

GÓNGORA'S SEA OF SIGNS:
THE MANIPULATION OF HISTORY IN THE SOLEDADES

Betty Sasaki
Colby College

The Spanish Baroque is a conflicted and confusing moment in Spanish history—one in which Spain finds itself at the crossroads between traditional, societal organization and early modern politics. The decline of imperial power, and the subsequent economic and political crises which overtook Spain, gave rise to opposing views on expansion. As many literary critics and historians have noted, the state responded by imposing more rigid restrictions on writers and their work in an attempt to create one “official” discourse constructed upon the eradication or censorship of contradictions which might prove threatening to the state’s authority.¹ Spadaccini and Godzich observe that, as a part of this process, “the individual discourses lose their autonomy and, as a result of being integrated into the state’s totalization, their self-sufficiency as well. They are now fragments of a much larger whole, patches of a quilt. Their speakers also lose their autonomy and self-sufficiency, and must recognize that they are speakers of fragmentary discourses which can never be totalized. Only the state can achieve this totalization—at least such is the claim” (59-60). Yet, despite the mechanisms of institutionalized control, counter-arguments emerged, advocating reform and anti-expansionist policies. Moreover, at a time when art and politics were not clearly separated, literary patronesses of the court were also engaged in the contentious process of how to respond to the situation of imperial *descenso*.²

It is precisely within this controlling climate that Góngora writes the *Soledades*, initiating the long and vehement debate about the use and function of language. The fact that Góngora sided with the *pacifistas*—those who criticized prevailing expansionist policies—and that he was contemptuous of the rich, urban class who lived off the labor of the rapidly declining rural economy suggests that he, along with other writers of his day, was a critical voice con-

cerned with Spain's decline. When we consider that Góngora's detractors accuse him of heresy, amorality, and atheism,³ accusations based almost exclusively on questions of style and form, it becomes clear that deviation from literary decorum necessarily implied a deviation from ethical decorum. Indeed, the type of personal attack brought against Góngora in a public forum suggests that his language was seen as subversive to the extent that it defied literary convention.⁴ At a time when the state was attempting to circumscribe all discourse within fixed, ideological parameters, the question arises of how one can separate linguistic or syntagmatic subversion from political subversion. While I do not contend that Góngora was a revolutionary (he actively sought court patronage), I do support a reading of the *Soledades* as a critique of Empire—one which responds to the state's inability to create or imagine a solution to Spain's decline. According to John Beverley, Góngora's novel use of language is a response to living "in a country which has become 'historicized,' where nothing seems to hold firm. In such a situation the conventional forms of historical discourse—the chronicle, the imperialist epic, the sycophantic political biography—have lost their mimetic force, have become more mystification of history than attempts to render its inner logic. Hence the need for new forms of representation" (*Aspects* 87). I would add that along with new forms of representation, Góngora's linguistic innovations also respond to the need for new forms of understanding Spain's historical reality. Rather than subordinate his readers to a single, monolithic view of the world, Góngora seeks to empower his readers by soliciting their participation in the production of textual meaning. The method by which he approaches his readers is designed to promote action rather than passivity, skepticism rather than acceptance. Góngora's selection of an elite readership composed not only of educated but also politically powerful men confirms Beverley's assertion that Góngora understood the *poeta-vates* notion as one that also encompassed the idea of the poet as legislator: one involved in both the creation and questioning, rather than the mere affirmation of national conscience (*Aspects* 31).⁵

Limiting my discussion to the long epico-lyric section in the first *Soledad*, I propose to clarify how Góngora manipulates both rhetorical convention and historical discourse in order to modify his readers' conception of Spain's decline and its relationship to histo-

ry. At a time when providentialist views of history sought to explain the national crisis in purely moral terms, advocating a return to traditional moral values,⁶ yet tenaciously clinging to the myth of empire, the *Soledades* postulate a counter-argument which problematizes the decline as an historical issue as well. The alleged imbalance and apparent instability of his linguistic structures provide a poetic representation of a precarious, varied and contingent reality which challenges the notion of history as "epic" sublimation of Spain's political power (Beverley, "On the Concept" 225). Rather than resist history and "write" the expansion with epic proportions, Góngora shatters the illusions of epic grandeur by letting history in. The obscurity of his language arises from his refusal to organize for the reader the increasing number of historical contradictions and complexities generated by man's unbridled desire for wealth and power. By conflating genres, and placing before his readers a seemingly infinite number of linguistic possibilities, he is, in a sense, postulating a much more complex view of historical reality. It becomes the readers' task to contend with the complexities of the text in the activity of reading, just as it is the leaders' task to confront the contingencies of the world in the activity of governing.⁷

As I shall attempt to show, memory and imagination are key factors in both the readers' literary repertoire (the readers' previous exposure to literature), and the readers' world knowledge—what Eco calls their "encyclopedia of the world" which enables them to decode the text within the boundaries of institutionalized knowledge (*The Role of the Reader* 21). In terms of reader response and reception theories, the readers' arsenal of coded knowledge forms the basis of the expectations which they bring to the text.⁸ By altering the codes of rhetorical convention, or manipulating historical discourse, Góngora often subverts or frustrates his readers' expectations. The result of this type of linguistic manipulation challenges readers "to review the codes available to them, subject them to revision in order to accommodate new possibilities of meaning, and... to postulate new ones" (Goodrich 13). Thus, the readers' interaction with the text stimulates a "dialogue" between the readers' imagination and memory. What emerges is a dialectic between what is irrevocably lost, and what inevitably remains to be found. The past and future are thus fused in and mediated through Spain's historical present—a period that Beverley likens to Janus, the dou-

ble faced god with "one face peering perhaps at the sunset of feudalism, the other at the dawn of capitalism" ("On the Concept" 216).

The dialectic between memory and imagination, in the *Soledades*, is nowhere better exemplified than by the narrator of the passage on navigational history. Recognizing the alienated state of the shipwrecked pilgrim as he rests near a stream with other members of the wedding party, the old man is moved by memories of his own maritime experience, and ultimately, as we discover later on, of the death of his son:

De lágrimas los tiernos ojos llenos
reconociendo el mar en el vestido
(que beberse no pudo el Sol ardiente
las que siempre dará cerúleas señas),
político serrano,
de canas graves, habló desta manera: (360-65)

An ex-courtier who has willfully left the courtly life of the city to join the pastoral collective, the old man embodies a multiplicity of temporal perspectives. For he is not only a former witness to and participant of the past events which he narrates, but also a member and leader ("político serrano") of the present shepherd community. His decision to join the shepherds points toward the future, providing a different configuration of the topical *corte-aldea* antithesis which conventionally places the city at odds with the countryside.⁹ In this way, his position as narrator is both retrospective and prospective, both experiential and visionary. Thus, Góngora frames this section in memory so that, from the outset, the readers are confronted with a mythico-historical account which is underlined by personal experience. As a result, the readers, like the historical period in which they live, are also like the double-faced Janus, "oscillating between the plural and the singular, between the social and the individual, between the collectively shared and the personal framework that functions as the mold on which the experience is cast" (Goodrich 8).

While the shepherd-narrator functions as a bridge between individual narrative and official history, pastoral and epic, he is also a recognizable *senex* figure, the wise old man, whose presence sig-

nals to the reader that what follows will be a critical but prudent evaluation of a situation seen from the experienced eyes of the past. Although the thematic focus shifts away from the pastoral progression to the epic themes of war and greed, the complicated syntax and unrelenting accumulation of allusion and metaphor make it impossible for the reader to distinguish the narrative voice of the *viejo* from the third person narrator of the preceding passages. By virtually submerging the speaker's voice in a sea of signs, Góngora denies the reader the orientation traditionally offered by an authoritative poetic voice. In this way, Góngora's readers, like the pilgrim who must define the contours of the mountain with each unguided step, must decide for themselves the proper relation between Nature and Man, between past illusion and present reality.¹⁰ Thus the "lost" voice of the narrator obliges readers to assume responsibility for making their way through the linguistic confusion of the *Soledades*—a process which establishes their own "authority" in relation to the text.¹¹

In a subsequent passage describing the construction of seafaring vessels, Góngora further stimulates the dialectic between memory and imagination through a subtle but constant use of intra-textual references. The repeated, metonymic identification of seafaring vessels takes readers back to the original source, that is, Nature, which has supplied the raw material to build the ships:

Más armas introdujo este marino
 monstruo, escamado de robustas hayas,
 a las que tanto mar divide playas,
 que confusión y fuego
 al Frigio muro otro leño griego. (374-79)

The elemental nature of wood, which provided utility and comfort to the shepherds in the opening passages of the first *Soledad* are, in this instance, deceitfully crafted into artifacts of war.¹² Moreover, the metonymic identification of objects ("hayas" for the ship's planks, "leño" for the Trojan horse) shifts the emphasis away from the end product to the processes by which they come to be. As a result, Góngora's readers cannot maintain the distance from the text which would enable them to passively perceive the confusion described as a static "linguistic picture." The repeated use of the wood-for-wooden-artifact metonymy not only forces readers to

take the history of things into account, but also engages them in the activity of recreating their "history." The contiguous and continuous relationship between source and product must be filled in by the reader. Iser defines these gaps as "blanks" or places of indeterminacy in the text which arise precisely from the non-fulfillment of traditional literary functions. As reading strategies, these blanks indicate vacancies in the text which must be filled by the readers through a process of deciphering and combining the textual schemata provided. The result is an increased productivity or participation on the part of readers whose responsibility no longer entails the mere apprehension but also the creation of meaning in the text. In other words, readers must not only make connections between the textual schemata but also supply the codes which will enable them to grasp it. In the case of Góngora's metonymies, readers must recall the previous references to "wood" and synthesize those references into something new in order to successfully complete the process of ideation. Thus the readers who, by recognizing the flow of history and adjusting their perspective accordingly, must redeem the text from confusion. According to Iser, this transformative process has a catalytic function insofar as "it regulates the interaction between the text and the reader... through a history which is actually produced in the act of reading. This is the history of changing standpoints, and as a history it is the condition for the production of new ones" (*The Act of Reading* 212).

The insistence on processes of transformation suggests that historical time, as Góngora perceives it, cannot be ordered into a static, unchanging, social and natural background against which individual objects and events are set. By the same token, as the effects of time continually change the natural landscape so they will necessarily change the psychological and noetic landscape of man. The metonymic signifiers not only oblige readers to return to the initial moment of Nature's transformation into artifice, but also postulate Nature as a part of history, an earthly, mortal construct whose meaning depends upon man's ability to acknowledge and respond to her historical liability. In this way, Góngora's language elicits from his readers a reconstruction and re-evaluation of history by deconstructing and invalidating existing notions which hold fast to the illusion of national grandeur.

In the passage initiating the trajectory of maritime voyages, Góngora's use of intertextual references exposes the readers to another type of metonymic configuration which displaces conventional assumptions in order to stimulate new ways of understanding:

Tifis, el primer leño mal seguro
 condujo, muchos luego Palinuro;
 si bien por un mar ambos, que la tierra
 estanque dejó hecho,
 cuyo famoso estrecho
 una y otra de Alcides llave cierra. (393-402)

The allusions to Tiphys and Palinurus echo the epic texts from which they are drawn, thus requiring readers to activate their previous knowledge and experience with other texts.¹³ While intertextual references are a commonplace in seventeenth-century literature, Góngora does not employ them as mere edifying exempla. By naming the more obscure figures of the helmsmen rather than the heroes, Góngora uses Tiphys and Palinurus as metonymic representations for the epic voyages of Jason and Aeneas. The displacement of the main characters from the central position in the epic tale, like the reduction of objects to their elemental state, impedes readers from establishing direct correspondences between signifier and signified. Thus, Góngora's readers must generate an increasing number of intertextual connections in order to link given names to their corresponding source texts. As Goodrich observes in her discussion of the readers' use of intertextual codes, once these connections are established "there is a dissemination of meaning which spreads over both the pre-text (source) and the 'actual' text in a movement from one to the other which keeps renewing itself" (69).

By shifting the central identifying references away from the heroic main characters, Góngora alters the traditional, epic perspective which, by convention, celebrates the heroes' victories. While references to Tiphys and Palinurus provoke the readers' memory of the source text, they will also evoke the roles played by the minor characters as pilots. Rather than focus on the heroes' arrival, the emphasis here is on the helmsmen's guidance. In this way, history ceases to be defined by the conventionally narrow view of individ-

ual triumph and is enlarged to encompass a wide variety of details which do not easily fit into a predisposed, historical framework of events. In this case, Góngora's targeted readership will recall that the Argo's harrowing passage through the Symplegades was possible only with the helpful advice of the sage Phineus. Likewise, it was the supernatural power of the sorceress Medea which enabled Jason (who deceived her with the promise of marriage) to obtain the fleece once they arrived to Colchis. Similarly, Aeneas' pilot, Palinurus, despite his loyalty to the captain, was sacrificed to Neptune for the safe arrival of the hero. Thus, Góngora establishes an epic trajectory while at the same time subtly embedding within it the themes of greed and deception, betrayal and sacrifice.¹⁴

These very themes are developed in the following passage, wherein the epic discourse comes into contact with the historical chronicling of Spain's expansionist voyages. Yet here again the readers are confronted with another unexpected displacement of elements:

Piloto hoy la Codicia, no de errantes
 árboles, mas de selvas inconstantes,
 al padre de las aguas Océano,
 de cuya monarquía
 el sol, que cada día
 nace en sus ondas y en sus ondas muere,
 los términos saber todos no quiere
 dejó primero de su espuma cano,
 sin admitir segundo
 en inculcar sus límites al mundo. (403-412)

The temporal marker *hoy* abruptly brings the reader to the present where a new pilot, "Codicia," stands at the helm once occupied by Tiphys and Palinurus. Further, the metonymic contrast between "árboles" (individual ships) and "selvas" (fleets of ships) points out that specific, epic expeditions have been subsumed into the anonymity of a larger maritime enterprise. As a result of the contrasts, the journeys of Aeneas and Jason, symbolized by the "alado roble" and "primer leño" of the previous passage, lose the definitive edges which distinguish them from the scores of greed-driven voyages of the Spanish Empire. Rather than inflate the historical

trajectory to epic proportions, Góngora deflates the epic trajectory to mortal dimensions.

This distinction between epic and history is emphasized by the qualifier "inconstantes," a conventional love lyric term which, juxtaposed to the image of "árboles, suggests that the sense of individual destiny and heroic purpose has been replaced by human capriciousness. The limits once imposed by Nature in the previous description of the Mediterranean Sea ("que la tierra / estanque dejó") are now transgressed as man sails out to open sea which, like Spain's world empire, constitutes a boundless monarchy.

As the new pilot, "Codicia," steers her ships outside the parameters of a mythical framework and into the sea of historical time, the natural forces which once governed and shaped the destinies of a Jason or an Aeneas, like Góngora's language, seem to lose their power to signify. Rather than supply the reader with the uni-directional syntactical paths of least resistance by trimming away contradictions and providing a strong speaker, Góngora's manipulation of syntax increases the scope of possible courses of action available to readers. The unique structuring of this passage wherein the first six lines introduce three possible subjects ("Codicia, Océano, Sol"), while the closing five verses contain a barrage of verbs ("nace, muere, quiere, dejó, admitir, inculcar") sharply increases the number of possible agent-action combinations. Here, as in many instances throughout the *Soledades*, linguistic excess suggests that "meaning" cannot be contained, that no single discourse can provide totalizing coherence. Consequently, it becomes the readers' task to take the helm of their own vessel in pursuit of structural coherence.

In the penultimate stanza of this section, Góngora's description of Magellan's circumnavigation of the globe points out the difficulty of circumscribing all discourses into one official voice. This is the only voyage which Góngora describes from its outset to its end—a trajectory that follows a circular path suggesting closure and completion:

Zodíaco después fue cristalino
a glorioso pino
émulo vago del ardiente coche
del Sol, este elemento,

que cuatro veces había sido ciento
doxel al día, tálamo a la noche,
la bisagra, aunque estrecha, abrazadora
de un océano y otro siempre uno,
o las columnas bese o la escarlata
tapete de la Aurora. (466-76)

Góngora alludes to this circularity in the opening verses by comparing the sea to the Zodiac (which in the seventeenth century was understood to encircle the earth and divide the sky into four equal parts) and the ship's movement to the course of the sun. Yet, the choppy, complicated syntax of these verses destroys their structural coherence just as man's seafaring expeditions have fragmented the world into separate geographical pieces defined only for their economic value. Rather than provide a rhetorical map which corresponds to a preconceived view of the world, Góngora obliges his readers to produce that map for themselves as they move out onto previously uncharted textual waters. In other words, past readings alone will not allow readers to successfully decode the present text. It is only through the deployment of their imagination that they can move beyond the textual impasses as they create new codes of reading that combine the known and the unknown, the conventional and the novel; the past and the future.

The most significant transformation, however, occurs in the last four lines of the passage:

Esta pues nave, ahora,
en el húmedo templo de Neptuno
varada pende a la inmortal memoria
con nombre de Victoria. (477-80)

In stark contrast to the generic anonymity of previous metonymic references to seafaring vessels, the ship is identified as "nave," its proper cultural signifier. From the image of the "glorioso pino" at the beginning of the stanza to the finished product of the ship here at the end, the readers' textual voyage seems to end, like Magellan's, exactly where it began. However, despite the appearance of closure this passage signals a beginning. For in the midst of Góngora's varied and confusing linguistic indirection, the direct and com-

mon term *nave* appears strange and oddly unfamiliar. By shrouding in artifice the ordinary and natural aspects of the world, Góngora has taken his readers through a slow, but calculated process of defamiliarization. Having journeyed through the difficult and constantly changing terrain of Góngora's linguistic *selva*, readers have not only learned, but also come to expect, to see the world in a different way whereby they can no longer assume a "natural" correspondence between signifier and signified.¹⁵ Instead, they must now see the term as a cultural construct—one of the many signs whose meaning is only as fixed as the system to which it belongs. By undermining the mimetic codes of representation, Góngora leaves his readers without conventional recourse and requires them to use their "imaginative knowledge" in order to transform symbols into a system of communication. According to Mario Valdés, "imaginative knowledge is not acquired by passively permitting an influx of sensations to enter the knowing mind; it must be constructed" (276). Thus, it is not only particular terms whose meanings are called into question, but the entire discursive system which claims to fix those meanings. Góngora's manipulation of language is, in this sense, a strategy designed to punch holes in the state's claim to a totalizing discourse.

The last stanza, which takes readers back to the events leading up to the discovery of the Mollucan Islands, exemplifies the way in which Góngora lets history in. Here, the image of the *Victoria*, potential symbol of Spain's epic achievement which seemingly "closed" the previous stanza, dissolves, giving way to a landscape of death and violence:

De firmes islas no la inmóvil flota
 en aquel mar del Alba te describo,
 cuyo número, ya que no lascivo,
 por lo bello agradable y por lo vario
 la dulce confusión hacer podía,
 que en los blancos estanques del Eurota
 la virginal desnuda montería,
 haciendo escollos o de mármol Pario
 o de terso marfil sus miembros bellos;
 que pudo bien Acteón perderse en ellos. (481-90)

The earlier emphasis on the circularity of Magellan's voyage, described in the preceding passage, shifts as the narrator alludes to the missing center, concentrating now on the suppressed "story"—Magellan's arrival at the island of Cebú where he is killed in battle by the island's inhabitants. Although the narrator never refers directly to the death of the explorer (who never makes it back to Spain), it is contained within the narrative's mythological allusion to Acteon who, like Magellan, inadvertently discovering the islands, encounters Diana and her huntresses. By transforming the hunter into the hunted, the violator into the victim, the comparison between Magellan and Acteon evokes that darker reality concealed beneath the mask of myth—a reality that underscores the precariousness of human control and mortal intention.

The intertwining of myth and history erodes the ideological foundations of empire by alluding to the paradoxes in the enterprise. Readers will recall that the *Victoria's* arrival in Spain was preceded by the death of Magellan who, like Acteon, is presented as the unwitting victim of his own desires. Although Juan Sebastián de Elcano continues the voyage to the long-sought Mollucan Islands, the irony of the Acteon myth also pervades this apparent victory. For the captured spice trade, like the slaughtered deer, is a deceiving prize—one that disguises and obscures the contradictions and contingencies of apparent success.¹⁶ Such paradoxes raise serious questions concerning both the ethical legitimacy of the conquest as well as its political and economic soundness. Was the *Victoria's* triumph the circumnavigation of the globe or the discovery of the Spice Islands? Was Magellan's death a heroic sacrifice or an inconsequential loss in the larger, imperialist trajectory of the voyage? Indeed, was the monopolization of the spice trade the triumphant beginning of an economic boom or the tragic onset of Spain's decline? Góngora responds to these questions in the last half of the stanza by comparing Spain's decline to the greed-induced fall of the Roman Empire:

El bosque dividido en islas pocas,
fragante productor de aquel aroma
que traducido mal por el Egipto,
tarde le encomendó el Nilo a sus bocas,
y ellas más tarde a la gulosa Grecia,

clavo no, espuela sí del apetito,
 que en cuanto conocelle tardó Roma
 fué templado Catón, casta Lucrecia,
 quédese, amigo, en tan inciertos mares,
 donde con mi hacienda
 del alma se quedó la mejor prenda,
 cuya memoria es buitre de pesares. (491-502)

In much the same way that he conflates modes and genres as a means of undermining the stability of established codes, Góngora here conflates meanings. Constructing a clever conceit around the polysemic value of "clavo," Góngora accuses the Egyptians of mistranslating ("traducido mal") the clove spice, naming it for its physical similarity to a nail ("clavo"). Instead, he identifies the spice as a spur ("espuela"), insisting on the conceptual similarities between the two objects as catalysts, the clove spice being the stimulus, or spur, to unbridled appetite or greed. Of equal interest is the term "traducir," which also contains multiple definitions, ranging from translation, to transportation, to transformation (*Diccionario de Autoridades* 314). Besides Góngora's obvious condemnation of the spice trade, this conceit also postulates language as a commodity whose value is neither inherent nor absolute, but rather assigned by the interaction, the "transportation" of meaning, between sender and receiver. This constant insistence on exchange is the dialectical dynamic enacted by Góngora's readers with the text, a necessary condition for developing new ways of understanding history. The translation conceit also serves as a warning to readers against the dangers of misreading both the textual and historical signs. It is a process which, as we have seen, entails the recovery of "missed" readings—the fragmented accounts, buried beneath or cut off from the state's ideologically coherent edition of history. Thus, as the passage comes to a close, the readers discover that the memory of Magellan's death contains yet another memory—the unchronicled death at sea of the old narrator's son "cuya memoria es buitre de pesares."

Memory as a "scavenger of grief" is a fundamental element informing Góngora's problematization of the imperialist project, for it allows him to conjoin both the ethical and historical dimensions to Spain's decline. His manipulation of language allows him to

inscribe within historical discourse the unchronicled and deleted landscape of loss. Rather than "rewrite" or directly "supplement" what has been censored, his language stimulates the reader to fill in those silences. Seen from this perspective, Góngora's preoccupation with the past is not merely a conventional pastoral longing to recuperate what has been lost. Instead, it is the desire to recuperate the memory of what has been lost; and, by so doing, to reclaim its significance in the trajectory of Spanish history. It is that recognition of loss which motivates and frames the old man's account of Spain's maritime enterprise, which ends as it begins—with his inarticulate "suspiros y lágrimas." Similarly, the linguistic gaps created by Góngora's fragmented and convoluted language are the textual inarticulations which must be decoded by readers—a process which requires the constant recollection of what has come before in order to move through the text. In this sense, the readers' progress follows a movement forward while looking back. The value of the exercise is reflected again in the figure of the old man who, despite his despair, has forged a new order among the shepherd community. As he himself claims in a passage only thirteen lines after the discourse on navigation, "Cabo me han hecho, hijo/ de este hermoso tercio de serranas." The juxtaposition of the two speeches suggests that his success as a leader is informed by the acknowledgement of his earlier failures.

By pointing out the impossibility of escaping historical liability, Góngora is not advocating a passive acceptance of the inevitable. Instead, as readers engage in the deliberative processes necessary to make meaning from chaos, they are tearing down the illusions which have allowed them to deny, and to "forget," the consequences of their actions in the world. At the same time, his linguistic innovations do not signal a complete break or *ruptura* from the past poetic tradition, but rather an opening or *apertura* in the codes which no longer correspond to the historical complexities of this time. By manipulating the very rules of rhetoric which should provide coherence to the text, Góngora's language reflects the destructive repercussions of his government's resistance to history. As the readers intervene to restore signifying power to language and to fill in the missing textual gaps, they are also recovering the memory which will enable them to re-imagine the unofficial, untold episodes which have been subsumed into the totalizing voice of the

state. The experience of reading the *Soledades* thus becomes an exercise in both autonomy and responsibility—one in which readers act prudently, as textual legislators, in the same way that Góngora would have the individual act in relation to the world.

Notes

¹Elliott, *Spain and Its World* describes the some of the state's measures to counteract its growing unpopularity during the seventeenth century: "But the government did not restrict itself to repressive measures. It also sought, where possible, to seize the offensive, mobilizing court preachers, playwrights, and artists on its behalf. There was no equivalent in Spain to the Gazette founded in France in 1631 by Théophraste Renaudot with Richelieu's blessing, but there was an unending stream of *avisos* and *relaciones* conveying officially inspired or authorized information" (183). For an examination of the effects of censorship on writing and reading, see Patterson. What is germane to the situation in Spain is Patterson's framing of her study within the larger context of early, modern European culture "when all major European powers were themselves emergent nations, engaged in a struggle for self-definition as well as for physical territory, and when, in consequence, freedom of expression not only was not taken for granted, but was a major subject of political and intellectual concern" (5).

²See Rama for a discussion of the role of the writer as a political-moral leader within the institutionalized parameters of the state.

³For specific examples of accusations of heresy and atheism brought against Góngora, see Cascales, Jáuregui, and the anonymous author of "Carta de un amigo" (Góngora, *Obras*, III, 268-72). Collard discusses at length the moral attacks brought against Góngora's new style by his detractors.

⁴For more detailed discussion of "subversive" literature in seventeenth-century Spain, see Elliott, "Concerto Barroco," and Beverley, "On the Concept of the Spanish Baroque."

⁵Beverley further notes that the goal of this type of literature was "to intervene in the discrete circuits of power and patronage" ("On the Concept" 218).

⁶Elliott terms this particular explanation as "supernatural," insofar as Spain's decline was seen as a consequence of God's wrath: "This did not necessarily mean, however, that God had cast it [Spain] aside forever. On the contrary, disaster might even be represented as cause for hope, as it was by the Jesuit Pedro de Ribadeyra. The disaster was, he argued, yet another sign of God's special favor, since it would oblige Castilians to

strengthen their faith, purify their intentions, and reform their manners and morals" (*Spain and Its World* 247).

⁷Beverley points out that, during the Spanish Golden Age, art and politics were not clearly separated. He further remarks that the highly rhetorical and explicitly literary writing styles that emerged at this time were seen as "effective...in forming a guide to statecraft or 'mirror of princes'—particularly in a situation of imperial *descenso* where new forms of political imagination and practice were urgently needed" ("On the Concept" 220).

⁸The literature on reader response theories is vast, but see especially Culler, Eco, Iser, and Jauss.

⁹Góngora's modification of the *corte-aldea* opposition is also evident in his juxtaposition or overlaying of images which pose nature alongside artifice. The fascinating description of the course of the sun within the architectural spaces of a bed and a room in the penultimate stanza of this section is one of many such examples. Beverley asserts that such images "serve as terms of a dynamic model, the poem itself, which invites the city to be more like the countryside and the countryside to be more like the city" (*Aspects* 78). His observation suggests that Góngora's pastoral landscape exceeds conventional configurations. The old man, in this instance, represents an extension and modification of the "Guevarian" courtier whose presence in the *aldea* excludes any real interaction with its inhabitants. For more discussion on Góngora's novel combination of nature and urban images, see Woods.

¹⁰Molho discusses the structure of the *Soledades* as a metaphor which equates the pilgrim's journey through the pastoral landscape with the poet's composition of the work, and the reader's journey through the textual landscape.

¹¹According to Beverley, the old man's loss and longing are stimulated in the reader through Góngora's use of language. By placing the reader in an unfamiliar landscape without conventional guides, the reader, like the old man in relation to his dead son, or like the pilgrim in relation to his absent beloved, experiences a similar longing—one which constantly asks to be reunited with what has been lost (*Aspects* 25).

¹²At the beginning of the first *Soledad* the recently shipwrecked pilgrim finally discovers the shepherds when he sees their campfire, which Góngora describes with the following "natural" images: "El can ya vigilante / convoca, despidiendo al caminante, / y la que desviada / luz poca pareció, / tanto es vecina, / que yace en ella robusta encina, / mariposa en cenizas desatada" (84-89).

¹³In his discussion of mythological allusions, Eco notes that such signs involve "at once a precise cultural-mythological signifier and the stream of connotations that the very memory of the character discloses" (*The Open*

Work 36). See also Valdés who suggests that mythological images are a form of historical consciousness to the extent that they invoke in readers a sense of prehistory.

¹⁴Pastor notes that colonized natives astutely "fed" the conquerors' desire for and expectation of finding wealth in the New World by inventing and sustaining myths that would lead the Spaniards to their own demise in the process of searching. In a note on this section, Pastor adds that "this is the same mechanism that several years later Cervantes would explore in *Don Quijote*" (161). I would suggest that Góngora similarly explores this mechanism in the *Soledades*. Beneath the mask of the myth of empire he conceals a darker reality—one that the readers must confront as they search for textual meaning.

¹⁵Smith describes Góngora's means of conveying this idea as "emphatic"—a process whereby "language itself is denaturalized and its representational function can no longer be taken for granted" (73).

¹⁶Góngora's insistence on pointing out these contradictions echoes the views and critiques made by many *arbitristas* who sought to reform the political economic policies of their country. See Martín González de Cellorigo, *Memorial de la política necesaria y útil restauración de la república de España* (Valladolid, 1600), as quoted by Beverley: "el no haber dinero, oro ni plata, en España, es por averlo, y el no ser rica es por serlo: haziendo dos contradictorias verdaderas en nuestra España, y un mismo subjecto" (*Aspects* 116).

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