

Trajectories of Hermeticism amid the Ruins of Colonization: Beyond Góngora's Humanist Circle

Crystal Anne Chemris

(Courtesy Assistant Professor of Spanish, University of Oregon)

In a previous study, I investigated cases in which the Spanish baroque poet, Luis de Góngora, stages an encounter between European hermetic symbolism and indigenous and Morisco signs (Chemris 2018, 2021). I would now like to contextualize this encounter in greater detail within Frances Yates's classic portrait of the Hermetic tradition in Europe, in order to describe relevant trajectories and varieties of Hermetic experience. These, in turn, will allow me to highlight a later structurally homologous case in the interaction of the fragmented signs of Vodou and Freemasonry, described by Susan Buck-Morss in her groundbreaking work, *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History*. In so doing, I will provide a map of possibilities for better understanding the fragmented representation of colonized subjects more generally in the literature of the Spanish early modern and its sequels.

While Carmen Bernand mentions Frances Yates's work only in passing in her biography of Inca Garcilaso, she does situate the mestizo writer's indigenous perspective in dialogue with the Renaissance milieu of Neoplatonism, Cabala, Solomism, and utopian projects such as Tommaso Campanella's *City of the Sun*. These spiritual and philosophical currents are all touchstones of hermeticism, and thus I take her studies of Inca Garcilaso's Cordovan humanist circle—which included Góngora—as a point of departure.¹ I also continue Bernand's interest in parallels between colonized figures in the intellectual life of the early modern and the Enlightenment as well as her interest in the socialist trajectory of messianic thought.² Where I hope to expand her studies is by considering Yates's work in greater detail, and in light of Yates's concordance with more recent research in intellectual and Morisco history. I will begin by reprising and reflecting on the relevant signposts of Yates's *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*. As I am not a historian, my focus will be on advancing literary studies through greater contextualization.

Frances Yates and the Renaissance Hermetic Tradition

Frances Yates locates the beginning of the Renaissance hermetic tradition in the work of Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), and specifically in his Latin translation of his patron's newly acquired Greek manuscript of ancient theology (or *prisca theologia*), which was brought to Florence in 1460 (12-14). This *Corpus hermeticum*, allegedly the work of Hermes Trismegistus (“the Thrice Great One”) who was identified with Thoth, the Egyptian god of wisdom, was believed to be the “fount of pristine wisdom” (13, 2, 6). The corpus contained several treatises of ancient Egyptian knowledge, philosophy, “arcane mysteries,” and magic, which gains new currency for its association with the discovered manuscript (14, 15, 18). Ficino was also drawn to another work by an Arabic writer of the Egyptian hermetic tradition, the *Picatrix*, a treatise of sympathetic and astral magic, with particular reference to talismans as cures for disease (49). The *Picatrix* contains a description of a city in Egypt, Adocentyn, a “magical utopia” ruled by a

¹ See Bernand 2006 and 2011, for example. I will also acknowledge Mercedes Blanco's brief mention of the trajectory of hermeticism in reference to Góngora's use of the paradigm of “el obelisco verde” in the *Soledades*, which she associates with initiation into the mysteries of his poetic world (2012b, 460).

² See Bernand 2009, a comparative essay on Inca Garcilaso and Ouladah Equiano.

philosopher-magician-priest, an apparent prototype for other utopias in the hermetic tradition, which notably houses a temple to the sun (54-55; 370).

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), and Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639) continue Ficino's project, which became associated with a climate of religious heterodoxy, the rise of science, and utopian politics. As Yates explains, Giordano Bruno "saw the Egyptian magical religion as really Neoplatonic theurgy and ecstasy, the ascent to the One" (273), noting that Giordano Bruno's vision of unity "came at the end of that sixteenth century with its terrible exhibitions of religious tolerance, in which men were seeking in religious Hermeticism some way of toleration or union between warring sects" (273). In this context, Hermeticism becomes associated with various forms of Christian Hebraism. Pico had earlier revived Cabalism, as it was developed in Spain during the Middle Ages, based on the Hebrew alphabet and its explorations of the name or names of God, with its endless possible combinations of Hebrew letters (923). In a similar vein, Giordano Bruno compares his Petrarchan love poems to Solomon's Canticle (286). The implication of hermeticism in such Christian Hebraism is thus one backdrop to the literary expression of Spanish mysticism. Furthermore, as Yates writes, "Bruno's use of love emblems with mystical meanings [...] is remarkably similar in its method to the transposition of 'profane' love emblems into the emblems of 'sacred' love in the Jesuit religious emblem books of the early seventeenth century" (286). Thus, we must allow for a possible crossover effect between the emblem and the hermetic tradition in our reading of early modern imagery.³

Curiously, Bruno espouses Copernicanism as a portent of the return of the magical religion of the Egyptians which predated Christianity (155, 352). As Yates illustrates, Nicholas Copernicus's scientific theory of heliocentrism, based on mathematical calculations, was thus paradoxically introduced in "the atmosphere" of the Hermetic "religion of the world" (153).⁴ So too were Galileo's theories, as Tommaso Campanella in his 1632 correspondence with the astronomer "assures Galileo that he is constructing a new theology which will vindicate him" (383).

Campanella's utopian politics evinces similar tensions between scientific ambition and medievalism. In 1599, in the atmosphere of millennial prophecy, he organized the Calabrian revolt, what Yates describes as "a revolutionary movement aimed at throwing off the Spanish rule in the kingdom of Naples and substituting for it a wildly utopian republic, a magical City of the Sun, of which Campanella was to be head priest and prophet" (361, 386). The uprising was put down and Campanella was imprisoned with his fellow Dominican rebels (365). Campanella then composes from prison his *Città del Sole* or *City of the Sun* (1602; rev. ed. 1623), a work in which Yates signals Greek and Hebrew influences (in Plato's *Republic* and the figure of Solomon's temple), but primarily the Egyptian hermetic precedent of the *Picatrix* (367, 369, 371). Yet she insists that Campanella's utopian vision was not that of a "liberal revolutionary" (387). Rather, [h]is ideal was an all powerful theocracy like that of Egypt, so powerful that it regulated by scientific magic the celestial influences and through them the whole life of the people," an ideal he hoped to extend through Catholic evangelization (387-88). In light of the defeat of the revolt, Campanella looked to orthodox channels for the realization of his vision: the Spanish monarchy, the Pope, and later the French monarchy (386). Where Giordano Bruno had

³ See Blanco 2012b, 276-82.

⁴ Copernicus's *De revolutionibus orbium caelestium* was written between 1507 and 1530 and published in 1543 (Yates 153).

placed his hopes in Henry IV, Campanella looked to a united and reformed Catholic world in the reign of Louis XIV, “le roi Soleil” (390-91).

The Hermetic tradition undergoes a fundamental shift, however, when subjected to the textual criticism and dating which Mercedes García Arenal and Fernando Rodríguez Mediano observed as pivotal in Spanish intellectual history (395-421; Cf Yates 395). As Frances Yates points out,

the dating by Isaac Casaubon in 1614 of the Hermetic writings as not the work of a very ancient Egyptian priest but written in post-Christian times, is a watershed separating the Renaissance world from the modern world [...]. It shattered the position of an extremist Hermetist, such as Giordano Bruno had been, whose whole platform of a return to a better ‘Egyptian’ pre-Judaic and pre-Christian philosophy and magical religion was exploded by the discovery that the writings of the holy ancient Egyptian must be dated, not only long after Moses but also long after Christ. It shattered, too, the basis of all attempts to build a natural theology on Hermeticism, such as that to which Campanella had pinned his hopes (398).

Hermeticism now enters a “post-Casaubon” era, represented by three philosophers highlighted by Yates: Robert Fludd (1574-1637), Johann Valentin Andreae (1586-1654), and Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680) (403).

Fludd and Andreae were connected to the Rosicrucians, a clandestine society which originated in Germany “in a Lutheran milieu” and which, in Yates’s view, “represent the tendency of Renaissance Hermetism and other occultisms to go underground in the seventeenth century” (407).⁵ Andreae also had ties to Campanella and authored his own utopia based on Campanella’s work, proposing a Christian union, also called the City of the Sun (413-14). Yates suggests that the legacy of Bruno converged with Rosicrucian ideas to produce Freemasonry in England (274, 415). These branches of the Hermetic tradition, Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry, impact later developments in Hispanic literature of the Enlightenment and avant-garde, as Hermeticism reclaims terrain in the imaginary of revolutionary politics and also evinces the possibility of a shift from the religious to the aesthetic sphere, the latter in a phenomenon which Joshua Landy has termed “secular re-enchantment.” One need only consider, for example, Rubén Darío and Delmira Agustini’s embrace of French Symbolism, influenced as it was by the occult world of the Rosicrucians, or the association of the “New Jerusalem” with later utopian projects, echoing the figure of Solomon’s temple in Campanella’s work, but in secular terms.

The third figure, Athanasius Kircher, in Yates’s view, represents “a last full flowering” of “Renaissance hieroglyphic lore,” interpreting “hieroglyphs as symbols containing hidden divine truths,” and “expanding it with enormous labour and pseudo-archeology” (417). García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano similarly see in Kircher’s work the “culmination of a cultural effort to restore a magical-hermetic vision of the world, in contrast to the one imagined by ‘mechanical philosophy’” (417). Yet they also signal a striking paradox in Kircher’s ideas:

For Kircher, the truth of Christianity already inferred in the ancient truth that lay hidden in Egyptian hieroglyphics. But this view had its own radical consequences: if it were possible to relate Christianity to original truth, what

⁵ The Rosicrucian manifesto was published in 1614 (Yates 408).

would be the role of Holy Scripture? If the Bible no longer had value as Revelation, the way was opened to all sorts of deist thinking that could defend a universal and original revelation and thus erase the boundary between sacred and profane history (417).

Thus, just as hermeticism was, ironically, a culture medium for the development of early modern science,⁶ so too was hermeticism—now in its final flowering—a step to the secularization of history, its establishment as a modern discipline.

No early modern Hispanic writer has been more identified with Athanasius Kircher's hermeticism than Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz,⁷ fueling debates over the degree to which her poetry was more focused on the scientific or the aesthetic, particularly in contrast to the work of her contemporary, Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora.⁸ Luis Rodríguez Rincón nuances this debate productively by shifting the focus to Sor Juana and Sigüenza y Góngora's common *criollo* "anxiety about indigenous [...] knowledge" in their engagement with both the poetic myth and early modern science of the European tradition (177). In so doing, he raises the issue of the epistemological encounter between Europe and its colonized peoples which will be the focus of the two moments I have proposed to examine: Góngora's juxtaposition of European hermetic symbolism with indigenous and Morisco signs, and a later homologous case in the fragmented interaction of the imagery of Vodou and Freemasonry associated with the Haitian revolution.

Góngora's Humanist Circle and the Hermetic Tradition

To fully grasp the significance of Góngora's poetic imagery, it is first necessary to understand his engagement with the "parallel colonialisms" of the Moriscos and the indigenous (to use García Arenal's term) and with the political controversies within his humanist circle (García Arenal 1992). Two such controversies are those concerning the expulsion of the Moriscos as well as the so-called "Lead Books" and Turpiana parchment of Granada, fabricated archeological finds held to be evidence for an early Arab Christianity in the region, vindicating the Christian heritage of Granada's once Islamic population as well as the sacred origins of the city (García Arenal 2006; García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano 13-34; and Fuchs, *Mimesis* 99-117). Responding to these issues, Góngora's humanist mentor, Pedro de Valencia, composed a major treatise in opposition to the Morisco expulsion, arguing instead for more rigorous evangelization and methods of assimilation (*Tratado acerca de los moriscos de España*, 1606). He also wrote a polemic disputing the authenticity of the parchment and Lead Books (*Discurso sobre el pergamino y las láminas de Granada*, 1607).

Góngora takes up these controversies in his work. Góngora introduced a camouflaged poetic protest against the Morisco expulsion into his major lyric poem, the *Soledades*, thereby incorporating the sentiments of Pedro de Valencia as well as those of his regional patrons, the dukes of Medina Sidonia, who opposed the expulsion, defending their Morisco vassals.⁹ Yet, in an apparent break with Valencia, Góngora wrote a panegyric sonnet hailing the Lead Books

⁶ See Yates (450-52). Yates signals the "currents and countercurrents still running strongly out of the past" which continue during the rise of modernity and advises that we focus on the interaction of the "animistic" and "mathematical" phases of the scientific revolution rather than on "the seventeenth century triumph" (446, 452).

⁷ On Sor Juana and hermeticism, see Arenal, Cortijo and Castellví Laukamp, among others.

⁸ See Trabulse, for example.

⁹ See Chemris, especially 2016 and 2021, 29-53; 2022b gives an overview of my arguments.

found at Sacromonte, “Este monte, de cruces coronado” (1598), and was associated with many supporters of these or similar falsifications (Chemris 2021, 50-52). Muriel Elvira suggests that Góngora would have likely recognized the discoveries’ fraudulent nature, given his own efforts to revive the Latin roots of Spanish, a goal inherently at odds with such claims as the parchment’s revelation of a Christian apostle already preaching in the Spanish language on the Iberian Peninsula at the time of Nero (98-99; Cf García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano 184). Inca Garcilaso, with whom Góngora coincided in Córdoba, was similarly tied to the project of the Lead Books; their main promoter, the archbishop of Granada Pedro Vaca de Castro, was the son of the governor of Peru who had befriended his father (Bernand 2011, 17).

The invention of history at issue in the forgeries of Sacromonte was both local and cosmopolitan, as the world of writers, translators, Arabists, librarians, antiquarians, physicians, painters and architects drawn to the project or its critique, interacted beyond Spain’s borders. Their intellectual networks could overlap with those associated with hermeticism. For example, the Count of Lemos, a coveted patron of both Cervantes and Góngora, founded a literary court in Naples that intersected with Prince Cesi’s Accademia dei Lincei, in which Galileo participated and would correspond with Campanella in later years (García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano 236-41). So too did Pedro de Urrea, an Arabist who befriended the Argensola brothers and who joined Pedro de Valencia in his recognition of the Lead Books as a fraud (236-41). Campanella embraced Christian prophetism, a force in the milieu of Pedro de Valencia and the 7th Duke of Medina Sidonia,¹⁰ in what Yates has called “a *rapprochement*” between “Catholic mysteries and the religion of natural magic” (364). In another confluence, Henry IV of France, a figure associated with Christian unity and relative tolerance, was simultaneously the object of Giordano Bruno’s hopes, Luis de Góngora’s panegyric sonnet, and the entreaties of oppressed and expelled Moriscos.¹¹

The falsified discoveries of Granada constitute a regional case of a larger phenomenon of invented histories for Renaissance cities which arose with a distinctly hermeticist cast. For Bernand as for García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, an important source for this phenomenon is the Italian Dominican Annius of Viterbo’s invention of a false chronicle, allegedly written by the historical figure Berosus of Chaldea (García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano 198; Bernand 2011, 5). This “falso cronicón” presents a pseudo genealogy for Spain’s Catholic Kings, tracing “their royal line back to Egyptian Hercules, son of Osiris and grandson of Noah, who had brought ancient learning to Iberia directly, without Greco-Roman intermediaries” (198). In an appeal to the “Egyptomania” of his contemporaries, he thus joined “the modern West directly to the Biblical East,” opening the door to the patriotic competition on the basis of the most outlandish inventions (198). Now, as García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano argue, “[e]very country, every city felt the need to provide itself with a national history that would match or outdo the ancient histories of Greece and Rome to which humanists gave so much importance” (198).

In this context, García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano signal the confluence of invented histories for confessional minorities in Spanish cities, who sought validation under the cover of

¹⁰ Valencia’s letters to Fray José de Sigüenza were sent through the home of the Duchess of Feria, Jane Dormer, a known supporter of the Congregación de la Nueva Restauración (Magnier 80, n. 136); on the Duke of Medina Sidonia, Góngora’s patron, see Kagan 109, 127. See also Marie Tanner’s chapter on the Escorial regarding Campanella’s support for the prophesized destiny of the Spanish monarchy (178-82).

¹¹ On Bruno and Henry IV, see Yates 34; on Góngora’s sonnet, see Chaffee-Sorace; on the Moriscos and Henry IV, see Green-Mercado.

this wave of national and regional affirmation in an appeal to the Biblical East, if not specifically to Egypt. They describe Jerónimo Román de la Higuera's invention of a false chronicle which allegedly "'proved' that there were Jews in Toledo before the death of Christ (thus exonerating Spanish Jews of the crime of 'deicide')," thereby "seeking to 'cleanse' and ennoble the lineage of Toledo *converso* families of Jewish origin just at the time when purity-of-blood statutes were coming into force in the city" (202). Góngora's friend Pablo de Cespedes made similar claims for the Jews in Córdoba: "Céspedes made the sons of Noah the founders of Cordova, thereby creating a link between a temple in that city (subsequently a mosque and a cathedral) and Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. The effect was to obliterate the Islamic character of Cordova's mosque" (219; Cf Bernand 2011, 15). On a larger scale, Kevin Ingram identifies the Old Testament decorative program for Philip II's Escorial basilica and library with the integrationist project of Christian Hebraists such as Arias Montano (for whom Pedro de Valencia served as amanuensis) and Juan Bautista Villalpando. He also signals the participation of Valencia's friend and Montano's successor, Fray José de Sigüenza, who, notably, tied Solomism to broader notions of irenism and natural religion (149; Cf Magnier 175). All of these ventures have been viewed by scholars as parallel projects to that of the Lead Books in the face of the requirements of a revised Christian history. As García Arenal writes, "La solución, que viene proporcionada por los hallazgos sacromontanos, radica en incorporar a esos judíos y musulmanes despojándolos de su identidad religiosa: haciendo a los árabes cristianos y a los judíos españoles, enraizándolos con aquellas Tribus Perdidas que no habían podido participar en la condena de Cristo" (2006, 581; García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano 7).

The validation of colonial subjects within the Spanish empire conjoins in similar parallels between Moriscos and the indigenous. While the Lead Books begin with magical "Solomonic" letters, evocative of hermeticism, magic spells, talismans¹² and antiquity dating back to King Solomon, Carmen Bernand points to an indigenous case of "la moda salomónica" in Inca Garcilaso's appropriation of the features of Solomon's Temple in his description of Coricancha, the Inca temple of the sun, in the *Comentarios reales*. Basing his description on oral reports, he describes the temple with an explicit allusion to tabernacles, thereby placing, in Bernand's words, "un vernis judaïque sur la religion des Inca" (2006, 275, 279). She relates this not only to earlier humanist syncretic and ecumenist aspirations in the context of the mood of the Quattrocento and the Florentine Council, including an appreciation for the ancient prefiguration of Christianity in solar cults—classical, Eastern and now, American—but also to later utopian projects (2010, 2-4, 13; 2006, 279). She connects Inca Garcilaso's imagery of Solomon's Temple to the project of a New Jerusalem. As she writes, "Si Cuzco es una nueva Jerusalén, entonces comparte con la ciudad sagrada la dimensión mesiánica y construye una réplica del proyecto divino, réplica antártica pero no menos venerable" (2010, 12). Similarly, she notes that Inca Garcilaso decorated his burial chapel with a painting linking Solomon's Temple, Coricancha and the mosque-cathedral of Córdoba (2011, 15). Yet Inca Garcilaso's syncretic burial chamber has been interpreted as well in more directly Andean terms, as what Christian Fernández calls "a tumba mestiza de un lugar sagrado mestizo," in which the writer followed the customs of contemporary Peruvian indigenous who buried their ancestors in churches built on the sites of ancient Inca temples. (110).

Similar to Carmen Bernand, José Cárdenas Bunsen points to the parallel between Miguel de Luna, the assumed author of the Lead Books, along with Alonso del Castillo, and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, in their affirmation of the legitimacy of their respective communities and in their use

¹² García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano (176-82).

of Mary Immaculate as a figure of restorative justice (Bernand 2011, 18; Cárdenas Bunsen 333-406, 410, 405). Yet the parallel extends beyond a common aspiration for acceptance within Spanish Christian society; both also appealed covertly to the autonomous ambitions of their base.¹³

As García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano point out, Miguel de Luna was a complex and ambiguous figure. Married to an Old Christian, he both asserted the “right of some Morisco families to privileges and honors,” but also seems to have created in the forgeries a version of Christianity that Muslims who stayed in the Peninsula could accept” (189), a “syncretic text” (152). Luna interacted with humanists of the Escorial library and served as a translator for the Duke of Medina Sidonia, but he also engaged in a cryptoislamic network of solidarity, ransoming a Morisco slave girl and befriending a Morisco doctor punished by the Inquisition (189). He gathered with other Moriscos who met in secret for education in Islam and Arabic, giving lessons using the Lead Books, which also circulated in copies smuggled at great risk to exiled Moriscos in Tunis and Morocco (188, 148). The books, in García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano’s opinion, could thus function not only as a syncretic text but also as “anti-Christian polemic” (152). Similarly, Inca Garcilaso’s *Comentarios reales* engaged, broadly, Spanish and European humanism, while also incorporating oral histories of the indigenous and gaining early on an Andean following (See Guibovich Pérez and Francisco A. Ortega).

Thus, García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano deem the Lead Books text, “an example of the richness and specificity of that late Spanish Islam in which cultural motifs, spirituality, and Christian references—including those to reformers and Lutherans—were tightly interwoven with Islam” (8). They consider the Lead Books “the counterpart to what may be the most important work of all Morisco literature, the *Tafsira* of El Mancebo de Arévalo: an Islamic text built on a variety of Christian referents, from the Prologue to *La Celestina*, to Thomas à Kempis’s *Imitation of Christ*” (8).¹⁴ The Mancebo de Arévalo’s “secret text” written in the early 1500s in *aljamía* shows parallels with Inca Garcilaso’s *Comentarios reales* written a century later. García Arenal describes the Mancebo’s “journey around the Iberian Peninsula to seek out and compile the knowledge of old Moriscos,” interviewing survivors of the conquest of Granada, reading books from their clandestine libraries, recording stories of elders such as a midwife and a mystic, giving testimony to the end of a Muslim world (2009, 909-11). Likewise, Luna and Inca Garcilaso bear witness to the fragments of a vanishing culture in the wake of conquest, with a gesture toward the hope of restoration.¹⁵ Bearing in mind these divided aspirations of Spain’s confessional minorities and colonized subjects, we can now approach Góngora’s poetic texts.

The Crowned Serpent and the Morisco City Glyph

In key passages of the *Soledades*, a poem which Betty Sasaki has called a “sea of signs,” Góngora incorporates a juxtaposition of hermetic imagery with that of colonized subjects. One such passage expresses the topic of world unity, addressed by Inca Garcilaso in his first chapter of the *Comentarios reales*, where he states, “Se podrá afirmar que no hay más que un mundo, y

¹³ For this reason, Bernand argues that Inca Garcilaso projects an “identité protonationale” in which he occupied “une position d’avant-garde” (2006, 301). On the national question in the Spanish early modern, see Chemris 2022a.

¹⁴ Regarding these referents, they cite María Teresa Narvaez.

¹⁵ On such gestures toward restoration, see Mazzotti on Inca Garcilaso (81) and García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano on Luna (25).

aunque llamamos Mundo Viejo y Mundo Nuevo, es por haberse descubierto aquel nuevamente para nosotros y no porque sean dos, sino todo uno” (Bk I, Ch 1). For Sara Castro Klarén, here Garcilaso shows the influence of the hermetic philosopher Marsilio Ficino’s commentaries on Plato’s *Timaeus* and *Symposium*, which promote the view of natural religion as a universal and equalizing attribute of all peoples and nations, thereby vindicating Garcilaso’s affirmation of the parity of the Amerindians (220, 197). Góngora expresses this shared belief in world unity, hermetic and Amerindian, in his depiction of the strait of Magellan, testimony to the fact that the ocean has always been but one: “la bisagra (aunque estrecha) abrazadora / de un Océano y otro siempre uno” (I. 473-74). His engagement with mapmaking convention, as Mercedes Blanco points out, emphasizes the provisional and illusory nature of imperial naming, appealing to ecumenist principles of a greater utopian humanist context (2012a, 340, 350-52; 366-69).¹⁶

The most important passage of the *Soledades*’ seascape which stages the encounter of hermetic and indigenous signs is the depiction of this same massive, singular ocean divided by the isthmus of Panama:

el istmo que al Océano divide,
y, sierpe de cristal, juntar le impide
la cabeza, del Norte coronada,
con la que ilustra el Sur cola escamada
de antárticas estrellas. (*Soledades* I. 425-29)

Mercedes Blanco has identified sources for this passage in cartography and classical literature; the most important of these is Homer’s “river-ocean” which circled the world and Horapollo’s first entries in his *Hieroglyphica* of the *ouroboros*, the snake biting its tail, seen as both a symbol for the world and for the universe (2012a, 353-60). The *Hieroglyphica*, thought to be written by an Egyptian, and revived in Greek translation, is solidly in the hermetic canon. It is also, curiously, viewed as a conflicted attempt to “reconstitute” the fragments of “a lost tradition” similar to that of Inca Garcilaso (Grafton xiv-xv). Significantly, Góngora’s sources may also include Andean iconography, and specifically images from the heraldic shield Inca Garcilaso used to introduce his *Comentarios reales*, analyzed in elegant detail by Christian Fernández.

Fernández notes the use of the crowned *amaru* (serpent) as an Inca royal symbol; he argues that Inca Garcilaso combined this image with a figure of European hermeticism, Mercury’s *caduceus*, his staff of intertwined snakes, both as protective cover for a risky display of a banned Inca icon and for its own symbolic suggestion of prudent speech, with the intention of interpellating, cautiously, an Andean audience (96-127). Góngora’s image obliquely suggests both features of Inca Garcilaso’s heraldic figure. It hints at the crowned *amaru* by its reference to “sierpe [...] coronada” which is also, by inference, “sierpe antártica,” while simultaneously employing the cover of European hermeticism in its emphasis on the *ouroboros* figure.

In his theatre, Góngora finds other creative ways of blending the hermetic and the signs of the colonized subject, in this case evoking the Moriscos. In *Las firmezas de Isabela*, the city of Toledo is associated with a recurring paradigm, what Mercedes Blanco terms a hieroglyph, that of a ring of water surrounding a hill (2012b, 264-86). This figure is reminiscent of an indigenous city glyph¹⁷ and Javier Irigoyen García has noted that the figure at one point also becomes a

¹⁶ Blanco mentions the cordiform projection (the world mapped as a heart) and its association with the Familia Charitatis; in this regard, we should consider Arias Montano’s Familist milieu in the Netherlands (Ingram 149).

¹⁷ Chemris 2016, 16.

turban evoking the recently expelled Moriscos, reinforcing the dialogue among the Christian cast of characters staging their foundational hybrid identity (386). The fact that the turban is superimposed upon the form of what might be construed to be an indigenous city glyph illustrates, quite literally, Carmen Bernand's contention that Góngora's humanist circle read Spain's history through the prism of the conquest (2011, 20). It also represents visually Pedro de Valencia's claims about the indigenous nature of the Moriscos as original Spaniards: "son españoles como los demás que habitan en España, pues ha casi novecientos años, que nacen y se crían en ella" (2000a, 81). Here displacement operates on multiple levels, identifying Moriscos as the Amerindians of Spain through a poetic hieroglyph, with Homeric resonances, suggestive of the world as one. In his creative juxtaposition of signs, Góngora enacts what Susan Buck-Morss, in her reading of the blending of Freemasonry and Vodou, will view as "correspondences across non identical cultural fields" which "bleed into each other" (126). To understand the basis for this parallel in the trajectories of hermeticism, we will now turn to Buck-Morss's Benjaminian analysis of the interaction of signs in the context of the Haitian Revolution.

Vodou, Freemasonry and the Ruins of Culture

Buck-Morss describes the flourishing of Freemasonry in the polyglot atmosphere of the encounter between the Old and New World and the cosmopolitan interactions of multiethnic pirate crews, exiled religious dissidents, waterfront workers, indigenous soldiers and runaway slaves¹⁸:

There was no common language in the New World, no phonetic system of shared meanings [...]. Freemasonry thrived in this environment. The Masonic movement initiated a fascination with nonverbal means of communication, a search for universal human knowledge in signs, symbols, artifacts, and past architectural wonders, interpreting them esoterically as the secret source of wisdom. A visual world of images, from Egyptian pyramids to indigenous Indian sign language, was queried for possible keys to a common humanity that existed before the Biblical fall of Babel" (120).

Reading Buck-Morss's description, one is struck by the similarity to the multicultural environment of the Spanish early modern, the context for the creation of Góngora's "sea of signs."¹⁹ We might indeed consider possible parallels between Buck-Morss's description of an "Atlantic proletariat," a failed pre-industrial movement against merchant capitalist development,²⁰ and the roads not taken by the fragmented peoples of the early modern Iberian Mediterranean and Atlantic which now so engage contemporary scholarship.²¹ Most interesting is Buck-Morss's assertion that a type of enslavement of Europeans by Europeans existed from the mid-fifteenth into the nineteenth century, penal slavery, beginning with galley slavery,²² and

¹⁸ See her discussion of "the motley crew" building on Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Redeker (Buck-Morss 104-8) and references to indigenous Freemasonry (122, n. 100).

¹⁹ We might recall that Pedro de Valencia corresponded with Céspedes on ideograms and the origins of language (García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano 374-76), a humanist curiosity replicated in Góngora's representation of birds in flight in the *Soledades* as Greek letters in the sky (I. 609-10).

²⁰ Here Buck-Morss cites the theory and terminology of Linebaugh and Redeker.

²¹ See Steven Hutchinson, Daniel Hershenzon, and William Childers, for example.

²² Buck-Morss (88, n. 3) credits Orlando Patterson (44) for this observation.

that penal slavery as well as the African slave trade (here following C.L.R. James and W.E.B. Du Bois) were constitutive of modernity, giving rise to industrial wage slavery on both sides of the Atlantic before the introduction of machine labor (58, n. 106, 80, 94-104).

The Haitian Revolution began as a slave rebellion, led, significantly, by African Muslims as well as by a number of French-educated mulattos possibly associated with Freemasonry, which in turn influenced the Latin American independence movement (Buck-Morss 141, 63-65). Vodou ceremonies, performed on *vèvès* or ritual ground paintings, played a role in mobilizing the slave revolt. Buck-Morss signals the possibility of the “reciprocal influence” of Freemasonry and Vodou, pointing to the mixture of signs in the *vèvès* of the Fon and Kongo tradition into which the rainbow and serpent, the Masonic compass, and Latin Catholic images were interspersed (65, 126, 70).²³ She also comments on the difference in the incorporation of similar signs into the secret rituals of Vodou and Freemasonry, based on Walter Benjamin’s distinction between the allegorical and symbolic modes. In the allegorical mode, culture exists in fragments and ruins, reflecting, in the case of Vodou, the experience of “history as catastrophe” in the shattering of the cultures of the enslaved (127). Conversely, Freemasonry appeals to “the transhistorical realm of symbols,” in the search for “eternal truths” (128). In the symbolic mode, Buck-Morss explains, “knowledge is sought not from cultural fragments of the recent past, but from grand monuments of ancient eras and remote civilizations” (128). With the failure of the Haitian Revolution to truly liberate the masses who propelled it, hermeticism in the form of “Haitian National Freemasonry” is progressively emptied out into the decorative national symbol, the province of the elites (138). As Buck-Morss writes of the Haitian revolutionary leadership, “Neither Louverture nor Dessalines desired anything but the continuation of the plantation labor system, now employing freemen as wage laborers, but still geared toward maximum production for export” (95). This colonial model of labor discipline was then applied to the European metropolis in the toil of women and children in the Manchester textile mills, in a case of factory imitating plantation and of a globalized mercantilism coming full circle (102).

The trajectory of hermeticism among colonized subjects thus signals other systems of circulation of knowledge, both lettered and oral, as well as visual. New work on these other networks is on the horizon. In a forthcoming book, Oumelbanine Nina Zhiri has proposed an Arabic Republic of Letters parallel to and in interaction with the European, in the work of Morisco emigré and Moroccan Islamic scholar, poet and translator Ahmad Ibn Qâsim al-Hajarî (c. 1570-1641), a defender of the Lead Books.²⁴ We have observed related cases of interaction, in the circulation of the Lead Books, both as alternative Christian gospels and as Islamizing texts in the fragmented and diasporic culture of the Moriscos; in the incorporation of visual signs such as Inca Garcilaso’s indigenous icon into Góngora’s poetry, into church iconography, and into European print culture; and in the commingling of African and indigenous signs within the parallel hermetic fields of Freemasonry and Vodou. While hermetic imagery can be appropriated into hegemonic representation, monumentalized as part of the mythology of the nation, it can also open the possibilities for a counterhistory of the vanquished, one which is torn from a “history of the victors”²⁵ in the Benjaminian sense of Buck-Morss’s work. Thus hermeticism, in its cultivation as secret or clandestine knowledge and its use of spiritual claims

²³ Buck-Morss (70) cites Robert Farris Thompson (33).

²⁴ García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano devote a chapter to al-Hajarî, whose Spanish Christian name was Diego Bejarano (139-53).

²⁵ This concept comes from Thesis VII of Walter Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History” (256); See Buck-Morss 74-75.

as a utopian imaginary, can be a site for our archeology of oppressed voices in early Hispanic literature.

Works Cited

- Arenal, Electa. "Sor Juana's Arch: Public Spectacle, Private Battle." En Jane Donawerth and Adele Seeff eds. *Crossing Boundaries: Attending to Early Modern Women*. Newark: U of Delaware P, 200. 173-94.
- Benjamin, Walter. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." En Hannah Arendt ed. Harry Zohn trad. ingl. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. NY: Schocken, 1968. 253-264.
- Bernard, Carmen. *Un Inca platónico: Garcilaso de la Vega 1539-1616*. Paris: Fayard, 2006.
- . "El inca platónico y el africano ilustrado: Garcilaso de la Vega, Ouladah Equiano y la Tierra Prometida." *Revista Co-herencia* 6.11(2009): 73-86.
- . "Soles: Platón, Heliodoro, León Hebreo y el Inca Garcilaso." En Carmen de Mora, Guillermo Serès, Mercedes Serna eds. *Humanismo, mestizaje y escritura en los Comentarios reales*. Madrid/Frankfurt: Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2010. 31-50.
- . "Hebreos, romanos, moros e Incas: Garcilaso de la Vega y la arqueología andaluza." *Nuevo Mundo, Mundos Nuevos*. 31 Jan. 2011. Débats. (Web).
- Blanco, Mercedes. *Góngora heroico: las Soledades y la tradición épica*. Madrid: Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica: 2012a.
- . *Góngora o la invención de una lengua*. León: U de León, 2012b.
- Buck-Morss, Susan. *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2009.
- Cárdenas Bunsen, José. *La aparición de los libros plúmbeos y los modos de escribir la historia: De Pedro de Castro al Inca Garcilaso de la Vega*. Madrid/Frankfurt: Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2018.
- Castellví Laukamp, Luis. *Hispanic Baroque Ekphrasis: Góngora, Camargo, Sor Juana*. Oxford: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2020.
- Castro Klarén, Sara. "'For it is a Single World.': Marsilio Ficino and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega in Dialogue with Pagan Philosophies." En Castro-Klarén and Fernández eds. *Inca Garcilaso and Contemporary World Making*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2016. 195-228.
- Chaffee-Sorace, Diane. "Góngora's Sonnet 'El Cuarto Enrico yace mal herdido.'" *Neophilologus* 102 (2018): 15-24.
- Chemris, Crystal. "Góngora, the Moriscos, and the falconry scene in Góngora's *Soledades*." *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures* 70.1 (2016): 11-23.
- . "Moriscos, Amerindians and Góngora's *Soledades* in Context," *eHumanista/Conversos* 6. 1-2 (2018): 284-305.
- . *The Spanish Baroque and Latin American Literary Modernity: Writing in Constellation*. Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2021.
- . "Iberian Confessional Minorities and the Concept of the Nation in the Early Modern," *eHumanista/Conversos* 10 (2022a): 186-195.
- . "Evolution of a Paradigm Shift: Góngora's *Soledades* as Covert Protest of the Morisco Expulsion and of Militant Iberian Colonialism." *Hispanic Journal* 43.2 (2022b): 57-73.
- Childers, William. *Transnational Cervantes*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2006.
- Cortijo, Antonio. *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz o la búsqueda de la identidad: «Mulieres in ecclesia taceant»: Legitimación letrada y rivalidad nacional en Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*. Sevilla: Editorial Renacimiento, 2015.

- Elvira, Muriel. "La recepción de Góngora entre los historiadores españoles del siglo XVII." *Atalanta* 6.2 (2018): 83-116.
- Fernández, Christian. *Inca Garcilaso: Imaginación, memoria e identidad*. Fondo editorial de la UNMSM, 2004. (Web).
- Fouchard, Jean. *The Haitian Maroons: Liberty or Death*. NY: Edward W. Blyden, 1981.
- Fuchs, Barbara. *Mimesis and Empire: The New World, Islam, and European Identities*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001.
- García Arenal, Mercedes and Fernando Rodríguez Mediano. *The Orient in Spain: Converted Muslims, the Forged Lead Books of Granada and the Rise of Orientalism*. Consuelo López-Morillas trad. ingl. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- García Arenal, Mercedes. "Moriscos e indios: Para un estudio comparado de métodos de conquista y evangelización." *Chronica Nova* 20 (1992): 153-75.
- . "De la autoría morisca a la antigüedad sagrada de Granada, rescatada al islam." En Manuel Barrios Aguilera and Mercedes García Arenal eds. *Los plomos del Sacromonte: invención y tesoro*. Valencia/Granada/Zaragoza: U de València/U de Granada/U de Zaragoza, 2006. 557-82.
- . "Religious Dissent and Minorities: The Morisco Age." *The Journal of Modern History* 81 (2009): 888-920.
- Garcilaso de la Vega, Inca. *Comentarios reales*. Aurelio Miró Quesada ed. e intro. Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1985. 2 vols.
- Góngora y Argote, Luis de. *Soledades*. Robert Jammes ed. Madrid: Castalia, 1994.
- Grafton, Anthony pref. *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo*. George Boas trad. ingl. Princeton UP, 1993. ix-xxi.
- Green-Mercado, Mayte. "Morisco Prophecies at the French Court (1602-1607)." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 61 (2018): 91-123.
- Guibovich Pérez, Pedro M. "The Dissemination and reading of the *Royal Commentaries* in the Peruvian Viceroyalty." En Castro-Klarén and Fernández eds. *Inca Garcilaso and Contemporary World Making*. Pittsburgh : U of Pittsburgh P, 2016. 129-53.
- Hershenzon, Daniel. *The Captive Sea: Slavery, Communication, and Commerce in Early Modern Spain and the Mediterranean*. U Pennsylvania P, 2018.
- Horapollo. *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo*. Grafton, Anthony pref. George Boas trad. ingl. Princeton UP, 1993.
- Hutchinson, Steven. *Frontier Narratives: Liminal Lives in the Early Modern Mediterranean*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2020.
- Ingram, Kevin. "Phillip II as the New Solomon: The Covert Promotion of Religious Tolerance and Synergism in Post-Tridentine Spain." En Kevin Ingram and Juan Ignacio Serrano eds. *The Conversos and Moriscos in Late Medieval Spain and Beyond: Displaced Persons*. Brill, 2015. Vol. 3. 129-49.
- Irigoyen García, Javier. "'Libia en Toledo': 'lo moro' en *Las firmezas de Isabela* de Luis de Góngora." *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 47 (2013): 375-95.
- Kagan, Richard. *Lucrecia's Dreams: Politics and Prophecy in Sixteenth Century Spain*. Berkeley: U California P, 1990.
- Landy, Joshua. "Modern Magic: Jean Eugène Robert Houdin and Stéphane Mallarmé." En Joshua Landy and Michael Saler eds. *The Re-enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009. 102-29.

- Linebaugh, Peter and Marcus Redeker. *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*. Boston: Beacon, 2000.
- Magnier, Grace. *Pedro de Valencia and the Catholic Apologists of the Expulsion of the Moriscos: Visions of Christianity and Kingship*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Mazzotti, José Antonio. "A Syncretic Tropology: Semantic and Symbolic Aspects of the *Royal Commentaries*." En Castro-Klarén and Fernández eds. *Inca Garcilaso and Contemporary World Making*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2016. 62-128.
- Narvaez Córdoba, María Teresa ed. e introd. *Tratado (Tafsira) del Mancebo de Arévalo*. Madrid: Trotta, 2003.
- Ortega, Francisco A. "Writing the History of an Andean Ghost." En Castro-Klarén and Fernández eds. *Inca Garcilaso and Contemporary World Making*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2016. 229-59.
- Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982.
- Sasaki, Betty. "Góngora's Sea of Signs: The Manipulation of History in the *Soledades*." *Calíope: Journal of the Society for Renaissance and Baroque Hispanic Poetry* 1.1-2 (1995): 150-68.
- Silverberg, Robert. *The Realm of Prester John*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1972.
- Tanner, Marie. *The Last Descendant of Aeneas: The Hapsburgs and the Mythic Image of the Emperor*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1993.
- Thompson, Robert Farris. *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*. NY: Vintage, 1984.
- Trabulse, Elías. "El tránsito del hermetismo a la ciencia moderna: Alejandro Fabián, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz y Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora." *Calíope: Journal of the Society for Renaissance and Baroque Hispanic Poetry* 4.1-2 (1998): 56-71.
- Valencia, Pedro de. *Tratado acerca de los moriscos de España*. 1606. En Rafael González Cañal ed. crit. Rafael Carrasco intro. *Escritos sociales: Escritos políticos*. En *Obras completas*. León: U de León, 2000a. Vol. IV.2. 13-140.
- . *Discurso sobre el pergamino y las láminas de Granada*. 1607. En Hipólito B. Riesco Alvarez ed. crit. Gaspar Morocho Gayo intro. *Escritos sociales: Escritos políticos*. En *Obras completas*. León: U de León, 2000b. Vol. IV.2. 141-456.
- Yates, Frances A. *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*. London: Routledge, 1964.