific. Their opposition, consequently, reinforces the dichotomy between the lands to which they correspond.

Gaylord Randel has written of the explorer's act as violation and of its object, the lands discovered, as feminine. Such a theory, however, does not take into account the fact that the shift in the text from aggressivity to sensuality accompanies, not landfall, but the movement from West to East and from Spaniards to Portuguese: the Panamanian isthmus with its Lestrygonians, after all, is decidedly masculine. Gaylord Randel's explanation, were it viable, would empty Góngora's manipulation of gender types of political content.

The dichotomy in the representations of East and West is further emphasized through Góngora's manipulation of intertexts. In the first part of the "Discurso," references to epic predominate as the *serrano* alludes successively to the Trojan horse, Mars and the Lestrygonians. The Hircanian tiger of the exordium (vv. 366-68) recalls the angry words of Dido in *Aeneid* IV (vv. 365-67) when the hero abandons her and the emasculating sumptuousness of Carthage to attend to civic duties and to the long wars which they will bring. In the description of the ancient and Spanish navigations, therefore, heroic, virile and military qualities are accentuated through the evocation of an epic milieu. In contrast, the allusions of the second part of the speech, featuring Actaeon (v. 490) and Phaeton (v. 468), signal, not Homer or Virgil, but Ovid whose poetic world is considerably less martial. Such patterns further corroborate the geographical differentiation which structures the "Discurso."

Another distinctive characteristic of the latter half is its introduction into the speech of a greater consciousness of peril and mortality. The section begins and ends with the image of the vulture (vv. 440, 502), an augur of death, and the seas through which its adventurers voyage are "estigias aguas" which open "sepulcros" (vv. 444-45). These funereal hints are elaborated as well through the intertexts selected. The fates of the mythological figures Actaeon, Phaeton and Tityos remind the reader, not only, as Sasaki has suggested, of Magellan's end (161), but of man's mor-

tality generally and of his potential to fail. Finally, it is noteworthy that the *serrano* evokes in these verses the phoenix's pyre in Arabia (v. 465).⁴ The association of the East with the interstices between the fabled bird's lives and with its deaths confirms Góngora's Orientalism: the East is, like woman, conceived as at once unknown and dangerous, a source of life but also of death. The relegation of the Portuguese to such a space, therefore, is a strategy of containment by which the poet, a second Atropos, puts the other to symbolic death.

Another technique of disarmament which depends on intertextuality can be seen in Góngora's handling of the Horatian topos in the exordium: In Camoens and the ancient models, the sin for which the first sailor ever to brave the waves is damned is that of having exposed mankind to the perils of the seas. The *senex* of *Os Lusíadas*, for example, exclaims angrily: "Que mortes! Que perigos! Que tormentas! / Que crueldades nelles experimentas!" (Canto IV, strophe XCV). In the rhetorical question which opens the "Discurso," however, Góngora refers, not to the danger, but to the barbarous, violent and violating character of the expeditions. Risk only enters in the second half of the speech where the *serrano* renounces "tan inciertos mares" (v. 499) and where Magellan's ship is consecrated (vv. 477-80)-much like the pilgrim's plank at the beginning of the poem (vv. 29-31)-to the memory of the perils it saw.

The *exvoto* of verses 477-80 recalls for Salcedo Coronel (113) the final strophe of Horace's ode I, v, in which the poetic voice, rejecting the tempestuous seas to which love for a fickle woman has condemned him, compares himself to a sailor hanging his "uvida [...] vestimenta" ("dripping garments") in Neptune's temple after escaping alive from great peril. The male lover here is disarmed before woman and ultimately must surrender, conscious of his inability to control her. The ur-sailor, in contrast, remains undaunted before such testy femininity. It might also be noted that in Propertius, another to take up the Horation topos, this enterprise is explicitly related to that of dominating women:

ah pereat, quicumque rates et vela paravit
 primus et invito gurgite fecit iter!
 nonne fuit levius dominae pervincere mores (l.17, vv. 13-15)

[Death to whoever first produced ships and sails and journeyed
 over the reluctant sea! Was it not easier to conquer my mistress's
 temper...?]

What is important here is not the plaintive speaker's hesitation but his estimation of the act of the first ever to set sail as one of triumphant masculin-

ity. The initial part of the *serrano's* speech foregrounds precisely this, reserving all references to peril for the second half where Horace's Pyrrha will prevail finding victims in the Portuguese explorers of the East.

The *serrano's* final dismissal of "tan inciertos mares / donde con mi hacienda / del alma se quedó la mejor prenda, / cuya memoria es buitre de pesares" (vv. 499-02) likewise provides an intertextual corroboration of the emasculation implicit in the second set of voyages. The words recall a *quintilla* of Lope de Vega's *Isidro* (1599) in another speech on the "Damn the first sailor" motif which has hitherto been overlooked by Gongorine scholarship, despite the poet's familiarity with the work:

¿Qué os contaré quanta hacienda
al mar entonces le di?
por salvarme el castor fui
que arroja la mejor prenda
rico entré pobre salí. (Tomo XI, 169)

In both passages, reference is made to wealth ("hacienda") which has been lost and to "la mejor prenda," which too is gone forever. In each, moreover, the rhyme *prenda/hacienda* foregrounds the common fate. The texts coincide thus in such a way as to suggest a conscious intertextuality in light of which the *serrano's* last verses would acquire new meaning. Lope's sailor's "mejor prenda" alludes to Juvenal's Satire XII where a traveler finds himself in danger so great he is almost reduced to the desperate measures of the beaver who, according to legend, resorts to self-castration when hunted: "imitatus castora qui se eunuchum ipse facit cupiens evadere damno testiculi" (vv. 34-36) ("like the beaver, who makes himself a eunuch, that he may escape—with loss of a testicle").⁵ The *serrano* in Góngora refers to his son with the expression, "mejor prenda," but the resonances of the Lope text in these verses simultaneously evoke another, more charged scene of desperation at sea in which masculinity is overtly threatened: the beaver's plight clearly contrasts, for example, the superhuman agency of Columbus in his ships' rape of Neptune.

Representation and intertextuality converge in Góngora to create a dichotomy between a virile, empowering West and a feminine and feminizing East. The poet seems here to employ the very strategies suggested by Camoens's old man, who advises Vasco da Gama's soldiers to find an other in Islam and thus to forge collective identity: "Não tens junto comtigo o Ismaelita / Com quem sempre terás guerras sobejas? / Não segue elle do Arabio a lei maldita, / Se tu pela de Christo só pelejas?" (Canto IV, strophe C). In the "Discurso," Góngora heeds this suggestion producing a highly Orientalist text; yet, ironically, the Eastern other against which he

delimits his nation's selfhood becomes Portugal, his own predecessor's domain.

Góngora's Venus Armata

Góngora's description in verses 379-92 of the astrolabe further corroborates the virile presentation of the expeditions in the West and offers a glimpse at the complexity of the technique here at work. In the first four lines, Góngora compares the relation of the compass magnet with its metal to that of ivy with the rock it binds:

Náutica industria investigó tal piedra,
que, cual abraza yedra
escollo, el metal ella fulminante
de que Marte se viste...

In what follows, we shall argue that the simile as written is built on a visual ungrammaticality, the full implications of which rely upon the reader's perception of the dissonance between tenor and vehicle, reality and representation.

Though Góngora equates "piedra" to "yedra" and "metal" to "escollo," the images of the comparison would more naturally be elaborated were metal to correspond to ivy and magnet stone to rock. This alternative organization would seem to be expected for several reasons. On the one hand, both the magnet, referred to as "piedra," and "escollo" are of the same material, stone. On the other, ivy and metal both serve in the images compared to enclose or cling, and their common function is reinforced by the notion of dressing implicit in the allusion to Mars' armor. Finally, in the *serrano's* earlier description of the tower in ruins, a passage which anticipates the "Discurso," ivy notably parallels armor in function:

...el que ves sayal fue limpio acero.
Yacen ahora, y sus desnudas piedras
visten piadosas yedras (vv. 216-18)

In their own ways, both "acero" and "yedra" serve to garb, and the similarity of their roles is underlined through their contiguity. The natural order of the comparison in the "Discurso," consequently, would seem to be other than the one Góngora elects. Indeed, the only apparent reason for it to be as actually written lies in the genders of the four terms—"piedra" and "yedra" are feminine, while "metal" and "escollo" are masculine—a motivation which once again draws attention to the importance

of gender.⁶

The traditional associations which accompany the metaphor of ivy or vines bound around trees or stones are markedly gendered. Conventionally, in European literatures, such images are symbols of connubial felicity and of the dependence of woman on man. In a *romance* in Cervantes' *La gitanilla*, for example, the Spanish queen is likened to a vine and directed to cling to her regal spouse, the elm: "Fecunda vid, / crece, sube, abraza y toca / el olmo felice tuyo" (69). The *Soledades*, however, as Smith has demonstrated with regard to the later wrestling scene ("Barthes" 91), retain these connotations only insofar as they contrast with what is actually presented in the tenor of the metaphor. In the passage at hand, whatever dependence the ivy or feminine element might have on the rock or male is overshadowed by the fact that the female position of the ivy is assigned in the tenor to the male component, the metal, and that the magnet assumes an assertive role as the subject of the clause: it is the female element which has both the male position and the active role. Her agency, moreover, is reinforced by the use of a strong subject pronoun ("ella") rather than the demonstrative ("ésta") proper for inanimate antecedents. Such usage suggests a note of personification.

The conjunction of a personified, female subject with the action of donning the armor of Mars recalls a mythological scene much in vogue, as Daniel Heiple has shown, in Spain in the Renaissance and Baroque. As the octaves of a sonnet from Lope de Vega's *Rimas* (1602) illustrate, the scene presents the goddess Venus playfully trying on the armor of her lover Mars, who sleeps beside her:

La clara luz en las estrellas puesta,
del fogoso León por alta parte,
bañaba el sol, quando Acidalia y Marte
en Chypre estaban una ardiente siesta.
La Diosa por hacerle gusto y fiesta,
la túnica y el velo deja aparte,
sus armas toma y de la selva parte,
del yelmo y plumas y el arnés compuesta. (Tomo IV, 259)

Góngora's reference to an "ella" who embraces the "metal [...] de que Marte se viste" evokes the story of this *Venus Armata* as a narrative subtext for the description of the compass. The choice of the verb "abrazar," on the one hand, places the action within the domain of the amorous, the jurisdiction of Venus as goddess of love. The emphasis on dress in the passage and *Soledades* generally, on the other, increases our awareness that hers is an act of donning: from the pilgrim's recovery of his garments in the opening

scene to the *serrano's* exchange, cited above, of "acero" for "sayal" to the reference to the heavenly "capa" (v. 384) in the verses immediately subsequent, a context is established in which garbing is consistently symbolic action. The very word order of verse 381 dresses "ella" in the steel, encompassing her between "metal" and "fulminante" in a verbal play reminiscent of the Horatian "Quis multa gracilis te puer in rosa" (What slender youth among many a rose).

The notion of an intertextuality between the passage and the mythological scene gains further validity on considering several extratextual supports. Explicating the same verses, Gates cites from Claudian a text which refers to magnet and metal as attributes of Venus and Mars respectively:

Effigies non una deis: sed ferrea Martis
 Forma nitet, Venerem magnetica gemma figurat.
 Illis conubium celebrat de more sacerdos.
 (*Magnes*, 25-27, cited in Gates, "Góngora's" 26)

[Each deity has his own image; Mars, a polished iron statue, Venus, one fashioned of the loadstone. The priest duly celebrates their union. (Trans. Platnauer)]

The excerpt provides a precedent for the association of the magnet with Venus, who is not mentioned directly in the Spanish. Góngora will not only invert Claudian's trope by swapping the roles of its tenor and vehicle but will also introduce into the system the action of dressing, which points the reader toward the classicizing scene popular at the time. Placing the Claudian metaphor of Venus as magnet and Mars as metal together with Gaylord Randel's vision of the compass as a "mujer vestida de hombre" (106), therefore, one deduces in Góngora's text a subtle reference to the playful, mythological episode.

Another confirmation of this association in Góngora is found in his *Polifemo* when Acis approaches the sleeping Galatea: "El bello imán, el ídolo dormido, / que acero sigue, idólatra venera" (vv. 197). If one follows Dámaso Alonso's paraphrase⁷ in which "idólatra" and "acero," are respectively appositives to the subject ("el bello imán") and object ("el ídolo dormido") of "venera," this sentence appears to be doubly chiasmic. Not only are the adjectives and nouns of verse 197 arranged in perfect chiasmus but the four half-verses repeat the pattern in such a way as to relate "ídolo" and "acero", on the one hand, and "imán" and "idólatra venera," on the other. This second chiasmus, read in light of Claudian's associations of Venus and the magnet and of Mars and metal, permits us to consider the passage as a mild allusion to the mythological scene to which we have

referred in regard to the compass of the "Discurso." Thus, while one axis of the chiasmus linking "dormido" with "acero" suggests the sleeping Mars, the other joins "imán" with "venera," a *figura etymologica* for Venus. The verses further corroborate Góngora's interest in the scene.

The two passages are important to one another for several other reasons. First, an acknowledgment, facilitated through their comparison, of the references to Mars and Venus in the *Polifemo* prompts the reader to recall the unfortunate denouement of these deities' love, discovered abruptly by Vulcan. Their story clearly parallels that of Galatea and Acis whose relationship will later be discovered by Polyphemus. Second, the passage in the *Polifemo* offers another example of the reversal of gender roles so central to Góngora's work. It is not Galatea, after all, but Acis who is equated with Venus. The text consequently provides a precedent for an ambiguous and somewhat masculine magnet: just as the "imán" here corresponds to a male, in the *Soledades* it will dress in a man's armor. Finally, it is noteworthy that in the *Polifemo* it is the magnet that follows the metal and not vice versa. The *Soledades* too assign the former the active role in the embracing.

In some Gongorine criticism, this forwardness of the magnet has generated certain critical confusion. In the verses which follow the initial simile, the element which acts continues to be the "piedra"

que, cual abraza yedra
 escollo, el metal ella fulminante
 de que Marte se viste, y, lisonjera,
 solicita el que más brilla diamante
 en la nocturna capa de la esfera,
 estrella a nuestro Polo más vecina,
 y, con virtud no poca,
 distante la revoca,
 elevada la inclina
 ya de la Aurora bella
 al rosado balcón, y a la que sella
 cerúlea tumba fría
 las cenizas del día. (vv. 380)

Robert Jammes's paraphrase for the Castalia edition of the poem, however, fails to admit this continued agency of magnet:

aquella piedra que tiene la propiedad de adherirse, como la hiedra al escollo, al acero replandeciente de que se viste el dios Marte y, lisonjera, se vuelve siempre hacia la estrella que brilla más vecina a nuestro polo septentrional. Cuando la Estrella Polar está lejos de esta piedra [i.e. de la aguja imantada

por la piedra], la atrae hacia sí; pero cuando está encima, la inclina, ya hacia el Oriente, rosado balcón de la Aurora bella, ya hacia la parte Occidental del Océano, tumba azulada y fría donde, al ponerse el sol, se encierran las cenizas del día. (277)

Jammes attempts to identify as the subject of "revoca" and "inclina," "estrella" or "diamante," rather than "piedra," and neglects the fact that the North Star, as direct object of the first verb of the sentence, could not become the subject of the second without the insertion of a demonstrative pronoun after the coordinating conjunction "y." His interpretation does not recognize that it is not the star which draws the magnet toward itself, but rather the magnet which moves the star. In his eagerness to identify a "magnífico y casi único ejemplo de poesía científica moderna" (276), Jammes is unable to perceive the incongruity implicit in the text: Góngora attributes to his compass an implausible degree of agency over Nature, a power which is at odds both with the technology of his day and the feminine gender of the subject. The technicism of his description of the North Star as "estrella a nuestro Polo más vecina" and the diamond "que más brilla" functions consequently to draw attention away from Góngora's heterodox presentation of gender roles and to mitigate the dissonance between representation and reality in the initial simile. Indeed, if one considers the tremendously active, domineering and masculine role assigned the female magnet ("ella") in these verses, the litotes "con virtud no poca" might be read as a *figura etymologica*, referring to the Latin *virtus*, a word related more to virility or manliness than to woman's chastity.⁸

The description of the compass, therefore, is realized through a narrative which specifically foregrounds an inversion of traditional gender roles. Venus' assumption of a powerful masculine vestment and role corresponds, in its broader context, to the virile and violent assertion of the Spanish expeditions and to their transgression of man's natural place. The allusion to the mythological scene thus can be situated within the framework of the Orientalist dichotomy, posited above, of East and West. The Venus who presides over the Occident is fully armed, masculine and capable of harnessing and reducing stars to her will.

The Aphrodite of the East, in contrast, is alluringly feminine. Describing Balboa's discovery of the Pacific, the future domain of Portuguese exploration and the beginning of the Orient, Góngora refers to its pearls as "blancas hijas de sus conchas bellas" (v. 432) in an image which seems to recall the birth of Venus. A similar passage from the *Soledad Segunda* reinforces this association:

sin velle al lascivo ostión el justo
 arnés de hueso, donde
 lisonja breve al gusto,
 mas incentiva, esconde:
 contagio original quizá de aquella
 que (siempre hija bella
 de los cristales) una
 venera fue su cuna. (vv. 83-90)

The relationship between shell creature and Venus is explicit here, and the repetition of the phrase "hija bella" in both texts corroborates verse 432 as a second allusion to the goddess in the "Discurso." The Pacific or East is thus identified at the outset of the latter half of the speech with a Venus who is the prototype of femininity and who stands in direct contrast to the *Venus armata* of the compass.

Moreover, within the *Soledades*, the poet establishes a clear relationship between the Portuguese and the image of Venus in her shell:

y el mar que os la divide, cuanto cuestan
 Ócéano importuno
 a las Quinas (del viento aun veneradas)
 sus ardientes veneros,
 su esfera lapidosa de luceros. (vv. 375-79)

The *figura etymologica* implicit in "veneradas" / "veneros," as well as in the reference to "luceros," evokes the image of Venus emerging in a shell ("venero") from the sea. As Jammes suggests in his critical edition, Góngora seems to hint at *Os Lusíadas* "donde esta deidad aparece siempre como protectora de los navegantes portugueses" (474). If the "Discurso" at large is a response to Camoens, Góngora's reference to the *Venus armata* might be regarded as a strategy, based on gender typing, of national one-upmanship. Like Juvenal and Lope's beaver-eunuch, the Venus who emerges in these eastern waters owes her existence to an act of emasculation, Jupiter's castration of Uranus.

Another case of the juxtaposition of the motifs of the birth of Venus and the *Venus armata* is Garcilaso's "Ode ad florem Gnidí" which makes references both to "la concha de Venus" (35) and "el aspereza de que estás armada" (25). In regard to this *canCIÓN*, Garcilaso criticism has addressed at length the implications of mythological allusion and generated several observations pertinent to the Góngora passage. First, Ignacio Navarrete cites Herrera's hesitation over the propriety of the shell imagery: "Fingen que Venus va en concha por el mar, dejando la causa principal, que no es tan honesta que la permita nuestra lengua; porque el mantenimiento de

este género conmueve el incentivo de la lujuria" (106). Reference to the shell of Venus, that is, would not merely evoke an aestheticizing, Botticelli-like image but would also incite a dangerous lust through the denotation of an erotic code-word. The "lujuria" implicit in the shell, Dunn and Navarrete suggest, has the potential to render man effeminate as occurs with Sybaris in the Horatian ode (I, viii) which serves as intertext to the poem (Dunn 143).

With reference to the second motif, on the other hand, Navarrete notes how in the traditional "Justa de Marte y Venus," Mars emerges triumphant as well as Venus. Thus, while Garcilaso provides a heterodox example in which the *Venus armata* continues the emasculation begun by Galeoto's imprisonment within the "concha," Góngora restores to the "Justa" a male-dominated power structure and subordinates female victory to its utility for man's purpose. The poet's *Venus armata*, after all, is an instrument (a compass), just as Venus is to Mars' pleasure. The female assumes the armor but is at once contained by it.

Recent criticism of Góngora has sought to foreground the feminine as threat. Malcolm Read affirms that woman in the poet's work "stands for the natural body, for the not-me that threatens to engulf the poet" (37). She is, as Johnson writes, "a dangerous Other who must be identified, stigmatized and kept at bay in order precisely to preserve the hegemony, and indeed merely the integrity of the masculine speaking subject" (34). In the "Discurso," as in "Contra una roma," Góngora deflects this peril onto the cultural other, who is made its victim. His rhetorical posture at the outset, thus, masks a strategy by which vulnerability to the feminine is transferred. A dangerous feminization of man in the Portuguese territory (through the agency of a Venus who depletes explorers' manliness) is opposed to a masculinization of woman in the Spanish (in the figure of the *Venus armata*). In this way, the much-noted inversion of gender roles in Góngora is subordinated here to a political end.

In light of this projection of victimhood onto the cultural other, Sasaki's postulation of a "Discurso" which "shatters the illusions of epic grandeur" (152) "which have allowed [readers] to 'deny,' and to 'forget,' the consequences of their actions" (163) becomes somewhat less tenable. Góngora numbers ultimately among the constructors of imperial illusions, and his initial recourse to the Horatian topos represents not so much a condemnation of navigation as it does a sign-post toward the intertext with which he is in dialogue. The *serrano's* speech consequently may be regarded as considerably less subversive than Sasaki, Jáuregui or Salcedo Coronel have intimated. His words erect with bricks of gender walls which at once support national identity and banish otherness.

Notes

¹Camoens's reference to Magellan in *Os Lusíadas* (Canto X) as fundamentally Portuguese in deed if not in loyalty justifies Góngora's placement of him among his compatriots.

²See Sasaki for an analysis of this metonymy.

³On the importance of Hercules in early Spanish historiography, see Israel Burshatin's "Narratives of Reconquest: Rodrigo, Pelayo, and the Saints."

⁴For a discussion of the phoenix, see Beryl Rowland's *Birds with Human Souls* 134-40.

⁵For an explanation of the symbol of the beaver, see Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces* 35-37.

⁶The placement of the four elements in stark chiasmus suggests the fluidity and interchangeability of their relationships to one another. It is noteworthy that the two terms which are said to do the embracing ("yedra" and "ella") are placed in the outer positions and thus further embrace at the level of word order.

⁷"hay que notar que los adjetivos *bello y dormido* obligan a entender que 'el bello imán que como acero él seguía, encontrándolo dormido lo veneró, ídolatra, como a ídolo.'" (Alonso, *Góngora* 670) It should be conceded that the syntax of these verses opens them to several interpretations.

⁸It is noteworthy that this is the only occurrence of the word "virtud" in the *Soledades* and *Polifemo*.

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