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The Baroque Aesthetics of Exhaustion

By

José Luis Patiño Romero

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in Charge:

Professor Emilie Bergmann, Co-Chair

Professor Ignacio Navarrete, Co-Chair

Professor Niklaus Largier

Professor Ivonne del Valle

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Abstract

The Baroque Aesthetics of Exhaustion

By

José Luis Patiño Romero

Doctor of Philosophy in Hispanic Languages and Literatures

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Emilie Bergmann, Co-Chair
Professor Ignacio Navarrete, Co-Chair

This dissertation re-examines three canonical works: Cervantes's romance/adventure novel *Persiles* (1617), Góngora's long, unclassifiable poem *Soledades* (1613), and Sor Juana's long, philosophical poem *Primero sueño* (1692). This study builds on the baroque paradigm of excessive self-invention as satirized in Don Quixote's imitation of outdated chivalric figures in his effort to become a knight errant. I elucidate the possibility of participating in the voluntaristic culture implied in this satire without identifying with it—an approach I refer to as the “aesthetics of exhaustion.” This negative self-fashioning entails resituating and reconfiguring available modes of self-cultivation to evade the emergent society of control. I focus on how my selection of texts models an emergent modern subjectivity that aestheticizes failure by redeploying mystic figures of “humility” as exemplified in the metaphor of garden cultivation as a spiritual exercise in Teresa of Avila's *Vita* and Fray Luis de Leon's poem “Vida retirada.” Through three case studies that thematize new tendencies in Counter-Reformation marriage, imperial navigation, and natural philosophy, I analyze the reconfiguration of institutionalized, compulsory desires.

Instead of displacing an exhausted desire with another iteration of “greed” within the libidinal economy, the main characters in these texts reiterate exhaustion itself as a relatively autonomous identity. I develop this understanding of exhaustion by adapting Deleuze's figure of *the exhausted*, by which desire becomes the endless playing with the possibilities of the same habitual, limited situation without asserting any preference. I analyze plots that dramatize how similar figures emerge in baroque literature. In *Persiles*, I focus on Auristela's performance of escape from arranged marriage through identification with Marian figures from the Bible, early modern painting, and theological debates on the immaculate conception. The novel critiques the free will to marry by comparing it to sacrificial scenes evoking colonial chronicles and minorities evoking picaresque literature and other Cervantine works. In *Soledades*, I focus on the pilgrim's material and emotional “shipwreck” in dialogue with the tradition of Petrarchan masculine desire as eroticized and elaborated in early modern Spain by Garcilaso de la Vega and Francisco de Quevedo. In *Primero sueño*, the soul's renunciation of its flight

toward impossible absolute knowledge, inspired by St. Teresa's double bind of humility, redeploys the trope of the mystical unknowability of the divine as a gendered iteration of Icarus and Phaeton against sexual and epistemic violence.

If the Renaissance paganized Christianity and emphasized individual passions, I identify a Baroque tendency to reconfigure mystical desire as care of the self without a religious community. This displacement shows that the baroque anticipates and satirizes, in its thematization of the failure of desire, the neoliberal instrumentalization of "care of the self" as Foucauldian human capital. In my conclusion, I foreground how my dissertation has established that baroque desire does not aim at modeling self-control but rather at theorizing complex degrees of community identification and exclusion. The differential accessibility to alternative narratives of self-exhaustion depending on social categories leads to a consideration of how the baroque questions the capacity of established genres—the picaresque, the pastoral, colonial chronicles, and encyclopedism—to represent new social needs. I demonstrate that the aesthetics of exhaustion in baroque literature, while situated in the upper classes, mirrors the survival strategies of characters excluded from the baroque economy of desire, such as the *pícaros*, *pícaras*, Jews, Muslims, and the so-called barbarian worlds. I end up proposing ways of complementing the synchronic baroque approach to exhaustion in this dissertation by focusing on those identities only considered in these texts through exclusive inclusion. By way of the mediating concepts of *mestizaje*, black performance, and generalized prostitution, I suggest how this project can be supplemented by genealogical approaches situated on specific exhausted identities. In turn, these approaches situated in marginal identities are supplemented by the perspectivist baroque approach to exhaustion within the field of the libidinal economy.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This dissertation re-examines Miguel de Cervantes's romance/adventure novel *The Trials of Persiles and Sigismunda* (1617), Luis de Góngora's long, unclassifiable poem *Soledades* (1613), and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's long, philosophical poem *Primero sueño* (1692). I approach these works by drawing upon Hispanic literature's emblem of the baroque as a satire of excessive self-invention, Miguel de Cervantes's novel *The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha* (1605, 1615). Don Quixote's imitation of outdated chivalric figures propels his endeavor to become a knight-errant. He roams the world driven by his enthusiastic habit of reading chivalry novels as a process of self-identification:

En efeto, rematado ya su juicio, vino a dar en el más estraño pensamiento que jamás dio loco en el mundo, y fue que le pareció conveniente y necesario, así para el aumento de su honra como para el servicio de su república, hacerse caballero andante y irse por todo el mundo con sus armas y caballo a buscar las aventuras y a ejercitarse en todo aquello que él había leído que los caballeros andantes se ejercitaban, deshaciendo todo género de agravio y poniéndose en ocasiones y peligros donde, acabándolos, cobrase eterno nombre y fama. (Book I, chapter 1)

The truth is that when his mind was completely gone, he had the strangest thought any lunatic in the world ever had, which was that it seemed reasonable and necessary to him, both for the sake of his honor and as a service to the nation, to become a knight errant and travel the world with his armor and his horse to seek adventures and engage in everything he had read that knights errant engaged in, righting all manner of wrongs and, by seizing the opportunity and placing himself in danger and ending those wrongs, winning eternal renown and everlasting fame. (trans. Grossman)

Don Quixote's unbridled, literary ingeniousness aligns the figment-heroes he admires with the lower nobility's needs for recognition and contribution. However, the novel's cynical narrator understands Don Quixote's imaginative enterprise as a singular kind of madness produced by a reading addiction to an outdated literary genre. Don Quixote's pathologized pursuit of feudal honor and justice in service to the kingdom, associated with adherence to privileged bloodlines, is a symptom of an identity crisis among those classes premised on such beliefs. This crisis is conditioned by a tension between political, economic, and cultural power in what is now the Spanish absolutist state. In a world where the new merchant and credit economy encroaching on the government diminished the relevance of the lower-noble class, such as Cervantes's *hidalguía*, only a madman would resist such a political-economic issue with a personal choice. Despite its excess, Don Quixote's excessive and impossible self-invention thus re-deploys outdated upper-class values in the emergent modern world. At the same time, these values are privatized by remaining only valid as individual fantasies, implicitly limiting the possibilities of this new form of subjectivity. That is, this repression prefigures the

emergence of modern discourses on madness and addiction as innate possibilities that individuals must negate in the development of an elusive free-will always predicated on controlling its dark side.¹ However, the dominance of this form of subjectivity in the main characters of many early modern Hispanic narratives at the same time triggers a tendency that goes beyond individualist, nostalgic resistance.

This project develops one unexamined aspect of baroque subjectivity. It aims to complement the work of scholars who complicate José Antonio Maravall's model of the Hispanic baroque as a hegemonic mass culture, promoting the ideological apparatus of the emergent absolutist state. According to these scholars, the baroque also enables resistance to the same ideology.² For critics like Julio Baena, David Castillo/William Egginton, and Anthony Cascardi, in dramatizing mannerist alienation and the theatrical perception of reality, and problematizing the distinction between substance and style, the baroque models a way of maneuvering from within systems of control. Without eschewing this model of baroque style, I demonstrate that the baroque also evokes the possibility of participating in its individualistic culture by reaffirming its failed control—an approach I refer to as the “aesthetics of exhaustion.” This negative self-fashioning implies resituating and reconfiguring available modes of self-cultivation. As with Don Quixote, previous exemplary figures are recovered; however, unlike Don Quixote, though in a way an iteration of him, they do not operate to reproduce an identity but to enable the ongoing assemblage of alternative imagined communities.

Indeed, this aesthetics of exhaustion is a displacement of desire away from hegemonic values in baroque narratives. In my primary texts, this displacement emerges from the processes that shape and limit the realization of desires for erotic love, wealth, and rational/empirical knowledge. In order to relate such different objects of desire, I analyze how the early modern libidinal economy enables and limits social relations. Julio Baena's most recent book, *Dividuals: The Split Human and the Humanist Split in Early Modern Spanish Literature* (2022), borrows inspiration from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's description of control societies and the relationship between Marxism and psychoanalysis. Baena uses Deleuze's late essay “Postscript on the Societies of Control” (1990) and Guattari's early interview “Freudo-Marxism” (1977) to synthesize his critical approach to Early Modern Hispanic texts in the dyad *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554)–*La Diana* (1559). While the first picaresque novel, *Lazarillo*, thematizes labor exploitation analogously to some aspects of Marxism, the first Spanish pastoral novel, *Diana*, thematizes erotic desire analogously to some aspects of psychoanalysis. This comparison, rather than a theoretical claim about the origins of Marxism and psychoanalysis, serves Baena as a heuristic to analyze how Spanish narratives represent the libidinal economy. Love is always subordinate to labor in *Lazarillo* and picaresque/minoritarian identities in early modern Hispanic narratives. On the other hand, in pastoral novels, class struggle is overlooked in favor of focusing wholly on love among the upper classes. Baena's approach represents a “disjunctive synthesis” of two perspectives that always lead to each other. This dialectic parallels Deleuze's concept of the “dividual” in control societies as the reduction of the individual to algorithmic habits exchangeable across institutions under late capitalism like the university, the prison, and the family. Baena's generative approach resonates with the way I approach

¹ See Sedgwick, “Epidemics of the Will” (1983).

² See Cascardi (2018, 1997), Egginton and Castillo (2022) and Baena (2022).

masculine erotic desire as analogous to both colonial desires for honor and fame and the modern desire to develop an absolute system of knowledge.

Moreover, I want to recover from Deleuze's "Postscript," the differentiation borrowed from Michel Foucault, among forms of power based on punishment, discipline, and control. While Deleuze and Foucault hint at a periodization, I aim to consider the specific relationship among these three forms of power as represented in my primary texts. In the works examined in these pages, forms of power based on sheer punishment are illustrated through reference to public punishment of crimes to scare people from likewise behavior and in reference to colonial conquest justified as a Christian mission—the most common forms of repression of marginalized groups. Next, forms of power based on discipline depend upon the enclosure of subjects within physical or institutional spaces that shape their implicit consent, as manifested in these texts via references to the court, convent, marriage, and evangelization. Finally, power constructs in societies of control, while similar to discipline societies, spread the same ways of desiring across spaces unified in a global economy. While Deleuze theorizes "societies of control" based on his observations of the late twentieth century, this project identifies analogous disciplined individuals as illustrated in Petrarchan masculine/erotic desire, colonial navigation, and emergent scientific knowledge. The first sense in which this project construes "exhaustion" refers to the crisis of alternative spaces under the incorporation of all desires into the same economy, pushing everyone toward a new form of self-improvement. This generalized tendency does not mean that sheer violence and contained discipline are no longer relevant. Rather, they acquire a new function in a more extensive exchange system.

The second sense in which this study interprets "exhaustion," which forms part of its central argument, implies an affirmation of exhaustion as a process to be reiterated. In a society of control, giving up on the desire shaped by a disciplinary space is only possible by discarding an entire constellation of assembled drives. However, in this case, the exhaustion of an institutionalized desire is not an occasion to recover it with another form of compulsory obsession. The need to rekindle desire without re-generating "greed" emerges from my three case studies. Before an actual detouring of desire is possible, as in the case of the mystic turning of the soul away from "worldly" concerns, the subjective investment in pre-determined objects to meet a desire must be exhausted to prevent the desire from being subsumed by a new hegemonic need. I was initially inspired to read plots of obsession and exhaustion as conjuring with Eve Sedgwick's "paranoid and reparative reading" (2003). The reiteration of paranoid desire, suspicious that the object is always trying to trick the subject, essentially differs from the eventual reiteration of the moment of that paranoia's exhaustion. For example, the charged and complicated erotics of Petrarchan desire, as literalized in my baroque narratives, emphasizes the loss of the beloved as emblemized in the myth of Daphne fleeing from Apollo's attempts at sexual assault. However, this poetics of loss, for the poetic voice, becomes an occasion to perpetuate his desire against the anxiety of previous authors' influence in the service of poetic fame. This poetics of loss is satirized by Don Quixote's choice of mistress, Dulcinea del Toboso, the farmworker Aldonza Lorenzo whom he idealizes as a chivalric princess only living in his imagination.

On the other hand, beyond satire, in my primary texts erotic obsession is exhausted, and this exhaustion itself becomes part of a culture that escapes

subsumption by the libidinal economy. I develop this understanding of exhaustion by adapting Deleuze's figure of "the exhausted," which he conceptualizes in his analysis of Samuel Beckett's late short plays for television ("The Exhausted," 1992, tr. 1995, 1996). The protagonists in *Quad*, *Ghost Trio*, *Nacht und Traume*, and *...but the clouds...* (1977–1983) renounce any personal preference beyond playing with the limited possibilities within their habitual spaces. Out of the reiteration of the exhausted situation, sometimes emerges an image, an image in itself, the imagination's only investment, a pure possibility. However, for the most part, the protagonists are invested only in the customary process. For example, in *...but the Clouds...*, a man who follows a simple, solipsistic routine day after night sometimes involuntarily sees the elusive image of a woman as a vision focused on some facial features. However, though he enjoys those moments, the play is focused on the ordinary moments in which nothing new happens. He does not aim at anything else, as if the routine was not made to generate the image but an accident secondary to the perseverance of the whole practice. This process differs significantly from the Petrarchan utilization of the memory of the loss of the beloved as narrativized in my texts. For Petrarch, the image of loss is reiterated as a boost to the creative project that feeds the poet's fame as the beloved Laura is transformed into Laurel, the tree of poetic glory. The three baroque texts that form the center of this dissertation can be read as responses to this erotic figure of poetic glory, as re-erotized in Spain by Garcilaso De la Vega. Sor Juana's *Primero sueño* and her love sonnets—sometimes addressed to women—and Cervantes's *Persiles* and his other narrative works, critique the violence to women's free will in this model and focus on women's perspective. In *Soledades*, the male *peregrino*, after years of trying to keep his obsession alive (and almost dying for it), has exhausted his erotic desire, which becomes a metaphor for the exhaustion of the imperial machinery of "greed" as "shipwreck." Unlike Beckett's late twentieth-century plays, my primary texts focus not primarily on the figure of exhaustion but on plots that articulate contradictory perspectives on the emergence of such possibility.

Further, I historicize the seventeenth-century emergence of the relevance of "exhaustion" concerning the secularization of religious desire. The early modern society of control correlates with the incorporation of medieval systematic monastic practices that shape desire—such as prayer and contemplation—into the new global economy. Ivonne del Valle's discussion of Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* (1522–24) illustrates this religious influence in the transition to a new configuration of power as an index of the emergence of modern secular subjectivity (2022). Unlike the Augustinian model, in which Christians align their will with the Church as God's intermediary, Loyola's *Exercises* authorized all Catholics, not only monastics, to discern God's will in oneself. While Augustine's doctrine was used to justify colonization, the new iterability of religious self-discipline was instrumental in the Jesuit evangelization of indigenous people through habit creation as designed by Jesuit missionary José de Acosta. This potentializing of pastoral power implies the confluence of the three forms of power mentioned above but now through Christian discourses: the sheer violence of colonization, the discipline in contained missionary spaces, and the global iterability of Christian subjectivity in the service of economic goals.

One consequence of this colonial mediation of modern subject formation outlined by Del Valle is baroque "theatricality," which I understand as a form of emotional and

affective labor. According to Del Valle, the development of an inner work in progress amid the secular world promoted by the *Exercises* is reflected in Rene Descartes's *Discourse on the Method* (1637) and Baltasar Gracián's *Art of Worldly Wisdom* (1647). As in dramatic irony, nobody but the actors know what they intend by playing the role they play—whether it is mastery of the physical world, personal salvation, or building a missionary project. For example, in my Sor Juana chapter, I invoke Alison Weber's discussion of Teresa of Avila's ironic confluence of social (false) and spiritual (honest) humility. As such, the baroque stages a split subjectivity between inside and outside. However, I show how this form of tactical baroque subjectivity, apparently from below, is already contained within the emergent control society represented in the interconnectedness of all desires under analogous algorithmic processes of subjectivation. This claustrophobic awareness underlies the tendency I identify in my texts. The "exhaustion" of pursuing all desire (after many failures) as the only way out is a negative form of immanent transcendence that is neither secular nor religious. As in Niklaus Largier's approach to mysticism's deployment of religious figures, exhaustion is valued for its whole sense of possibility before it can be re-aligned in the service of an institutionalized desire (2022). The re-iteration of exemplary images in new situations generates experiences that exceed any belated reappropriations by historical discourses. In my conclusion, I evaluate the limitations of my approach as I have not adequately considered the perspectives that remain at the margins of this libidinal economy, leaving such explorations up to future scholars.

In my first chapter, I focus on how Miguel de Cervantes stages marriage as the sacrifice of "free will" in his last novel, *Persiles*. Critics have not associated Auristela's hesitation to marry Periandro with the novel's deconstruction of the early modern process that, according to Norbert Elias, differentiates "barbarism" from European "civilization." I analyze how, in *Persiles*, Catholic marriage, arranged or by choice, also promotes "barbarian" desires like those of foreign cultures and *pícaros*. I argue that Auristela's meaningful "silences" are inspired by the religious escapes of Leonora and Feliciano because she has exhausted all hope of escaping marriage. By politicizing the spiritual value of the Virgin Mary, Auristela reimagines the spiritual community affected by the counter-reformation ideology of the free will to marry.

In my second chapter, I consider how Luis de Góngora's poem *Soledades*, in its narrative of an aimlessly wandering "pilgrim," constantly re-contextualizes nautical metaphors. In this process, the poem's exhaustion of the imperial meaning of shipwreck is analogous to the exhaustion of lovesickness. Scholars have largely treated the poem's metonymies of navigation and shipbuilding (forests, trees, ships, planks) only as part of Góngora's style of an abundance of figures or as signaling the relationship between raw materials and manufactured products. Contrarily, I examine how these metonymies, as reconfigured in the poem, represent an alternative model of desire grounded in the constant danger that imperial navigational enterprises end in shipwreck. The central figures equate shipwreck, trees, and love: Apollo running after Daphne, who metamorphoses into a tree; Phaeton and his grieving sisters turned into trees; Augustinian spiritual shipwreck; Fray Luis de Leon's retreat into nature; and the metaphor of the "bark" of the text in biblical hermeneutics. In Góngora's ecology of shipwrecks, the contexts of figuration constantly displace the exchange value of objects of desire.

In my third chapter, I approach Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz as providing an affect theory of how baroque desire correlates with the project of infinite expansion of modern knowledge—and the inevitability of its failure. In her philosophical poem *Primero sueño*, embodiments of ambitious transgression—Phaeton, Icarus, the Tower of Babel—are exemplary despite their failure. As such, I analyze the performative representation of failure in the poem as a solution to the ambitious desire for knowledge. The poet's subjectivity relentlessly seeks to map out all existence while remaining self-conscious of how such an impossible project promotes social alienation and is complicit with misogyny. By comparing her use of Phaeton's myth to Teresa of Avila's spiritual humility, I reveal Sor Juana's solution as a defiant performance of failed knowledge. I also propose that the poem prefigures Sor Juana's apparent retreat at the end of her life under an ironic register. This biographical connection also models a response to our contemporary academic humanities crisis.

CHAPTER TWO
Free Will and Compulsory Marriage in Cervantes's *The Travails of Persiles and Sigismunda* (1616)

. . .advierte que en la tabla rasa de mi
alma ha pintado la esperiencia y escrito
mayores cosas
– IV, 10

[. . .] observe that on the blank slate of
my soul experience has drawn and
written important things.
(Trans. Richmond & Colahan, 341)

I. Introduction: The Libidinal Economy in *Persiles*

While my next two chapters focus on poetry, they share a concern with this chapter's focus on a novel. In the subsequent chapters, two baroque *silvas*, Góngora's *Soledades* (1613) and Sor Juana's *Primero sueño* (before 1691), dramatize, among other trends, a counter-narrative to the interconnectedness of all desires, which are redirected toward "failure." On the one hand, the constant danger of shipwreck faced by colonial navigation enterprises functions as a metonymy for the new imperative to win favors from the king or powerful patrons under the new merchant economy. The feudal aristocracy, feeling encroached upon by a new upwardly mobile bourgeoisie, intensified its courtly values in order to protect its exclusivity. One form this material and cultural crisis takes is the ironization of male erotic desire—often portrayed as a sublimation of corrupted courtly values in bucolic spaces—its one-way nature confronted by new representations of female desire. In Sor Juana's late-baroque poem *Primero sueño*, the speaker's desire for absolute knowledge is part of the Western imperial enterprise that, in its ruthlessness, resonates with mythical narratives of sexual violence. In Góngora's *Soledades*, the protagonist's wandering after unrequited Petrarchan love is detoured by a shipwreck, which the poem refigures as driftwood that alludes to mythical and commodified trees that reflect his erotic desire. In both cases, the exhaustion of an overpowering desire liberates subjects to experiment with alternative economies that refigure "failure"—of knowledge, masculine desire, and imperial navigation—as part of a new structure of feeling. That is, instead of containing the sense of failure as a test for reinforcing a teleology of transcendence, that teleology is now secondary, and failure itself is cast as an aesthetics.

Similarly, Cervantes's last novel, *Persiles*, though not a work of poetry like the texts to be considered in later chapters, serves as an entry point to interpreting associated changes in the seventeenth-century libidinal economy. The novel narrates the adventures of a young man and a young woman from the Northern Islands who have promised to delay their marriage until they complete a Catholic pilgrimage to Rome. The protagonists escape to avoid Auristela's engagement to Periandro's brother Magsimino and pretend to be siblings to avoid the scandal of an unmarried maiden traveling with a man. *Persiles* goes by Periandro, and Sigismunda changes her name to Auristela. They disguise their identities: he pretends to be a prince of Tule, and she a princess of Frislanda, but precisely why they undertake this subterfuge is not revealed until the very end of the novel. Instead, the novel starts in *medias res* with both of them captive on the same "barbarian" island but unbeknownst to each other: she is disguised as a man and is later rescued by *Persiles*, who is disguised as a woman. They survive shipwreck and pirate adventures and become pilgrims across continental Europe, which they find more "barbarian" than holy. They suddenly marry in the very last chapter—a decision made by the dying Periandro's brother, who appears in Rome. However, before that abrupt end, Auristela reveals that she has never really wanted to marry and rejects Periandro, bringing a conclusion to the few moments throughout the novel in which she is indecisive about marriage. While at the beginning of the journey she seems to want to marry, the novel portrays several moments of indecision—between marriage or the convent—until it is clear that the marriage option is secondary. Convent

life, which had been merely an alternative to marriage, eventually became a priority for her, resonating with other love stories in the novel that reinforce the option of the convent as safer than marriage.

Auristela's rejection of the marriage option presents a symptom of that option's failure to contain religious desire. Marriage's failure to become an end in itself suggests, contrary to the intentions of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) to revitalize that option with its defense of free will, that modern marriage is regarded as the lesser option to the convent in Cervantes's time. The Catholic Church is losing control of the institution of marriage over more secular concerns. Moreover, while the convent is viewed as a safer option for women, it is not regarded as a goal in itself either, but a means of avoiding marriage. Take the contrast between the family "home" and the convent in the earlier Cervantes' novella "El celoso extremeño" (1613). The young wife is treasured in privacy by her old husband, but this pseudo convent is only an incitement for transgression (Navarrete, 1992-1995). In the novella's denouement, the young wife prefers to enter an actual convent rather than marry her young assaulter when her old husband dies. Without signs of having a religious vocation, her choice suggests that the religious community is better shelter from the dangers of the outside world, including marriage. Similarly, in *Persiles*, we discover that Auristela chooses the safety of the convent over the perils of marriage. Auristela is the primary object of desire, motivating Periandro and other male characters to undertake a Catholic pilgrimage from shipwrecks in the northern seas through continental Europe toward Rome. However, right before the novel's end—and resonating with other female characters who took refuge in religion against arranged marriages, Auristela decides not to marry so she can become a nun. Though apparently resolving the issue, the sudden marriage at the end will be haunted by her indecision. Some critics read the sudden revelation of how the marriage was arranged and the *deus ex machina* marriage ending in the last chapters as careless and a sign of Cervantes's imminent death. However, critics have not dwelled on the implications of this incongruity. Considering this ending through the lens of "silence" throughout the novel reveals the irony of sanctifying the marriage option. While Auristela's silent resistance to arranged marriage is less defiant than the spectacular cases of female redress in *Persiles* and other works by Cervantes, it signals a community outside the libidinal economy of the precarious empire and a crisis of heterosexual desire. That is, stories of female characters who avenge their dishonor, while dramatizing agency in repairing the damage done to them—such as the avenging widows Sulpicia (Book I, caps. 12 and 19) and Isabella Castrucho (Book III, caps 14 and 21)—in the end do not pose an alternative to the marriage institution, as the focus remains on reforming men *within* marriage. Also, my reading does not assume a Catholic intention or a secular disenchantment in the novel. Instead, Auristela's community of escape points to a baroque reconfiguration of religious images for imagining a collective identity absent in modern marriage under the new libidinal economy.

Most readings of *Persiles* project a Catholic reading of the pilgrimage ending in marriage or ignore religion altogether. However, the function and nature of religion concerning marriage are problematized along the way before being apparently fixed by the end. *Persiles* follows the model of the ancient Greek romance-adventure novel *Aethiopica* or *Theagenes and Chariclea* (220s or 370s AD) attributed to Heliodorus of

Nemesa. It is structured as a series of retellings of stories of shipwreck and pilgrimage through Periandro and other interlocutors sharing their own stories, even later painted by one of their pilgrim friends so they can retell the story more easily. However, in the end, all values tend toward possessing Auristela, as exemplified by the proliferation of her portraits after Book III. In Book IV, one portrait even resembles the Virgin Mary, and its public auctioning creates public disorder, as public attention congregates around it, distracting from institutionalized religious images. The police intervene and take the portrait to the governor, who decides to keep it as part of Rome's treasures (IV, 7). The idolization of Auristela's image presents ironic commentary on how even divine-like beauty can get desire caught up in the representational aspect of images. However, it is revealed that she always remained doubtful about marrying Periandro and held her religious aspirations to enter a convent dear to her heart. Given the expectations that women love by compassion or that their silence suggests acquiescence in early modern literature, we could hold on to the possibility that most interactions in which Auristela confesses love to Periandro are performed under duress. Even her own jealousy and other signs of love, as when she kisses Periandro when he is about to die after falling off a tower (III, 14), should be regarded skeptically. Also, when in Book IV, 7, she hears from Periandro about Hipólita's attempt at seduction, she merely feels a passing concern or temporary jealousy. Such occasions that signal love for Periandro, apparently part of her development as a character before marriage, can be read as a performance of love for Periandro out of necessity. While she cannot withdraw her promise to marry him, that promise is secondary to her secret desire to evade an arranged marriage through religious vocation. Notably, in the world of *Persiles*, the only person who knows the truth about Auristela's origin, and thus her responsibilities and dangers of being a wandering princess, is Periandro. Thus, any possibility of Periandro deviating from a focus on her safety can be a sign of danger for Auristela, as she was at the Barbarian Island before reuniting with him. Jealousy is not an isolated emotional response but another strategy to secure her safety and spiritual desire. In *Persiles*, as in his previous works, Cervantes aims at a reform of erotic love through the purgation of jealousy. However, Auristela implies a renunciation of that reformist hope—replaced by the desire to constantly suspend an unavoidable marriage by imagining an alternative spiritual community.

In *Persiles*, the first sign of the forging of a new libidinal economy that influences marriage emerges through the ship metaphor. While *Persiles* does not portray imperial navigation itself, that impulse is shown as sublimated toward erotic love as part of the "process of civilization." Indeed, the capacity to control naturalized and excessive erotic impulses is the criteria for separating "barbarians" from "civilized" Christians. However, this dichotomy is problematized by erotic love in noble Christians who, despite the Petrarchan influence, also lack self-control. Ironically, while the Christian model of everyday life in marriage is largely absent from the novel, which focuses, as in most literature of the period, on maidens as objects of exchange, that model appears through a hybrid marriage. Only one married couple is thoroughly represented in the novel—an unofficially married couple who escapes with the protagonists from the "barbarian" island and accompany them through most of their pilgrimage across Europe. They are the Spaniard Antonio and his partner Ricla, a "barbarian" who was converted to Catholicism by Antonio himself, according to their story in Book I. That a former

“barbarian” serves as the only example of a Christian wife also contradicts the discourses of “limpieza de sangre,” which are suspicious of all converts. On the other hand, the primary example of lovers compelled to be married is centered around Auristela, who does not want to marry. This sense of the institution’s failure—with its limitations on “blood” and class—proliferates through most love stories in the text.

In *Persiles*, a sonnet sung by the rejected Manuel before he dies synthesizes the failure of the libidinal economy to displace “shipwreck” with Petrarchan love.³ “Shipwreck,” as a metaphor for a libidinal economy that neglects traditional values of the nobility in favor of the traffic of influences, cannot be contained by erotic love, as dramatized by Góngora’s *Soledades* and Quevedo’s navigation sonnet in his Lisi sequence (ed. Garcia-González, sonnet CCLXVIIa). In *Persiles*, while Leonora has rejected Manuel, he remains unable to renounce his desire, personifying a Petrarchan lover—as in the myth of Daphne running from Apollo in poem # 23 of the *Canzoniere* to which Petrarch compares his love for Laura. This poem was reworked in Spain by Garcilaso de la Vega (Sonnet # 3, Eclogue # 3). In this case, the lost love is eternalized not by the crying lover but by the ship. After Periandro, Auristela and others escape the “barbarian” island, now in flames, on a few boats, they hear a fellow passenger sing a sonnet, first in Portuguese and then in Spanish:

Mar sesgo, viento largo, estrella clara,
camino, aunque no usado, alegre y cierto,
al hermoso, al seguro, al capaz puerto
llevan la nave vuestra, única y rara.
En Scilas ni en Caribdis no repara,
ni en peligro que el mar tenga encubierto,
siguiendo su derrota al descubierta,
que limpia honestidad su curso para.
Con todo, si os faltare la esperanza
del llegar a este puerto, no por eso
giréis las velas, que será simpleza.
Que es enemigo amor de la mudanza,
y nunca tuvo próspero suceso
el que no se quilata en la firmeza. (Libro I, Cap. 9)

Calm sea, fair wind, the bright and shining stars,
a path untried but one most sweet and sure—
all these will lead our rare and wondrous ship
to find a pleasant, safe, and spacious port.
Our ship fears neither Scylla nor Charybdis,
nor does it stay its pure and virtuous course

³ Two historical persons named “Manuel” were known by Cervantes and may have inspired this story. Manuel de Sosa Coitinho was a captive with Cervantes in Algiers, and he and his wife also later separated and embraced monastic life, resonating with the story of Manel and Leonora’s separate retreats in the novel. Another person is Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda, who with his wife, Leonora, died after a shipwreck in South Africa. The survivors endured a five-month march. The story achieved legendary status and is included in Luis de Camões’ epic poem *Os Lusíadas* (Armstrong-Roche, 2009).

for fear of dangers that the sea may hide,
 but steers its way through open waters wide.
 But if your hopes for anchor in this port
 should start to waver, hesitate, or pale,
 only a fool would think of shifting sail.
 For love is steadfast enemy to change
 and only he who's constant as a gem
 comes safely to a rich and worthy end. (trans. Richmond-Weller and
 Collahan, p. 56)

In the context of *Persiles's* narrativization of Manuel's story, this sonnet ironizes Petrarchism's transcendental lyricism as self-imposed social death. As Navarrete says about Garcilaso's appropriation of Petrarchan love codes, Garcilaso's sonnets explicitly eroticize Petrarch's decorous desire, criticizing Petrarch's deviations from Ovid through the influence of the erotic Spanish *cancionero* tradition. However, in later poems like *Egloga tercera*, Garcilaso represents love sickness as an adolescent passion (Navarrete 113–26). *Persiles's* narrative of Manuel's love links this Garcilasian critique of Petrarchism, like Góngora's *Soledades*, to literal and figurative navigation. The protagonist of the implied narrative of Manuel's poem wanders the ocean after he is rejected by his beloved. However, unlike the "pilgrim" in *Soledades*, Manuel's navigation and shipwreck have not exhausted his love for Leonora. On the contrary, the destination of the poem conflates divine and erotic love, alluding to the trope of life as a pilgrimage toward God and toward Leonora's rejection of Manuel as a test that only fortifies his desire for her. Thus, much like Quevedo's sonnet in the Lisi sequence ironically preaches, Manuel's sonnet has redirected the dangers of shipwreck toward erotic love, and erotic love, like in Petrarch, according to John Freccero (2015), is spiritualized as a vehicle toward God which becomes conflated with the medium itself, the beloved and lost Laura (146). This ship is neither epic nor colonial, and it has implicitly displaced, as in Quevedo's sonnet, the riches of the Américas to the desired beauty of Leonora, who becomes a medium for spiritual desire. Instead, Manuel's and Leonora's separate deaths and the corruption of the protagonists' pilgrimage destination in Rome imply that this redirection is a failure that conceals symbolic violence against the silent object of desire.

Indeed, a comparison to Grisóstomo's *canción desesperada* in *Don Quixote* (I, 14) can explain the link between Manuel's desire and the ironic critique of "barbarism" in *Persiles*. Marcela is not interested in Grisóstomo or any of the bucolic shepherds seeking her in the countryside. Grisóstomo dies of "desperación" after Marcela rejects him, and a poem he wrote blaming her for his death is read by a friend. Marcela's sudden appearance and speech present a voice of reason in defense of her autonomy to live in the countryside with other shepherdesses. However, Grisóstomo's poem carries a singular Petrarchan voice, which he ironically confesses to be wild, not a vehicle to elevate the missing love, while asking her to listen,

no al concertado son, sino al ruido
 que de lo hondo de mi amargo pecho,
 llevado de un forzoso desvarío,

por gusto mío sale y tu despecho. (*Don Quixote*, I, 14)

Listen, then, to no harmonious song
but to the clangor rising from the depths
of my embittered breast, and borne by frenzy,
sounding to my delight and your displeasure. (trans. Grossman, 114)

This “noise” of irrational desire that overpowers the lover despite rejection is animated by images of wild animals’ voices, such as lion, wolf, crow, and bull, and confused with the voices of a turtledove and an owl, confounding all Grisóstomo’s senses. Disordered desire, thus, is equated with the category of the nonhuman animal in the same way that music is contrasted to “noise” and in the same way that *Persiles* attempts to separate “civilization” from “barbarism.” As Emile Bergmann notes, “Marcela responds not only to the accusations of Grisóstomo’s friend but to the continuing power that his self-destructive desire exerts over the other men through the violently passionate lyric voice in his canción” (273). Thus, by asserting her autonomy, Marcela stands literally outside the barbarian libidinal economy and, for the same reason, is an attractive force to the drive to expand masculine civilization. Similarly, but in a more subtle way, the entanglement of the theme of escape from marriage and taking refuge in the convent that recurs throughout *Persiles* suggests an alternative—despite the design of the novel. This alternative can be explained by virtue of comparison to the resistance to seduction in Calderón’s Faustian *comedia* “El mágico prodigioso” (1637). Here, the female protagonist, Justina, resists the temptation to accept the suitor who sold his soul to the devil.

JUSTINA

Pues no lograrás tu intento;
que esta pena, esta pasión
que afligió mi pensamiento,
llevó la imaginación
pero no el consentimiento (265-269)

Well, your attempt will fail;
that this sorrow, this passion
that afflicted my soul,
took away the imagination
but not the consent. (My translation)

Her religious desire is stronger than the devil’s forces, even when those forces have invaded her imagination. This resistance is dramatized by situating the story in an earlier period when Christianity was minoritarian and persecuted, and thus, no option of escaping to a convent was available. While Calderón’s play presents this resistance as an act of necessary free will, in *Persiles*, Auristela’s rejection is contextualized as repudiating neither the suitor nor the devil but marriage itself as a market exchange in the libidinal economy. Also, Auristela’s resistance is portrayed as neither voluntaristic

nor predestined but contextualized through its allusions to the stories of the other female characters who resisted the economy of marriage through religious experience.

While the narrator and some characters—including Auristela—reiterate a Christian teleology of desire in the form of meta-commentaries, this message is contradicted by the conflicts that reveal a new libidinal economy of modern “barbarism.” The fungibility of all desires within a new libidinal economy that does not offer a sense of transcendence casts any belief in the possibility of spiritual transcendence as minoritarian, if not anachronistic. Two examples from the novel—among many—illustrate this contrast. On Policarpo’s island, amid a crossfire of erotic intrigue, including jealousy, treason, and Auristela’s first confession of her desire not to marry, the narrator asserts the possibility of the Christian spiritual economy:

Todos deseaban pero a ninguno se le cumplían sus deseos, condición de la naturaleza humana que, puesto que Dios la crió perfecta, nosotros, por nuestra culpa, la hallamos siempre falta, la cual falta siempre la ha de haber mientras no dejáremos de desear. (Libro II, Cap. 4)

All of them had desires, but no one’s desires were fulfilled, for it is a condition of human nature that, although God created it perfect, we all, through our own fault, always find it lacks something, and that something will always be lacking unless we stop wanting things. (trans. Richmond and Colahan, 118)

According to the narrator, nobody gets what they think they want because they do not need anything but God. While this passage declares that the connection between human and divine nature necessitates the renunciation of all worldly desires, in practice, this logic necessitates that all desires be subordinated to the end goal of communion as a life journey. This spiritual economy resonates with the “process of civilization,” understood as the shaping of desire by upper-class cultural hegemony. However, ironically, in the Western-like Christian kingdom of Policarpo, similar to the “barbarian” island, the conflicts the adventurers encounter on mainland Europe and even in Rome negate any promise of relief from worldly life. Princess Sinforosa, first through the omniscient narrator and then in her own voice to Auristela, expresses this new flattened economy of desire in which everything is equivalent to everything else. Sinforosa expects Auristela to accept her old father’s proposal without knowing that Auristela is also a princess. Anticipating the lack of sexual appeal of marrying an old man, Sinforosa has already promised to give Auristela a younger husband who would inherit the old one’s wealth or power: “procuraré darte esposo que después, y aun antes de los días de mi padre, le elijan por rey los de este reino; y, cuando esto no pueda ser, mis tesoros podrán comprar otros reinos” (II, 3) (I’ll try to find you a husband who after [and perhaps even before] the end of my father’s days as king may himself be elected king by the people of this kingdom; and if this cannot be, my riches will buy you other) (trans. Richmond and Colahan, 115). Later, Sinforosa insists on similar reasoning:

puesta en pensar que pocas veces se desprecian las riquezas ni los señoríos, especialmente de las mujeres, que por naturaleza las más son codiciosas, como las más son altivas y soberbias. (Book II, Cap, 6)

Ya, señora, eres reina, ya Periandro es mío, ya las riquezas te sobran y si tus gustos en las canas de mi padre no te sobraren, sobrarte han en los del mando y en los de los vasallos, que estarán continuo atentos a tu servicio. (ibíd)

[thinking] . . . convinced that riches and titles are rarely rejected—especially by women—most of whom are by nature greedy, and proud and arrogant, too.
(trans. Richmond and Colahan, 126)

[to Auristela] Now, my lady, you're a queen and Periandro is mine; now you have more than enough riches, and if my father's gray hair doesn't thrill you that much, the joy of command and of having vassals always attentive to your needs will leave you nothing to desire. (ibid)

Dramatic irony infuses Sinforosa's inversion of Auristela's social circumstances by investing in her father's point of view. Instead of the government's directives being an imposition, as they are for Auristela, for Sinforosa, the power conferred by those same responsibilities presents an enticement to marry her old father. Furthermore, she invokes the misogynistic trope of women's superficial greed as exchangeable for love, as if having interiorized love poems that compare women's appearance to the possession of riches, which in early modern poetry is associated with colonial navigation. At the novel's end, the commutability of all desires driving the characters' intentions—desires for power, wealth and love—is equated with religious desire, thus exposing the lack of any possibility of transcendence. The exchangeability of all desires has implicitly replaced the possibility of attaining a higher desire, such as spiritual communion. In the world of the novel, in which the Christian spiritual economy can only be read ironically, Auristela's adoption of that alternative, almost like Don Quixote's figuring himself as a knight errant, can be read as anachronistic. However, unlike the hyperbolically satiric anachronism of Don Quixote, Auristela's anachronism is a more subtle and necessary form of agency as she does not have the option to wander the world by herself, not even to enter an actual convent.

In the following sections, I review recent scholarship that analyzes Auristela's silence in the context of the counter-reformation ideology of marriage and identify the need to forward these analyses of "silence" to the novel's end. Next, I elucidate my contribution to this scholarship by analyzing the dramatic irony of this silence in the light of resonances with other scenes in the novel. Finally, I re-evaluate the figuration of jealousy as a test for marriage in Cervantes's works from the point of view of *Persiles* and early modern Hispanic literature. As in Eve Sedgwick's theorization of the "periperformative" of marriage in nineteenth-century literature, which analogizes marriage and slavery, I conclude that *Persiles* correlates a critique of marriage to a critique of the "process of civilization." *Persiles*, through Auristela, dramatizes how subjects in the transition to modern marriage recuperate religious experience as a creative disidentification from the politics of the same institution.

II. Marriage, Silence, and Desire

In this section, I consider the prevailing assumption in analyses of Auristela's motivations that "silence" means consent. Previous studies on love and the consent to marry in *Persiles* have contextualized her decisions in Christian debates on the free will to marry and the relative importance of chastity and love after the Council of Trent (1545–63). For Ignacio López-Alemany (2005), the novel represents two love models: the "Petrarchan," one-way desire, and the Tridentine, reciprocal and marriage-oriented love. In the case of the variations of love that several men manifest for Auristela, only Periandro's love implies Tridentine love. On the other hand, the love of all other potential suitors, including the admiration implied in the proliferation of her portraits across Europe, represents a literalized version of Petrarchan desire. For López-Alemany, as opposed to platonic desire as in Ficino and León Hebreo, in which the lover aims to transcend the image of the beloved, in Petrarchism, the lover is trapped in the *phantasm* of the woman. However, in both models, the image of the woman replaces the woman herself, as for the Count of Nemours and King Arnaldo—unlike the "Trentian" version of mutual desire, symbolized by Periandro's love. However, it is worth noting that Periandro is ready to forget Auristela's recent rejection when his dying brother marries them. The irony of that ending does not surface if we do not look at the clues Cervantes presents to the reader about Auristela's desire before and after her last rejection scene.

Indeed, the scene in which Auristela and Periandro are married by Periandro's brother resembles a marriage in which the siblings decide for her. Periandro's Petrarchan moment after Auristela's confession that she prefers a conventual life almost leads him to die of "desesperación" (a euphemism for suicide) (IV, 12). However, this phase ends abruptly when he overhears two strangers talking about his brother, who was engaged to Auristela, soon coming into Rome, though severely ill (IV, 13). He realizes that the people he heard were Rutilio,⁴ whom the pilgrims met in the northern seas, and Periandro's old tutor, Seráfido. Through what Periandro (now with his real name, Persiles) hears from Seráfido, readers know that the "pilgrimage" was initially devised by Queen Eustoquia to save her son Periandro (Persiles) from dying of "desesperación" (suicide). However, that is precisely how he feels now that Auristela has rejected him. It is as if Periandro has not changed at all in two years. The queen had convinced the young Auristela to flee with Persiles in order to save him from death. Persiles was conflicted about going against decorum, as his brother, engaged to Auristela, was the new king. In this double bind of love and family politics, Persiles prefers death. The libidinal economy that makes all desires exchangeable, exacerbating individual desires, poses a risk to the power of the elites, who are threatened by erotic love out of familial authority. Now, two years later, afraid that his brother will find out about his secret with Auristela, Persiles has forgotten about her rejection and runs toward his group of pilgrims to warn her. Hipólita offers to help them flee and go with them, and Pirro gets jealous of Hipólita's love for Periandro. After Pirro severely injured Periandro, for which Auristela feels responsible, Magsimino, Periandro's brother, arrives

⁴ Rutilio has left his place as a hermit replacing the hermits Renato and Eusebia in a solitary northern island.

in Rome. Magsimino is about to die and, upon entering Rome, encounters the spectacle of Periandro already stabbed. Sensing he was himself about to die, Magsimino performs the transfer of the promise he was given of Auristela's hand to Periandro:

Magsimino [. . .] viéndose a punto de muerte, con la mano derecha asió la izquierda de su hermano y se la llegó a los ojos, y con su izquierda le asió de la derecha y se la juntó con la de Sigismunda, y con voz turbada y aliento mortal y cansado dijo:

—De vuestra honestidad, verdaderos hijos y hermanos míos, creo que entre vosotros está por saber esto. Aprieta, ¡oh hermano!, estos párpados y ciérrame estos ojos en perpetuo sueño y con esotra mano aprieta la de Sigismunda, y séllala con el sí que quiero que le des de esposo, y sean testigos de este casamiento la sangre que estás derramando y los amigos que te rodean. El reino de tus padres te queda; el de Sigismunda heredas; procura tener salud y góceslos años infinitos.

Estas palabras, tan tiernas, tan alegres y tan tristes, avivaron los espíritus de Persiles y, obedeciendo al mandamiento de su hermano, apretándole la muerte, la mano le cerró los ojos y, con la lengua, entre triste y alegre, pronunció el sí y le dio de ser su esposo a Sigismunda. (Book IV, Cap. 14)

Magsimino [. . .] with his right hand took hold of his brother's left and brought it up to his own eyes, while with his left he grasped Periandro's right hand and placed it in Sigismunda's. Then in a voice racked by exhaustion he said with his dying breath:

—I believe you're prepared for this, my true children and brother and sister. Dear brother, touch these eyelids and close these eyes of mine in eternal sleep, while with this other hand, clasp Sigismunda's and in so doing seal the promise I want you to give her to become her husband, and let the witnesses of this marriage be the blood you're losing and the friends who surround you. Your parents' kingdom awaits you and you'll also inherit Sigismunda's. Strive for good health and you'll enjoy them for countless years to come.

These words, so tender, so happy, and so sad, revived Persiles' spirits; obeying the command of his brother who was in death's grip, he closed his brother's eyes with his hand; then not knowing whether to feel happy or sad, with his tongue he pronounced the "I do" that gave him to Sigismunda as her husband. (trans. Richmond and Colahan, 353–54)

Magsimino, on the brink of death, assumes the authority to officiate marriage and decides the fate of Periandro and Auristela. Auristela remains silent as the siblings execute the entire transaction, and Magsimino dies. Periandro, who, like Auristela, was afraid that his brother could discover his love for her, ironically, says "yes" to Auristela now as Sigismunda; it is assumed that Auristela merely assents to the desire of her former fiancé. However, Periandro forgets that Auristela recently confessed to him that she did not want to marry. Close consideration of Auristela's character arc throughout the book clarifies that she never just assents to what Periandro, his family, or her family wants. Instead, as in the examples of Leonor and Manuel, and recovering the religious

meaning of Marian images as in Feliciano de la voz, she never renounced her desire to enter the convent. However, unlike her first significant silence, on the brink of being sacrificed on the Barbarian Island while disguised as a man, in this last significant silence, Auristela does not have her maid Cloelia to speak for her.

In a later essay, López-Alemany, though not addressing Auristela's decorous "silence," explicates the meaning of "decorum" in relation to the Council of Trent's position on painting. In Renaissance humanism, "decorum" meant sacrificing representational accuracy for rhetorical effectiveness, while for the Counter-Reformation influences by Trent, this decorum had to be subordinated to promote "decency." As Vicente Carducho explained in *Dialogos de la pintura* (1633), painting had to transcend *imitatio* by amending reality, which in practice meant avoiding portraying authorities and heroes in a bad light (Lopez-Alemany, 2008). López-Alemany's application of this concept of decorum to the contrast between Periandro's feats, as he narrates them in speech, and the paintings that he later commissions, can help us contextualize Auristela's silence. While Lopez-Alemany's reference to decorum in painting refers to amending in accordance with hegemonic values, in *Persiles*, from Periandro's point of view, Auristela's unrepresented perspective, as signaled by her "silence," points to a re-contextualization of "decorum" within an alternative ethical framework. In Lope de Vega's *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias* (1609), dramatic tropes must be adapted to educate the general public; however, from the implied perspective of objects of desire like Auristela, decorum suggests a reappropriation of tropes such as silence itself, not to educate others but to escape surveillance. Since in *Persiles* all paintings focused on Auristela are portraits meant to highlight her near-divine beauty, she remains essentially silent compared to the paintings focused on retelling their pilgrimage from Periandro's perspective as a hero. In this case, decorum erases the moments when she rejects Periandro or marriage altogether in favor of the convent. In this ideological visual culture, the inferred collective voice of objects of desire like Auristela can only be heard if we pay attention to the resonances between and among their moments of resistance.

Michel Armstrong-Roche (2009, 2016) analyzes silence in three scenes: Leonora's rejection of Manuel; Feliciano de la Voz's Marian hymn (Book III, cap. 5); and Auristela's sacrifice at the barbarian island in Book I. Building on Diana de Armas, he considers the story of Leonora, who rejects Manuel for the convent and later dies upon finding out that he has died of sadness. For De Armas, this story serves as both an inspiration and a cautionary tale for Auristela's ambivalence about whether to marry. As in the case of Auristela with Periandro and his family, Manuel and Leonora's father assume that her "silence" means assent, thus casting doubt on the value of silence in light of the Council of Trent's defense of spousal choice. After being rejected, Manuel agrees with her decision even though he will never stop grieving. Leonora chooses "Mary over Martha," referring to the sisters who received Jesus; Mary is just focused on listening to him, while Martha is more focused on attending the house (Gospel of St. Luke, 10). If Mary is a metaphor for contemplation while Martha is a metaphor for action, in this case as housework, both models are in conflict in the context of counter-reformation marriage. In theory, Trent's doctrine would pit the church's defense of spousal free will against noble parents' arranged marriages. However, in practice, the church counseled young lovers to obey their families and, as we see in the case of Feliciano, disobedient women risked punishment by male relatives (Armstrong-Roche,

2009, “Cruelty in the Name of Faith”). Feliciano is about to be killed by her father and brother. Before the sudden resolution of the conflict, she takes refuge in singing her Marian song and declares herself the “daughter of her voice” more than a daughter of her family (ibid, 2016).

Furthermore, Armstrong-Roche identifies the resonance between the function of the Virgin Mary in her song as the messenger of God that rescinds the order for Abraham to kill his son Isaac (Genesis 22, 1–19) and Feliciano’s own story. As if by miracle, Feliciano’s brother and father not only forgive her but also become nurturing relatives thanks to the persuasive arguments of witnesses and her lover’s relatives. For Armstrong-Roche, this failed sacrifice scene also echoes Auristela’s sacrifice scene at the “barbarian” island, when, moments before the slaughter, Cloelia reveals that the person they are about to kill is a woman disguised as a man. Building on these insights, I focus not on the prevention of female sacrifice but on another effect of the event of “silence.” Silence about imminent death connects Feliciano’s singing of her Marian hymn to Auristela’s acceptance of her sacrifice by the “barbarians” and to the end, in which she does not complain about the sudden marriage. This indifference suggests an alternative perspective to the novel’s main narrative of character formation and then incorporation into marriage.

From Auristela’s point of view, two narrative threads intersect with her silent consent to marriage at the end. On the one hand, Auristela’s silence resonates, as indicated by Armstrong-Roche, with Feliciano’s refuge in the Marian Song and her silence in the face of imminent sacrifice on the “barbarian” island. On the other hand, this ending contrasts with the two occasions in which Auristela manifests her preference for becoming a nun. In Book IV, Auristela recovers from a magic spell that almost killed her. The courtesan Hipólita, envious that she could not lure Periandro away from Auristela and suspicious that they are more than siblings, paid the witch and Jewish wife of Zabulón to take away Auristela’s beauty.⁵ Like in Calderon’s *El Mágico prodigioso*, the way magic or devilish forces work invokes the Christian doctrine that the free will cannot be directly manipulated, only incited. Thus, Hipólita’s strategy is to capture Periandro’s attention by eliminating Auristela. She almost dies, but upon seeing that Periandro is dying because of empathy with the suffering of his beloved, Hipólita asks the witch to reverse the spell. However, even though taking Auristela’s beauty away does not help her win Periandro, it succeeds in taking away Auristela’s will to marry—ironically enabling her to intensify her religious call despite Periandro’s expectations. While not fully recovered, she meets with Periandro privately, without their fellow pilgrims present. The privacy and her altered state of mind enable her to go against decorum and the expectation to love out of compassion, and she confesses to Periandro her preference for the convent. Though her state of mind may suggest that Auristela is making a hasty decision, this is not the first time she has expressed her consideration of the convent as an alternative to marriage. Auristela was well aware of the problem of making hasty religious vows. After a hasty marriage to the dying Count,

⁵ Zabulón is the Jewish businessman who offered the pilgrims upon their entrance in Rome that they stay in one of his lodgings, though they went with another Jewish businessman, Abiud (IV, 3). Zabulón was also the one who introduced Periandro to Hipólita, thus he had a decisive role in the plot by inserting a faustian detour. According to the note to the RAE edition by Carlos Romero, in this period the Jewish name “Zabulón” was for Christians synonymous with the devil.

Constanza, the young daughter of mixed “Barbarian” and old-Christian Spaniard blood, suddenly decides to become a nun right after he dies; however, Auristela warns her: “– ¿Qué voto queréis hacer, señora? –De ser monja –respondió la Condesa. –Sedlo, y no le hagáis” (III, 9) (“What vow do you want to make, my lady?” “To be a nun,” replied the countess. “Be one but don’t make a vow”) (Trans. Richmond and Colahan, 248).

Auristela’s decision to take the veil could not be more different: she has been promised to Periandro for almost two years and has already considered the convent option, while Constanza has just met her (deceased) husband and has never voiced consideration of a conventual vocation. Thus, Auristela’s state of mind after the effects of the spell fade can be read not as rushing her to make a decision but as enabling her to articulate herself. She is straightforward about not wanting to marry, as she is straightforward on only a handful of occasions throughout the novel:

. . . advierte que en la tabla rasa de mi alma ha pintado la experiencia y escrito mayores cosas; principalmente ha puesto que en solo conocer y ver a Dios está la suma gloria, y todos los medios que para este fin se encaminan son los buenos, son los santos, son los agradables, como son los de la caridad, de la honestidad y el de la virginidad [. . .] Heredera soy de un reino y ya tú sabes la causa por que mi querida madre me envió en casa de los reyes tus padres, por asegurarme de la grande guerra de que se temía; desta venida se causó el de venirme yo contigo, tan sujeta a tu voluntad que no he salido della un punto; tú has sido mi padre, tú mi hermano, tú mi sombra, tú mi amparo y, finalmente, tú mi ángel de guarda y tú mi enseñador y mi maestro, pues me has traído a esta ciudad, donde he llegado a ser cristiana como debo. Querría ahora, si fuese posible,irme al cielo sin rodeos, sin sobresaltos y sin cuidados, y esto no podrá ser si tú no me dejas la parte que yo misma te he dado, que es la palabra y la voluntad de ser tu esposa. (IV, 10)

. . . observe that on the blank slate of my soul experience has drawn and written important things. Primarily, it has written that knowing and seeing God is the highest glory, and all the means directed toward that end, such as charity, purity, and virginity, are good, holy, and pleasing . . . I’m the heiress to a kingdom, and you already know that the reason my dear mother sent me to the house of your parents the king and queen was to keep me safe from the great war then feared. You know, too, that going there was the cause of my coming with you here, so entirely subject to your will that I haven’t strayed from it in the slightest. You’ve been my father and you’ve been my brother, you, my shadow, my help, and finally, my guardian angel. You’ve been my instructor and my teacher, bringing me to this city where I’ve become a Christian, as I ought. I’d like now, if possible, to go to Heaven with no delays, no unpleasant surprises and no worries, but that won’t be possible if you won’t give me back what I myself have given you, which is my promise and desire to be your wife. (Trans. Richmond and Colahan, 341)

Auristela’s speech counters the love-poetry trope of the beloved impressed on your soul. Rather than enhancing her love for Periandro, her experience of shipwreck and pilgrimage has intensified her love for the spiritual path. The pilgrimage inspires in her a

different perspective from that of Periandro, one inflected by gender and the relative importance of marriage. Further, Auristela confesses that she has always adjusted her will to the will of her mother, Periandro, or his family. She also reminds Periandro about the political context in which the decision that she escapes with him was made. Now, she asserts her desire to align her will with her own desire, which is not to get married but to get “closer to god,” which can be interpreted as wanting to enter a convent or becoming a mystic, but in resonance with narratives of escape from imposed marriage. Thus, Auristela suggests that marriage is an obstacle to getting closer to her religious desire. The desire for autonomy is the only explicit link between her decision not to marry and religion. Regardless of whether Periandro is an ideal husband, Auristela's promise of marriage has already been decided for her.

A similar protest underlies Auristela's threat to Periandro in Book II. Jealous of Sinfrosa, Auristela seizes the occasion to threaten Periandro with joining a nunnery. In another private conversation, freed from performing her sibling-identity and recovering from sickness, she expresses her religious desire for escape:

. . . nuestro camino a Roma, cuanto más le procuramos, más se dificulta y alarga; mi intención no se muda pero tiembla, y no querría que entre temores y peligros me saltease la muerte y así, pienso acabar la vida en religión, y querría que tú la acabases en buen estado. (Book II, Cap. 5)

The more we try to follow our road to Rome, the more difficult and longer it becomes. My intention is unchanged, but it's wavering, and since I wouldn't want death to come upon me while immersed in these fears and dangers, I plan to spend the rest of my life in religious orders; I'd like you to finish yours in the happy state of matrimony. (Trans. Richmond and Colahan, 119)

Although she is far from Rome in Book II, Auristela's ambivalence about whether their pilgrimage to Rome should end in marriage or lead her to live a religious life outside of it is already stirring. This revelation occurs in a moment of jealousy—and yet her associations reveal an enduring preoccupation. She is ready to abandon her goal of pilgrimage to Rome to enter a convent. Marriage has always been an imposition: even though she consented to the marriage, it is not the fulfillment of her own desire, thereby subtly critiquing the Trentian interpretation of spousal free will. Both confessions to Periandro in Books II and IV imply that the Trentian defense of the bride's and groom's free will does not take into consideration implicit power dynamics. Thus, this private conversation on Policarpo's island shows, by comparison, one aspect of the dramatic irony at the novel's end. While Magsimino does not know about the love between Periandro and Auristela, neither he nor the other characters know of Auristela's declarations of her intent to repudiate her responsibilities to him and pursue a spiritual life. Periandro—and the readers—know, but he is happy to have escaped a confrontation with his brother and finally be able to marry her. Thus, Armstrong-Roche helps identify the “silence” issue in Auristela, an assertion that I place in dialogue with her confessions that she does not want to marry. These confessions reveal no signs for us to assume that she changed her mind simply because she did not oppose the marriage.

Furthermore, for Isabel Lozano-Renieblas (2019), Auristela's indecision about marrying reflects a contemporary conflict between the values of "love" and "chastity." Lozano-Renieblas reminds us that even before her religious intensification in continental Europe, in Book I, 2, we are told that Auristela rejects Prince Arnaldo by saying she has made a lifetime vow of virginity. Ironically, however, in the context of the early modern libidinal economy, a vow of virginity stands only to increase her sexual appeal. Virginity is one of the requirements for a marriageable young, which contributes to the sublimation of erotic desire for virgins in the goal of marriage. Moreover, the context of Books I and II in the northern Islands, where Auristela and other young female characters live in constant danger of being kidnapped, implies an economy where corsairs and pirates traffic women. In this pirate economy of maidens, a woman's virginity only adds value to her as a commodity—though how "virginity" is ever confirmed goes unexplained. The nautical economy of women and the market of women in arranged marriages are most certainly linked. Thus, the conflict between "love" and "chastity" emerges only in the double bind of female marriage in which the woman must at once be chaste and break that chastity with her husband. *Persiles's* focus on the fragile free will of maidens to marry anticipates this paradox.

Lozano-Renieblas also evinces that, when jealous of Sinforosa in Book II, Auristela concludes, apparently to provoke Periandro, that it is best to flee toward religion, a conclusion that resonates with Leonor's flight from Manuel. However, for Lozano-Renieblas, Auristela's later religious understanding of such a conflict rehabilitates early Christian anxieties against Trent, in which chastity supposedly does not oppose marriage, as famously described by Fray Luis de León's *The Perfect Wife* (1583). This ambiguity had been a preoccupation since the church fathers, who had to rehabilitate matrimony as a divine gift; and, indeed, Cervantes's time saw an anxiety about the rebirth of Encratism, a practice of absolute celibacy without being ordained (*ibid*). *Persiles* mocks this tendency through the exiled hermits Renato and Eusebia, who are temporarily chaste until they are allowed to return to France. However, Lozano-Renieblas, like Armstong-Roche and Lopez-Aleman, still assumes that Auristela changes her mind at the novel's end and wants to marry, despite a lack of evidence. Against the grain of this scholarship, I analyze Auristela's silences; instead of assuming that they mean consent, I see them as strategic deferrals to make space for her religious desire and implied potential community that recontextualizes the economy of marriage from her perspective.

Indeed, at the novel's beginning, Auristela prefigures her meaningful silence at the climax. Disguised as a young man held captive on the "barbarian" island, she is about to be sacrificed to satisfy the native deity's thirst for men's hearts. The dramatic irony of this surprise scene is that Cloelia, Auristela's maid, was the guardian of the prison that held Auristela—a fact that we, as readers know, but not the "barbarians" about to kill her. What we do not know as readers is why Cloelia chose not to reveal Auristela's identity until the last minute, though it may have been to protect her from the desires of other male captives or the barbarians transporting her. However, Aurisela also refuses to reveal her female identity and save herself, as if having given up hope after many travails:

Sin más ceremonias que atarle un lienzo por los ojos, le hicieron hincar de rodillas, atándole por atrás las manos, el cual, sin hablar palabra, como un manso cordero, esperaba el golpe que le había de quitar la vida. Visto lo cual por la antigua Cloelia, alzó la voz y, con más aliento que de sus muchos años se esperaba, comenzó a decir:

—Mira, ¡oh, gran gobernador!, lo que haces, porque ese varón que mandas sacrificar no lo es, ni puede aprovechar ni servir en cosa alguna a tu intención porque es la más hermosa mujer que puede imaginarse. Habla, hermosísima Auristela y no permitas, llevada de la corriente de tus desgracias, que te quiten la vida, poniendo tasa a la providencia de los cielos, que te la pueden guardar y conservar, para que felizmente la goces (Libro I, Cap. 4).

. . .with no more ceremony than blindfolding him, made him kneel down, tying his hands behind him. Not saying a word and like a gentle lamb, the young man waited for the blow to take his life. When old Cloelia saw this, she raised her voice and with more vigor than might be expected at her age, she spoke up: – Consider, great chief, what you’re doing, for that man you’re ordering sacrificed isn’t one at all, nor can he be of any use or serve you in any way you intend, because he’s a woman, the most beautiful imaginable. Speak, beautiful Auristela, and don’t—swept away by your misfortunes—let them take your life, for that would limit Heaven’s providential power, which can yet save and protect you and bring you future. (trans. Richmond and Colahan, 32–33)

The narrator compares Auristela’s lack of protest to a tame lamb facing impending slaughter. As previously discussed, this silence and rescue resonates with Felician’s Marian song, in which the Virgin Mary is the divine messenger who prevents Abraham from killing Isaac. What saves Auristela is Cloelia’s opportune intervention to save her mistress, like the Virgin Mary preventing the killing of the innocent Isaac in the song, and like Felician’s own singing, which delays her killing and enables her family to meet with her fiancé’s relatives who help her relatives’ change of mind. In the scene on the barbarian island, Cloelia ventriloquizes Auristela and reveals her identity. Suddenly, her physical features shine in a new light as if by the miracle of her gender reveal. Thus, Cloelia plays the same role Mary has in Felician’s song, which is missing in the last scene of the novel in which Auristela is married without her companion to speak for her. However, because Cloelia already knew the identity of the young man about to be killed, we can infer that she and Auristela may have agreed to stage her gender reveal at the last minute to impress their captors and negotiate their freedom. Thus, this scene has more in common with the staging of Leonora’s wedding with the necessary help of the nuns, who never revealed she would become a nun instead of marrying Manuel (I, 9). On the other hand, the aid of the nuns and the aid of Cloelia is one element missing for Auristela’s silence to affect others at the end of the novel. Only she (and the readers and supposedly Periandro) knows what she wants. While Auristela is not held captive by Periandro and his brother, the tremendous responsibility of preventing a war within and between kingdoms because of narrativized Petrarchan desire weighs on her. Through this play of resonances, marriage is equivalent to a sacrifice of women’s desire

within the libidinal economy as a process of civilization symbolized by the fragile stability of the ruling classes maintained through endogamy.

What unites these stories of silent resistance to arranged marriages is their figuration as a kind of sacrifice of the free will of the beloved woman that ultimately fails in getting rid of her free will. Thus, these stories also resonate with Auristela's silence in the face of being sacrificed by the barbarians and her rescue by Cloelia. Leonor's decision to enter the convent instead of marrying Manuel retroactively reveals that her wedding would have sacrificed her preference to the homosocial economy of marriage. Feliciano is about to be killed by her male relatives for not submitting herself to the same economy but is saved by the delay that her Marian singing inserts in her plot. These failed sacrifices of female free will in *Persiles* present a significant contrast to the issue of Quiteria's free will to marry the cunning Basilio in the "Bodas de Camacho" episode in *Don Quixote* II, 21. From what the reader learns from other characters, they were in love with each other before her parents decided to marry her to a wealthier farmer, Camacho. During the wedding ceremonies, Basilio appears, saying that he would rather die than not marry her, and throws himself onto a blade he fixed in the ground. He refuses to confess to save his soul unless she marries him before he dies. Convinced by everybody, even by her groom Camacho, to marry Basilio to save his soul, she accepts, and once the ceremony is blessed by the priest, he jumps off the blade. Some claim a miracle, but Basilio says it is "industria" (ibíd). While in this case we have a (mock) sacrifice—not of the woman but of the man, what is at stake is the woman's free will, in inverse resemblance to Auristela's sacrifice scene on the barbarian island. On the barbarian island, Auristela passes as a man about to be sacrificed and is rescued by Periandro, who is passing as a woman. In the Bodas de Camacho, as Mary Gossi (1990) points out, from a psychoanalytical perspective, Basilio's performance of sacrifice is also a feminization as it takes place through (fake) bloody penetration. However, unlike Auristela's rejection of Periandro in *Persiles*, Quiteria, given the opportunity, reaffirms the marriage that she was pressured to accept, suggesting a change of mind or a slow awakening to the situation. Information about Quiteria's decision is limited to mention in chapter 22: that she did not know anything about the plan, as she is only part of an inserted story, unlike Auristela's central character in *Persiles*. However, Stanislav Zimic (1972), following Américo Castro's characterization of this scene as a Cervantine "engaño a los ojos" (1925), asserts the importance of how Cervantes stages the sacrificial aspect, which is also relevant to *Persiles*. Stories with a punishment or sacrifice element eventually revealed as an illusion reflect concerns in Cervantes's time about the unstable nature of reality. While mentioning resonances with scenes in Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* and Heliodoro's *Aethiopica* (the narrative model for *Persiles*), Zimic focuses mainly on one scene in the Greek romance novel *The Adventures of Leucippe and Clitophon*, by Achilles Tatius (second century CE). This scene would have been available to Cervantes only through an Italian translation of the novel. Surprisingly, while Zimic uses that scene from Tatius as a comparison to Bodas de Camacho, the scene is also comparable to Auristela's sacrifice in *Persiles*. From a distance, the hero witnesses the sacrifice of his beloved on a barbarian island; believing she is dead, he is poised to commit suicide. However, it is revealed that the captives staged the sacrifice to deceive the barbarians—also using animal intestines and blood, as Basilio does in *Don Quixote*. Zimic highlights the similar dramatic ironies in both

Tatius and Cervantes, in which the protagonist and we, the readers, are deceived. However, the fundamental difference is that in Tatius, this is only one isolated, sensational element, while in the *Bodas de Camacho*, it remains within the possibilities of the worlds that Cervantes creates. What can be added to Zimic's analysis, through Gossi's assertions of Basilio's feminization, is that the actual sacrifice in this scene is of Quiteria's free will, regardless of whether she later changes her mind. As in Auristela's scene at the end of the novel, when she is suddenly married to Periandro, her consent is irrelevant to the transaction, though, unlike Quiteria, she does not want to marry in the first place. If we redirect the analysis of deceitful sacrifice to Auristela's sacrifice scene and its resonances to the scenes of the sacrifice of women's free will, we can conclude that, unlike Tatius and the *Bodas de Camacho*, escape from the marriage sacrifice does not reinforce the libidinal economy. By revealing that her desire is situated outside the marriage economy, *Persiles* shows how the sacrifice of women's free will is an illusion.

Closer to my perspective is Rachel Schmidt's (2020) recuperation of the active aspect of Auristela's role in the novel in the tradition of female pilgrims and their likenesses to wandering *pícaras*. Maidens from noble families did not live that differently from nuns, unlike the female pilgrims and the connotations of "wandering women," as in the female picaresque novel *La pícaro Justina* (1605), in which the protagonist is both prostitute and pilgrim, like Luisa la Talaverana in *Persiles*. However, by Cervantes's time, pilgrimage travel was already less common and had completed its process of interiorization since the Middle Ages, as when, in 1575, Luis de Granada called this life "extranjera and peregrina" at the moment Philip II imposed harsher restrictions on travelers. Thus, in this climate of interiorized pilgrimage, in which women are losing the option to travel, Auristela can be seen as a ghostly figure; though, unlike the satirical anachronism of Don Quixote, Auristela's pilgrimage maintains a serious tone. However, despite the lack of explicit satire in *Persiles*, the irony of reaching the end of the pilgrimage in Rome and finding it less religious than expected suggests the corruption of the religious value of the pilgrimage as a structural destination. Instead, the religious value becomes a gesture toward a community outside the libidinal economy.

III. Religion and Idolatry in Rome

Indeed, the main concern here is not so much that wandering *pícaras* could pass for *peregrinas* or that the literary imagination of Cervantes's time associated the two. The issue is that the novel represents the satisfaction of the desire for pilgrimage in Rome itself as impossible. I have analyzed Auristela's preference for the convent as a way to assert her autonomy—in opposition to a one-way male “Petrarchan” gaze concealed by the political discourse on the “free will” to marry. This one-way male gaze relates to Rome's general corruption of desire. While the pilgrims celebrate the sonnet in praise of Rome being recited by another pilgrim (Book IV, 3) upon seeing the city from a distance, actual events in the city suggest that Cervantes meant this praise to be ironic. Indeed, the unnamed pilgrim claims to be responding to a famous and widely circulated sonnet against Rome composed by an anonymous Spanish poet. I reproduce one version of the sonnet against Rome and not the sonnet in *Persiles* because it more accurately reflects the implied irony when Book IV is read in its entirety:

Un santo padre electo a mojicones,
 en cuya creación votan lacayos,
 de cuyas ceremonias los ensayos
 causan espanto a todas las naciones,
 sin religión trescientas religiones,
 tres agujas asombro de los payos,
 cuatro caballos que los partan rayos
 porque no los adoren bujarrones,
 un Coliseo medio derribado,
 duques de anillo, condes palatinos,
 cortesanos comidos de carcoma,
 tres calles solas para el desenfado,
 putos y putas todos sus vecinos:
 esta es, en suma, la triunfante Roma. (Lara Garrido, 2020)

A holy father elected by punches,
 in whose election lackeys vote,
 of whose ceremonies the rehearsals
 cause terror to all nations,
 a mob of three hundred religions,
 three obelisks amaze the ignorant,
 may lightning break the four horses
 so that sodomites don't love them,
 a Colosseum half in ruins,
 dukes by the ring, palatine counts,
 courtiers eaten away by creditors,
 three streets just to let off steam,
putos and *putas* all their neighbors:
 this is, in short, the triumphant Rome. (My translation)

José Lara Garrido identifies a resemblance between the satiric style of this poem against Rome and the style of a famous early sonnet by Góngora against the court of Madrid (“A la confusión de la corte” [1588]). In turn, Góngora’s sonnet was influenced by the Italian “pasquinate,” or Renaissance satirical genre of sonnets against Rome that were censored during the Counter-reformation, as the reciter of the poem in praise of Rome in *Persiles* knows (Lara Garrido, 1994). Satires of internal power struggles in the papacy had become a model for Góngora’s diatribe against the court, which in turn influenced images of Rome as similar to a secular courtly environment. Greed and traffic in influence and prostitutes amid an image of the ruins of ancient Rome come to define the city. *Persiles* presents Rome in a less satirical tone such that objectification and the privileged male subject of desire relate to the corruption of religious images. This corruption was anticipated by the several occasions in which Auristela’s beauty is qualified as “divine.” Though meant as hyperbole, the comparison of human beauty to divine beauty was not without self-consciousness about the possibility of idolatry, as ventriloquized by Cervantes through Periandro himself: “se mostró a aquel punto tan hermosa que yo disculpo el error de aquellos que la tuvieron por divina” (Book II, 10) (she radiated such beauty at that moment that I can forgive the error of those who thought her divine) (trans. Richmond and Colahan, 145). Ironically, the old and corrupt Rome, and thus religion, is infected not only by prostitution—among other things—but also by idealized erotic desire. Thus, as in the Petrarchan love for Laura, religious and masculine-erotic desires are equivalent.

In Rome, public adoration of Auristela’s beauty is analogous to how the marriage institution only includes her as a homosocial object of exchange. The expectation by readers is that, upon arriving in Rome, the pilgrims contemplate the spectacle of religious images. However, Auristela and her beautiful female companions become the center of attention. While they visit the churches, the public gathers around them to contemplate Auristela’s beauty. It is even suggested by a passerby, qualified as exaggerated by the narrator, that Auristela’s face be covered so it does not disturb the public space:

Yo apostaré que la diosa Venus, como en los tiempos pasados, vuelve a esta ciudad a ver las reliquias de su querido Eneas. Por Dios, que hace mal el señor gobernador de no mandar que se cubra el rostro desta movable imagen. ¿Quiere, por ventura, que los discretos se admiren, que los tiernos se deshagan y que los necios idolatren? (Book IV, Cap. 3)

I’ll wager the goddess Venus is returning to this city as of old to see the remains of her beloved Aeneas! By God, the governor is lax in not ordering the face of this moving idol covered. Does he, by chance, want the wise to be dumbfounded, the tenderhearted undone, and the fools to fall into idolatry? (Trans. Richmond and Colahan, 317)

In contrast to the impression that Auristela made in the previous books, the near-divine beauty now threatens to provoke idolatry, mistaking the medium for what is represented. The pedestrian compares Auristela to Venus, the goddess of passion,

complaining that she should incite more virtue than passion. Like Petrarchan objects of desire, beauty has the force to draw the viewer unto itself and away from God. The narrator has already mentioned that the Christian festivities of La Monda used to be pagan festivities in honor of Venus, who has become Christianized as the Virgin Mary (Book III, 6).⁶ Thus, Cervantes imagines the failure of the Christianization of the ancient sensuality that exceeds it, resonating with the failure to subsume religious desire in the marriage promise in *Persiles*. Auristela's beauty, though never described in detail by the narrator, is assumed to hold a supernatural quality, disseminating its effects throughout Rome. The public even surrounds the house where they lodge, demanding that the female pilgrims, especially Auristela, let themselves be seen. Thus, ironically, at their very pilgrimage destination, Auristela herself becomes the center of attention, trumping reader expectations set up throughout the entire novel.

The danger of idolatry caused by Auristela's beauty is again invoked by the circulation of one of her portraits throughout Europe. According to the narrator, Auristela, accompanied by Periandro, has been deepening her knowledge about the theological mysteries of the Catholic faith. While Periandro is eager to have Auristela as his wife, now that she has fulfilled her desire for Catholic instruction, Auristela is more worried about religious virtue and the dangers of illegitimate marriage. Periandro's motivation for the pilgrimage was always extrinsic: an excuse to escape his country, where his brother was engaged to Auristela, so he could eventually marry her. On the other hand, Auristela has developed an intrinsic motivation for the pilgrimage that she has even interiorized as a vocation. This newfound vocation, however, differs from public religion in Rome. Contrasting her aspirations with the corruption of the public space, Auristela and her female companions find a strange attraction: a painting of Auristela auctioned on the street. The hyperbolic amount of money offered for it by Arnaldo and the Duke of Nemours is qualified by a witness as "cosa de encantamento" (akin to the effects of a spell). Here, the narrator describes the portrait, and the owner interprets it:

. . . un retrato entero, de pies a cabeza, de una mujer que tenía una corona en la cabeza, aunque partida por medio la corona, y a los pies un mundo, sobre el cual estaba puesta . . .

—Eso, señora —dijo el dueño—, son fantasías de pintores o caprichos, como los llaman; quizá quieren decir que esta doncella merece llevar la corona de hermosura, que ella va hollando en aquel mundo; pero yo quiero decir que dice que vos, señora [Auristela], sois su original y que merecéis corona entera, y no mundo pintado, sino real y verdadero. (Book IV, Cap. 6)

. . . a full-length portrait (that is, from head to toe) of a woman wearing a crown on her head—though the crown was split in half— whose feet were set on a globe of the world . . .

"Those, lady," said the owner, "are the fantasies of painters, or caprices, as they're called. Perhaps it's trying to say this maiden deserves to wear the crown

⁶ The notes to the RAE Edition by Ignacio Garía Aguilar and Carlos Romero Muñoz explain that the festivities of La Monda, celebrated the Saturday after Holy Week, are actually a Christianization of the cult of Ceres, not Venus.

of beauty and is trampling the world underfoot. But I feel it means that you, my lady, are its original and deserve a whole crown, and not just a painted world, but one that's real and true." (Trans. Richmond and Colahan, 325)

This description of a portrait of a lady wearing a crown and standing astride the world resembles the iconography of the Immaculate Conception in Cervantes's time, as in Pacheco (left, about 1619) and Velazquez (right, about 1618). Rachel Schmidt has identified the resonances between the description of Mary in Feliciano's song (Book III, Cap. 5) and the representation of Mary in a geometrical cosmos atop a crescent moon in baroque paintings. For Schmidt, since Isidore of Seville, the moon, reflecting the sun's light, symbolized Mary as a humility trope in annunciation iconography.



While the Virgin Mary as the moon reflected the light of God over the whole earth, thus symbolizing humility, Auristela reflects that light on the earth, her beauty shining over all mortals in her proximity. In the seller's interpretation, the brokenness of the crown is a mark that the portrait is a copy of the original Auristela. However, her inexplicable beauty and divine qualities capture pedestrian attention, apparently serving as a vehicle to channel divine desire. Ideally, this response would resemble the function attributed to Mary by Feliciano's Marian song in Book III, which addresses the virgin directly. Mary mediates and re-aligns stained desire toward God, as expressed in one stanza:

Creced, hermosa planta, y dad el fruto

presto en sazón, por quien el alma espera
 cambiar en ropa rozagante el luto
 que la gran culpa le vistió primera.
 De aquel inmenso y general tributo
 la paga conveniente y verdadera
 en vos se ha de fraguar; creed, Señora,
 que sois universal remediadora. (Libro III. Cap 5, stanza #11)

Grow, beautiful plant, and bring forth the ripe
 fruit for which the soul awaits, so she may soon
 change from the mourning in which she was dressed
 by the first great sin into festive garb.
 The true and fitting payment
 for that immense and common debt
 must be made through you: Be assured, Lady,
 that you are the universal comforter. (trans. Richmond and
 Callahan, 226)

Here, the event of original sin that triggered the need to reunite with the Christian god is metaphorized as a debt. Mary catalyzes the payment of this debt of salvation. Auristela, a Marian image on earth, is also expected to mediate between spiritual and worldly desire. However, as I mentioned, the novel conveys that the mediation of religious desire through beauty is corrupted. The first passerby suggested that Auristela's face be covered to control public order. Now, the people admiring the Marian portrait of Auristela realize they have the "original" Auristela. Seeing that the crowd now decides to surround their carriage to see Auristela closely, Periandro also tells her to cover her face:

—Auristela, hermana, cúbrase el rostro con algún velo, porque tanta luz ciega y no nos deja ver por dónde caminamos.

Hízolo así Auristela y pasaron adelante, pero no por esto dejó de seguirlos mucha gente, que esperaban a que se quitase el velo, para verla como deseaban. (Book IV, Cap. 6)

—Sister Auristela, cover your face with a veil, for the light shining from it is blinding and we can't see where we're going.

Auristela did as he requested and they moved on, but that didn't keep several people from following them, hoping she'd eventually remove the veil so they could see her. (trans. Richmond and Callahan, 325)

As if waiting for a divine revelation, the crowd seeks and awaits the unveiling of Auristela, reifying Auristela's image itself. Instead of being a medium toward God, as is expected of Marian images, Auristela's appearance becomes the very source of obsession.

Set against Auristela's religious instruction in Rome, which led her to reject Periandro, Cervantes contrasts religious aspiration by describing the public's obsession

with Auristela's undescribed beauty. Similar to the earlier duel (Book IV, Cap. 4) and then bidding (Book IV, Cap. 6) between Arnaldo and the Duke of Nemours for the portraits of Auristela, the object of desire becomes both fetish and source of conflict. As a generalized form of social Petrarchism, this corruption of desire resonates with the novel's criticism of barbaric customs in the northern islands. The barbarian island of Book I burns to the ground due to unrestrained passions regarding a prophecy triggered by the sexual appeal of Auristela and Periandro. Similarly, Policarpo's feudal island is scorched because of the king's passion for Auristela.

Thus, keeping in mind this unresolved juxtaposition between Auristela's desire not to marry despite her consent and the public idealization of her beauty set against her private desire to join the convent, it is clear that she places the marriage option on a similar problem of one-way desire. Like the idolatry of her public image, marriage does not serve her singular intentions. By interpreting Auristela's desire not to marry as resistance to becoming an object of desire in marriage as a form of idolatry, we can interpret the novel's end as ironic. After Auristela has confessed her desire, and before she is married off, Periandro leaves feeling rejected while she is confident about getting what she wants:

Dijo su voluntad Auristela a Periandro, cumplió con su deseo y, satisfecha de haberle declarado, esperaba su cumplimiento, confiada en la rendida voluntad de Periandro [. . .]. (Book IV, Cap. 13.

Auristela revealed her wishes to Periandro, thereby satisfying her desire; happy to have made it known to him, she then expected him to comply, since she was confident he'd bend his will to suit hers. (trans. Richmond and Colahan, 349)

The narrator, entering Auristela's stream of thought, reaffirms, right before the scene in which her marriage is formalized, that she was still set on her intention to join a religious house. Thus, if we keep this impression while reading the scene of her marriage acceptance, there is no indication that Auristela has changed her mind—just an ironic assent. After the jealous Pirro stabs Periandro (Book IV, Chapter 15), Auristela feels responsible and is willing to submit to his desire. However, even though she now regrets that she declared her desire to Periandro, the princess in disguise does not renounce it but merely declares it is better to hide it and submit to his desires:

Auristela, arrepentida de haber declarado su pensamiento a Periandro, volvió a buscarle alegre, por pensar que en su mano y en su arrepentimiento estaba el volver a la parte que quisiese la voluntad de Periandro, porque se imaginaba ser ella el clavo de la rueda de su fortuna. (Book IV, Chap. 14)

Auristela, who regretted telling her thoughts to Periandro, had happily set out to look for him, thinking it was in her hands and up to her change of heart to direct Periandro's will wherever she liked, for she imagined herself to be the peg on the wheel of his fortune and the sphere within which all his desires moved. (trans. Richmond and Colahan, 352)

This quotation shows that Auristela does not regret wanting to enter a convent but regrets having declared her desire. She regrets having made public what she perceives as hurtful to the man who loves her, like Leonora to Manuel de Sosa. As we know, Manuel de Sosa died in (Book I) after narrating to the pilgrims how Leonora publicly humiliated him by turning to the convent instead of him. However, it is implied that Leonora, in her spiritual refuge, dies after knowing of his death, possibly out of regret. A Portuguese man had told the pilgrims what happened to the nun Leonora:

Preguntó Auristela al portugués qué sentimiento había hecho la monja, dama del muerto, de la muerte de su amante, el cual la respondió que, dentro de pocos días que la supo, pasó desta a mejor vida, o ya por la estrechez de la que hacía siempre o ya por el sentimiento del no pensado suceso. (Book III, Cap. 1)

Auristela asked the man what feelings the dead man's former lady—the girl who had chosen to be a nun—had shown on hearing of his death, and he replied that within a few days of finding out about it she went on to a better world, either due to the austerity of the life she'd been leading, or from the shock of the unexpected event. (trans. Richmond and Colahan, 201)

Like in this quote from Book III, there is no indication that Leonora's and Auristela's compassion for their suffering men means they surrender their preference for the convent. We can interpret Auristela's attitude at the end of the book in the same way. Although Auristela consents to marry Periandro through an apparently rushed ending, this forceful conclusion dramatizes the contradiction between Auristela situating her desire outside of marriage and her official engagement to marry Periandro even more. Having closely read the resonances between the confession of her preference and the rejection of Manuel by Leonora, and the contrast between the public corruption of Marian images and Auristela's recovering of Felician's Marian Song as her internalized image, we discover that Auristela finds herself in different circumstances than those imposed by Magsimino at the end of the novel. This imaginary community conjured by Auristela's invocation of Leonora and Felician as a rejection of the "barbarism" of one-way desire in marriage is not just a resistance to marriage. This community is what marriage as an exchangeable object of desire cannot contain: an implicit collective identity it has to negate to reassert itself. Though Periandro and Auristela are not shown in a "marriage," *Persiles* dramatizes the promise of marriage as if it were consented to by both parties while it was, in fact, politely imposed. Thus, "marriage" and its spiritual meaning are subsumed by the economy of exchange of upper-class maidens, much like the corsairs' economy of kidnapped maidens in the northern islands. This economy, synthesized by the dramatization of Auristela's "free will," is simultaneously critiqued and negated in the gesture toward an alternative community mediated by Marian images. Thus, the economy of marriage carries the seeds of its own failure, refiguring religious images as an aesthetics of escape.

IV. Jealousy and the “Process of Civilization” in Cervantes’s Works.

Persiles’s gendered religious desire exceeds compulsory marriage’s botched attempt to support the process of civilization. This failure urges us to reconsider the Cervantine economy of marriage in his other major works beyond the moral issue of “jealousy.” The word “barbarian,” often used in the novel to indicate those who were neither Christians nor aware of Christianity, carries with it several stereotypes, especially a lack of control over one’s passions, qualities that also correspond with characterizations of pirates, pícaros/as (including university students), witches, Muslims, Jews, and courtesans. These stereotypes project the particular relevance of self-control in Cervantes’s time, especially in the context of government and court politics. For example, in *Don Quixote* II, chapter 47, to govern the island *Barataria*, Sancho is forced to control his hunger for medical reasons or because the food might have been poisoned. This obligation suggests that disciplining hunger and other necessities shapes a good ruler, an inner government that must be reflected in and be a reflection of the outer government. Similarly, *Persiles* associates lack of control of the passions not only with the government of the failed kingdoms of the “barbarian” (Book I) and Policarpos’s (Book II) islands. “Barbarian” desire is also encountered in the pilgrimage adventures through Europe (Book III) and even in Rome (Book IV), the final destination of the protagonists’ pilgrimage to enable their marriage. According to this novel’s implied ideal of absolutist government, self-control should prevent individuals’ sexual, religious, and political aspirations from becoming ends in themselves—above the social order. This differentiation between a version of self-control correlated with a more prestigious rule of taste against internal and external groups of people perceived as lagging is part of what Norbert Elias calls “the process of civilization” (1939). Within the logic of such a process, the European network of courts in the new early modern absolutist monarchies developed progressively more differentiated forms of interaction. This elite culture separated its practitioners from the growing bourgeois class of professionals and merchants, reinforcing an internal sense of pride (Part 4, # 9). These social forms spread as naturalized social hierarchies thanks to increased internal pacification after the unification of feudal territories through thresholds of shame. Each opportunity any group of people had to escalate socially, as in the case of professionals, merchants, or the colonized elite, in using the cultural capital of the elite, they developed a new sense of shame for previously internalized values or ways of speaking. The new economy based on accumulation proffered not only new possibilities for noble women and the middle classes but also new challenges to aristocratic women’s lives, both domestic and political. On the one hand, in the seventeenth century, as Mar Martínez-Góngora (2007) points out about the work of María de Zayas, noble women were concerned about the new socially mobile class of bourgeois men and the corruption of humanist values that promoted men’s self-control in the domestic sphere. On the other hand, for Elias, in early modern courts, women gained importance as drivers of social opinion, which correlated with shaming the excesses of male behavior (Part 2, # 9). In Spanish imperial courts, where all spheres of government interacted through clientelism and patronage, queens and vicereines formed parallel courts, like the one in which Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz’s talents became public (Cañeque 7). Thus, attempts to control desire through

shaming in order to regenerate prestige under a new economy drove the behavior of the ruling classes.

None of the actions narrated in *Persiles* happens in the court—besides the court-like city of Rome—but rather in the northern islands and on the pilgrimage across mainland Europe. However, the protagonists—the prince and princess of Nordic kingdoms, disguised as siblings under different names—stand out, despite their youth, for their virtuous character in the eyes of the narrator and most other speakers. As members of royal families, they have not only internalized models of grace and self-containment but are also marked by near-divine qualities. Periandro is a model of eloquence and physical ability, while Auristela is a model of prudence and marked by an indescribable, celestial beauty—though she is never explicitly described. The focus is on the *reactions* of those who gaze upon her; pointedly, Cervantes never attempts to disclose to the reader precisely what it is about her appearance that captivates the viewer. Repeated reactions to her undescribed “beauty” thus echo religious tropes about the indescribability of the divine. The protagonists are also able to conceal their real intentions, like good courtiers. Both present themselves as siblings in public but are secretly engaged to marry, evoking the possibility of incest when the boundaries between public and private blur. They are always ready to help everyone regardless of origin or social class. These virtues are, to a certain degree, reflected in their companions from the Northern Islands through Europe toward Rome, as well as contrasted not only to the barbarians (unless they convert to Catholicism, especially Ricla, ironically a barbarian convert who is the only model of a good wife and mother in the novel) but also to the European *maldicientes* and *pícaros*. However, despite their exemplarity in contrast to the Christian or non-Christian barbarians, the novel suggests that they are not ready for marriage, as is evident in the episodes of jealousy they must endure.

Concern with jealousy as an obstacle to a successful marriage has appeared in Cervantes before. In *Don Quixote* I, 33–35, Lotario’s “impertinent curiosity” drives him to prove his new wife’s loyalty at all costs, driving her into adultery. In the *novela ejemplar* “El celoso extremeño,” Carrizales shields his wife at home from the dangers of the street to the point that it becomes a challenge that motivates Loayza to violate such a convent/tomb. In another *novela ejemplar*, “Las dos doncellas,” two avenger *mujeres varoniles* in search of the same man must overcome jealousy to cooperate. In *Don Quixote* II, Claudia Jerónima, another avenger *mujer varonil*, kills her fiancé before she realizes he will not marry another woman. Lovers’ need to learning how to cope with jealousy suggests that a new threshold of shame has developed in gender relations in Cervantes’s time. While there is a need to shame men in preparation for marriage to give more space to women’s autonomy, women themselves can also fall prey to jealousy-sickness. The tendency to try to reform men away not only from trickster *Don Juan*’s behavior but also from honest but addictive Petrarchan desire through shame is also the concern of several contemporary *comedias*, such as *Don Gil de las Calzas Verdes* (1615) by Tirso de Molina as well as *Valor Agravio y Mujer* by Ana Caro Maillén de Soto (1590–1646). In such *comedias* as well as in Cervantine fiction, the emotional labor of shaming men is the result of actions by the dishonored female lover herself, though it can quickly spiral, as in Claudia Jerónima’s case.

In *Persiles*, Cervantes is concerned with preparation for marriage but goes beyond his previous dramatization of shame and jealousy. Instead, as I have shown, he performs the possibility of the woman refusing to marry, often at the last minute. Instead of advocating for a reformed discipline of bodies into marriage, he reveals the doctrine of free will to choose marriage as an illusion that ignores social conditions. This implied critique of free will goes against the expectations of self-control. In early modern Hispanic texts, the masculine lover often expects that his erotic object of desire loves him out of compassion more than out of erotic desire. However, just to be seen talking to a man, even if out of compassion, can be dangerous to the reputation of women. The epistolary novel *Cárcel de amor* (1492), on which the central story of the self-exiled Renato in *Persiles* is modeled, illustrates the dangers of being “compassionate” to a Petrarchan lover. Laureola is constantly interpellated by Leriano (through the author as an intermediary) to talk to him to prevent him from dying of lovesickness. When she is finally persuaded and talks to him, and so ends up in prison, she replies in a letter:

No sé, Leriano, qué te responda, sino que en las otras gentes se alaba la piedad por virtud y en mí se castiga por vicio. Yo hice lo que debía según piadosa, y tengo lo que merezco, según desdichada. No fue, por cierto, tu fortuna ni tus obras causa de mi prisión, ni me querello de ti, ni de otra persona en esta vida, sino de mí sola, que por liberarte de la muerte me cargué de culpa, como quiera que en esta compasión que te hube hay más pena que carga, pues remedíe como inocente y pago como culpada. (San Pedro, 514)

I don't know what to tell you, Leriano, except that they praise other peoples' mercy, but mine is punished like a vice. I did what I should according to my pity, and I have what I deserve according to my fate. Neither your luck nor your deeds were the cause of my prison, nor I blame you nor any other person in this life, but myself alone, that to prevent your death I put all the blame on me, for despite this compassion I had for you I get more sorrow than reward, since I innocently lent you a hand and am paid like a criminal. (My translation)

Similarly, the dangers of this punished “compassion” may be part of what concerns Marcela in *Don Quixote* I, chapter 13, where the bucolic shepherds blame her for Grisóstomos' death of unrequited love. Also, in “El curioso impertinente,” Camila surrenders to Lotario's advances, at least initially out of compassion more than love. Similarly, in an ironic reversal that highlights, by contrast, the expectations placed on feminized objects of erotic desire, in *Don Quixote* II, chapter 46, the protagonist rejects Altisidora's serenata. Altisidora or the dukes punish Don Quixote's rejection (due to his loyalty to Dulcinea) by throwing a sack of cats at him. Like Don Quixote's satiric loyalty test, the masculine hero of *Persiles*, Periandro, resists seduction by the courtesan Hipólita. However, unlike the satiric episode in *Don Quixote* and the protagonist's loyalty to a rustic woman that he idealizes and never met, Periandro's loyalty to Auristela is based on the actual relationship he has with her, an actual princess, and the revenge by Hipólita (a magic spell through a witch) has serious consequences that change the course of the main story. Periandro, witnessing Auristela's sickness, develops the same symptoms, never forgetting the internalized and idealized Petrarchan image of his

beloved. However, in Periandro's test, contrary to feminized subjects, he must not love out of compassion but despite compassion or against the masculine impulse to reject the now ugly beloved for whom he feels sorrow. Once Auristela recovers and reveals she does not want to marry, Periandro becomes a Petrarchan lover (IV, 10). He thinks while wandering, suffering from unrequited love:

. . . pero quisiera que advirtieras que no sin escrúpulo de pecado puedes ponerte en el camino que deseas. Sin ser mi homicida, dejaras, ¡oh señora!, a cargo del silencio y del engaño tus pensamientos, y no me los declararas a tiempo que habías de arrancar con las raíces de mi amor mi alma, la cual, por ser tan tuya, te dejo a toda tu voluntad, y de la mía me destierro; quédate en paz, bien mío, y conoce que el mayor que te puedo hacer es dejarte. (IV, 11)

But I'll have you know you won't set out totally blameless on the road you wish to take. Though not exactly my murderer, my lady, you'll have been guilty of wrapping your thoughts in silence and deceit by not revealing to me sooner that you were going to pull my soul out by the roots of my love, a soul so much belonging to you that I leave it entirely in your hands, banishing all will of my own. Peace, my love, and know that the best thing I can do for you is leave. (trans. Richmond and Colahan, 345)

Even for Periandro, as in Petrarchan sonnets, the performance of suffering by the unrequited lover aims to incite the indifferent object's compassion as if such an emotion was equal to love. In courting new lovers, idealizing the beloved's indifference may protect or enhance the woman's reputation while inviting her to endanger it through compassion. In this case, Auristela's confession was not a rejection of a suitor but a breakup, but the effects are all the same.

In *Persiles*, as we have seen, a virtue associated with compassion is decorous silence when there is no real option to reject. As previously mentioned, the men in the novel often interpret decorous silence as a sign of assent (Lopez-Aleman, 2008; Armstrong-Roche, 2009). To avoid being shamed for countering their male lovers and relatives (regardless of what they want), marriageable objects of erotic desire may simply pretend to assent. We never know if Leonora really wants to marry Manuel Sosa until the wedding ceremony, when she suddenly chooses to take religious vows and enter convent life. Manuel's public humiliation by Leonora qualifies her as uncompassionate or even cruel in the eyes of Petrarchan lovers, who, like Manuel, masochistically elevate her "cruelty" as a religious virtue. Similarly, we never have certainty whether Auristela wants to marry Periandro at the novel's end since she is complying without explicitly agreeing to marry. Also, on the two previous occasions when she openly questioned whether to marry him, she was ready to retreat into religion. For her, the spiritual pilgrimage in itself is more important than marriage with Periandro, but this spiritual impulse is inseparable from a critique of spousal free will.

However, I have not presented Auristela as a mere instrument for a critique of the marriage institution or as an example of an escape from marriage. Instead, I have speculated about the figures that mediate the elusiveness of her desires and supplement my understanding of her silent consent to marry in the end. I have proposed

a constellation of figures that motivate Auristela's brief attempt at becoming a mystic or a nun instead of marrying, which haunts our understanding of her marriage at the novel's end. Instead of foregrounding sentimental education through jealousy, the performance of a change of mind by redirecting desire away from marriage indicates that the proto-liberal politics of Trent recognizes the free will to marry but conceals the actual inequality of gendered power relations. As Troyan and Gonzalez (2016) posit of neoliberal gendered affective labor in the "girlfriend experience," though two people may be in a relationship at least partially because of economic interests, for a romantic relationship to occur, both must perform indifference to socioeconomic differences. The more unequal a relationship is, the more affective labor must be enacted by the subordinate partner who performs abstract freedom and enjoyment in parts of the relationship. However, that most relationships may be deeply affected by the economy does not mean that relationships can follow (sometimes simultaneously) a different logic. Indeed, sometimes it is where that logic fails; precisely because the power inequalities in the relationship cannot be concealed, alternative economies are revealed. While Auristela does not have an economic interest in Periandro, the inevitability of her marriage to him—because of its political instrumentalization—makes similar demands upon her to perform enjoyment or at least assent while having no choice. An alternative libidinal economy is suggested in the resonances of Auristela's failed decision to renounce royal marriage—and thus her governmental responsibilities in order to become a nun—with her main inspirations. That is, her failed decision is informed by the spectacular renunciation of marriage redirected toward the convent by Leonora against Manuel de Sosa and the musical and religious refiguration of the Virgin Mary by Feliciano de la Voz. An alternative imagined community is implied among women without direct interaction with each other, mirroring in a different register the exclusion of others from the libidinal economy, such as the *maldiciente* Clodio and the prostitute Hipólita (the only two characters who guessed the actual relationship between Auristela and Periandro), and the witches. Indeed, the different status held by upper- and lower-class women in the libidinal economy is evident in *Persiles*, in which, ironically, the higher the class a woman is, though more coveted, the lesser agency she has in deciding whom to marry. Two cases from the novel show this contrast through the myth of Daphne and Apollo. Alluding to Garcilaso de la Vega's version of the myth, Auristela feels like turning into a tree when feeling the dangers of being pursued by Prince Arnaldo. In contrast, the aging (and thus socially demoted) courtesan Rosamunda herself is the one chasing after the young Antonio "the barbarian":

. . . pero Auristela no se movió del lugar donde primero puso el pie, y aun quisiera que allí se le hincaran en el suelo y se volvieran en torcidas raíces, como se volvieron los de la hija de Peneo cuando el ligero corredor Apolo la seguía." (I, 15)

– [Rosamunda to young Antonio:] Ves aquí, ¡oh nuevo cazador, más hermoso que Apolo!, otra nueva Dafne que no te huye, sino que te sigue? (I, 19).

But Auristela didn't move from the spot where she had first set foot; in fact, she would have liked her feet to sink into the ground and turn into twisted roots like

those of Peneus' daughter when the swift runner Apollo was pursuing her. (trans. Richmond and Colahan, 75)

You see here, my young hunter more handsome than Apollo, a new Daphne who not only doesn't flee but actually follows you. (ibid, 90)

A satiric contrast surfaces between the upper-class, young, and noble Auristela as an object of desire and the aging, socially mobile (former) courtesan Rosamunda as a hyperbolic subject of desire. While reinforcing social hierarchies based on heteronormative taste, this juxtaposition reveals the interconnectedness of all classes based on figures of desire with differing levels of agency and access. However, while Auristela is more desired than Rosamunda, her political responsibilities prevent her from having the agency to choose her object of desire. On the other hand, while Rosamunda, like other lower-class women, may have more freedom to desire, her age and former profession disqualify her from being loved. Isolated by the public objectification of her beauty, the responsibilities of her class, and a lack of religious community, unlike Leonora or even Feliciano, Auristela imagines a religious world not based on the equivalence of beauty, wealth, and power.

As Sedgwick (2003) explains of the “periperformative,” the phrase “I do” uttered during wedding ceremonies is the exemplar of the “performative” as theorized by J. L. Austin in his canonical work *How to Do Things with Words* (1962). Performative language, such as the institutionalized speech act “I do,” must meet normative requirements of who, how, when, and where in order for the act to have the intended effect. On the other hand, the *periperformative*, regardless of effects, is a speech act that alludes to a performative act, negating or building on its institutionalized value. Sedgwick analyzes the periperformative in nineteenth-century Victorian and American fiction as the performance of those without access to the conventionally performative acts of marriage. Primary examples are enslaved black people in the American colonies whose marriages were not legally protected and white women in arranged marriages. Both marriage and slavery were usually analogized to each other by 19th-century narrators and their characters themselves. Similarly, in *Persiles*, the failed disciplinarian of women who choose to escape marriage is analogized to the failed attempts by the (Catholic) European states to “civilize” what for them is barbarians' unbridled desire. This “escape” to the convent contrasts with the degradation of Catholic ideals in Rome. *Persiles* presents no evidence of a previous vocation, much less a narrative of predestination by the women who prefer spiritual to secular marriage. Moreover, like Sor Juana's autobiographical letter *Respuesta to Sor Filotea* at the end of the century, these stories feature an insistence on taking the veil as a choice over marriage. According to Asunción Lavrin, for many early modern aristocratic women, the convent was a logical option according to the religious education they received at home at an early age. They were allowed to go outside only for religious events until they were marriageable (55) and thus were sometimes forced to marry against their vocation (49). Lisa Vollendorf (2005) reminds us of María de Zayas' novella “Amar sólo por vencer” and the end of the same collection, *Disenchantments of Love* (1647), where women end up in the convent. In María de Zayas's stories and the frame of the collection, the focus of women's lives before marriage is on friendship with each other. However, even this friendship is in danger as long as male suitors can access it. In the story, the lower-

class suitor, disguised as Laureola's maid, takes advantage of that intimate space to eventually persuade her to have sex under the promise of marriage, only to abandon her afterward. Her father's dishonored family kills her by pushing a wall on her and another maid. Her mother and sisters, disappointed, decide to enter a convent. Similarly, Lisis, the protagonist who organized the soirees in which friends share fictional stories of love disenchantment, also decides to enter a convent at the end of the book. However, while Zayas shows the possibility of the nunnery as a refuge from corrupted male desire influenced by the new libidinal economy, Cervantes complicates it in the case of Auristela. Since she is the princess who is to be married to a prince to prevent war, peace depends on her decision. On the other hand, her desire for escape does not vanish but, as in *Don Quixote*, is reconfigured as an imaginary possibility, in this case, built through a synthesis of Felician's Marian song and the story of Leonora and Manuel to inspire a semiautonomous space beyond marriage.

Persiles performs an antagonism between marriage and religion as a new structure of feeling. The free will to marry and the path to the convent, both Catholic institutions, are refigured in *Persiles* by Leonora's escape to the convent by saying "I do" while shaming Manuel. Without assuming that Auristela wanted to become a nun from the beginning of the book, we should emphasize the importance of Auristela similarly choosing not to marry Periandro at the end—even though no one sees her reject him, and they end up marrying. In a periperformative act, Auristela refigures Leonora's performance and Felician's Marian song, which was Felician's only possibility of escape when she thought her male relatives would kill her. Auristela, thus, in refiguring a world of corrupt desire, also performs an escape from that world by evoking a potential community with other women who at least internally withdrew from marriage as a potential vehicle of "barbarian" corruption. Like Sor Juana rejecting the excessive praise of her literary fame that makes her doubt who she is, Auristela's action represents resistance to the public idealization of her beauty as another sign of corruption of desire. Though the last paragraph of the novel mentions that Auristela had many children and grandchildren, as if it suggested a happy ending, if we keep in mind the dangerous experience of childbirth for early modern women (Bergmann, 2002), this is an ironic ending haunted by a frustrated religious calling. Auristela thus constructs the constant suspension of desire for marriage as pointing toward a potential social space outside of it. The institutionalized religious aspect of Catholic marriage as a medium to serve God through social reproduction is thus reversed and configured as an intimate practice of desire that resituates the desire to marry from Auristela's perspective and the path to the convent as a motivation for that alternative. That is, Cervantes, with *Persiles*, marks a historical transition to a secular understanding of marriage that fails to fully incorporate the spiritual dimension of marriage that exceeds it from within. This failure of incorporation was anticipated in "El celoso extremeño" by Carrizales's fear that the street would take away his wife (Navarrete, 2016). So much effort to keep his wife in the house as if in a convent that would protect her only exacerbates the other's desire to transgress the fort. The institution is built by warding off the dangers of the outside. Marriage both depends upon and has to negate ways of life that do not depend on marriage.

The novel shows the virtuous Periandro as the only man worthy of Auristela. However, it also has to acknowledge that the "process of civilization," like the ideology

of purity of blood, requires Auristela to refuse marriage so she does not become part of the corrupted libidinal economy. Thus, it becomes necessary for future scholarship beyond the scope of this chapter to consider Auristela the embodiment of— and contrast to—other objects of desire that must be denied, such as the desires of the so-called savages, the *pícaros/as* and witches, who even as negative ideals reveal the new libidinal economy of marriage as the systematic negation of its desire for a community lacking in the upper classes. Those marginalized by the libidinal economy are not just passive consumers of the upper-class/patriarchal values imposed on them. On the contrary, they are periperformatively converting their degradation into contrarian values that infect hegemonic baroque values—such as the compulsive truth-telling of Clodio, the magic of the witches, or the gestures of escape from marriage. In this case, my focus on the evolution of the decision not to marry reveals such a choice not as a series of isolated incidents but as the creation of a conceptual persona available to female characters. As Moreiras (2000) said of the transition from violent colonization in the sixteenth century to cultural hegemony in the seventeenth-century Spanish empire, the outside is constantly negated by differential inclusion, which makes hegemony possible. After the initial colonization phase, colonialism has created subjects that consent to work for the same system that colonized them. In the case of the Catholic marriage institution, alternatives to being “civilized,” like *murmuración* (malicious gossip), prostitution, and witchcraft, must be violently suppressed to redirect desire toward institutional goals. However, the “civilized” will forever be haunted by the experiences institutions cannot contain. Ironically, religious desire, which was not initially opposed to marriage, becomes interiorized and defamiliarized as a means of escape, constantly reiterated as the outside of the failed marriage promise.

CHAPTER THREE
***Soledades's* Driftwood: The Plasticity of Trees**

I. Introduction: The Libidinal Economy in *Soledades*

In his many travels to Madrid between 1590 and 1610 as a prebendary for the Church of Córdoba, Luis de Góngora used his initial fame as a (then-unpublished) poet to gain access to aristocratic circles (Gahete-Jurado 2008). His poems had circulated as manuscript copies since he was a student at the prestigious University of Salamanca. However, Góngora may have preferred not to publish his works through the printing press because his secular themes contravened his position as a religious officer. By 1610, he had been trying to win protection from powerful patrons to sustain his way of life—dedicated to writing, gambling and providing for his extended family, but he had no luck. Also, he felt alienated from the corrupted sense of justice of the court and gained enemies who were envious of his poetic talent (ibid). Frustrated with court politics, in 1611, Góngora returned to his hometown in southern Spain, Córdoba, in the agricultural region of Andalucía. He decided to share his work duties with his nephew Luis de Saavedra, which gave him extra time to write poetry (ibid). His disappointment and retreat radicalize his ambitions to the poetic realm.

I approach Góngora's *Soledades* (1612–26) through the early modern symbolic value of “shipwreck.” Like his contemporary Miguel de Cervantes, Luis de Góngora never visited the Américas; however, his works critique the colonial libidinal economy. In *Soledades*, he diagnoses “greed” as the production of a subjectivity shaped by colonial enterprises that infect not only those who travel to the Américas but also the entire public sphere of the Spanish absolutist state. The traffic of influences to benefit from those resources commodified upper-class culture, which lost legitimacy in the eyes of the general population. One way of signaling this critique of desire generated by the empire as greed is through a disturbing inevitability of colonial greed: “shipwreck.” *Soledades* shows that Góngora was aware that most navigational projects aspiring to Amerindian riches were in danger of shipwreck. This always-imminent danger of nautical ruin and its costs in hardship, loss, and death overshadowed the feats of the Spanish empire.⁷ The case of the neighboring Portuguese kingdom suggests a possible interpretation. Historian Josiah Blackmore argues that in early modern Portuguese culture, stories of shipwrecks proliferated as a counter-historiography to the master narratives of “discovery” and “conquest.”⁸ For example, the “Historia Tragico Maritima” of Captain Manuel de Sousa Sepulveda's shipwreck and death of his family—famously retold in Camoens' epic poem *Os Lusíadas* (1572)—became famous despite the failed enterprise (ibid).

Furthermore, the cultural value of shipwreck is inseparable from the value of the raw material used to build ships. Maritime accidents are metonymically related to the symbolic value of trees, given the investment of the Spanish state in developing the first version of state forestry to guarantee access to wood for shipbuilding. As John Wing explains in *Roots of Empire: Forests and State Power in Early Modern Spain, C. 1500-1750* (2008), in tension with local needs and geographical limitations, since the mid-sixteenth century, the state's increasing control over trees and what people could do to them accelerated the internal territorialization of state power. Many forests offering

⁷ Ruiz and Rodríguez-Guridi (2022), pp. 8.

⁸ Blackmore (2008), introduction.

resources that were traditionally accessible to anyone were suddenly off-limits to local people. This shift was attended by a deepening and extension of knowledge of forests, even if most trees were not particularly useful, for they had a symbolic value of royal power, much like the exploration and mapping of the New World (p. 4-6).

However, *Soledades* is not a moralist critique of greed but imagines an alternative semiotic space that enables lines of flight from the logic of empire. The poem performs an imaginary speculation of an alternative to “gold” through re-figurations of the failed navigation enterprises to and from the Américas. I approach gold as a metonymy for a constellation of objects of desire related to wealth, fame, and honor, thus expanding the symbolic value of gold in the new credit economy, as studied by Elvira Vilches (2010), to encompass the interconnectedness of all desires symptomatically manifested as greed. “Greed,” in *Soledades*, points toward idolization or even erotization of these values, as when Góngora (and Quevedo) compares greed to Petrarchan erotic love. As a response to this colonial libidinal economy, *Soledades*’s style of endless narrative and metaphorical detour can be read as a radical representation of already-exhausted greed. For Carlo Ginsburg, in seventeenth-century Europe, mythological figures like the heroic Icarus and Prometheus shift in meaning from warning against hubris to incitement to daring exploration and intellectual discovery (38). This bold exploration coincides with new developments in state forestry that support Spanish imperial shipbuilding and the pervasiveness of its failure as shipwreck. In *Soledades*, it is as if Phaeton, another emblem of daring, has already fallen and his failure has been reconstituted in the *peregrino*’s aimless wandering on the ground after a shipwreck. This chapter reads how *Soledades* metaphorizes shipwreck as the possibility of resituating oneself beyond the libidinal economy of gold and greed.

Rather than sublimation or a displacement toward ideal objects of desire, the exit from problematic desires in *Soledades* is enabled through the “shipwreck” of the economy of imperial tree-log-ships that aligns all desires with itself as greed. The meaning of the poetic tree is constantly recreated in its endless detours, parallel to the aimless wanderings of the *peregrino*. Moreover, the exhaustion of desire, as shipwreck, is not chosen but an unwanted event that signals the transformation of the subject who does not aim at fulfilling any desire anymore. This transformation implies the forgetting of teleological imperatives of imperial/erotic/poetic desire, preventing this escape from becoming yet another form of greed. As John Freccero says in “Shipwreck in the Prologue,” in ideas circulating at least since Lucretius and Christian literature since Augustine, shipwreck as a metaphor for accidental and transformative events that the subject cannot anticipate is not a mere obstacle to avoid. Instead, by metaphorizing the epic as a pilgrimage of desire, catastrophic accidents become a precondition for transformation, for they prompt the need to hold on to a new transitional object of desire. After his spiritual crisis or “shipwreck,” Augustine metaphorically held on to a “log” or fragment of Jesus’s cross, a story of conversion like his other story about conversion under a fig tree’s shade. Also, in contrast to earlier Petrarchism, Góngora, in poems like “Qué de invidiosos montes,” does not prolong erotic desire through constant postponement but enacts a fantasy of fulfillment of desire. More than inciting desire with obstacles, Góngora imagines the end of desire by erotizing its impossibility. Thus, taking into account the spiritual shipwreck as a precondition for spiritual awakening to the Christian path of the cross, in this chapter I argue that *Soledades*, in its historicized

understanding of the libidinal economy, goes beyond Garcilaso de la Vega's erotization of Petrarch. As Ignacio Navarrete explains, Garcilaso de la Vega recovers Ovidian erotic desire through the influence of the Spanish Cancionero tradition. However, *Soledades* generates historical consciousness of how desire has been secularized by literalizing the poetic comparison between the beloved and a ship. While in Petrarch Laura becomes the unattainable object of desire, in *Soledades*, the economy of gold that generates greed is the unattainable desire to be destroyed by shipwreck. However, unlike in the work of Augustine, there is no transcendence beyond shipwreck, as if Augustinian desire through shipwreck has returned but without the possibility of redemption, as a diagnostic of all values interrelated and corrupted as vehicles for greed that cannot ever be fully satisfied.

Góngora's event of shipwreck is reflected in *Soledades's* style. The poem is structured as a five-day narrative of the shipwrecked *peregrino* who lacks any destination, as he is constantly detoured by whomever he encounters (hunters, peasants, fishers, a hawking party) without himself asserting any direction. Nautical metaphors, emblematic signs, pastoral and epic tropes, Petrarchan desire, and falconry, among other discourses, constantly displace each other in the description of the *peregrino's* travels through the islands. Detouring the *peregrino's* erotic desire through shipwreck, Góngora reconfigures Petrarchan desire as popularized in vernacular Spanish literature by figures such as Juan Boscán, Garcilaso de la Vega, and Fernando de Herrera. At the syntax level, word order is constantly altered through excessive hyperbaton. At the verse level, there is a lack of stanza separation, to which different editors react by interpreting pauses and inserting separations not marked in the original manuscripts. At the level of the metaphoric use of mythological figures for narration, meaning is constantly recreated in the flow of details. This multi-level intensification of craft draws readers toward their process of engagement with the text, making it impossible to hold on to a single message.

Critics since Góngora's time have tended to reduce *Soledades's* endless deferral and recontextualization of meaning as one of deliberate difficulty and opacity. This perceived difficulty can be explained by how the poem foregrounds the inadequacy of literary genres to represent changing realities. In the case of seventeenth-century Hispanic literature, this crisis of presence and clarity was triggered by colonial encounters that prompted increased awareness of the contradictions between the increasingly refined courtly values of early modernity and such violent enterprises driven towards gold as a way to satisfy the needs for wealth, fame, and honor. Greed is diagnosed not only as one sin among others, but it is the primary social disease that permeates all social aspirations, a symptom of a world turned upside-down. This crisis of desire was already thematized a generation before Góngora by Fray Luis de León (1527–91) in poems about retreat such as the emblematic "Vida retirada" (The Life Removed):

¡Oh monte, oh fuente, oh río!
 ¡Oh, secreto seguro, deleitoso!
 Roto casi el navío,
 a vuestro almo reposo
 huyo de aqueste mar tempestuoso. (20–24)

Oh field! Oh woods! Oh, river!
 Oh, secret refuge of delight!
 With ship almost destroyed,
 I flee from this stormy sea
 to your nourishing repose. (Adapted from the prose translation by Rivers,
 p. 92)

This stanza asserts that the needs for fame and wealth have become limited to the scarce and dangerous medium of gold, metaphorized as the stormy sea almost destroying the ship of desire. The pervasiveness of greed driven by gold at the base of all aspirations triggers in the speaker a constant escape from the values of the court. The spaces of pastoral literature have become not only a temporary escape but also a vital necessity for the exhausted soul. Asunción Rallo (1984), in her introduction to Antonio de Guevara's *Menosprecio de la Corte y Alabanza de la Aldea* and *Arte de Marear* (1539), explains the relationship between the concepts of the court, the village, and the sea in sixteenth-century Spanish humanism. For Italian humanists like Petrarch, the Horacian *beatus ille* had become—more than a rhetorical topos, a universal ideal for the man of letters. However, Spanish authors like Guevara historicize this pastoral ideal as an escape from the new kind of political-administrative courts, no longer organized around feudal relationships of servitude. The court is now represented as a space of fierce competition to gain favors, a system that implies an inversion of values in which only sinners thrive, thus reinforcing greed. Similarly, the ship is represented by Guevara as a corrupted space, an extreme mirror of a world in which people only aim for gold. In this diagnostic, the *aldea* is, like the monastery for the monk, a space conducive to salvation. However, the village is not just a place. The village expresses a longing to create and sustain a social space free from greed and pride, which can only be accessed after developing “*menosprecio*” (disregard) for the court. Fray Luis reflects the same critical attitude but emphasizes the Christian perspective. As in the quote above, he evinces the exhaustion of an obsession with courtly business that drives the Christian courtier to an alternative space of retreat from the endless fight for favors and the pursuit of dangerous navigational enterprises. Góngora's *Soledades* rearticulates this space of exhaustion and retreat but problematizes the distinctions among the court, the sea, and the village.

Many of the interrelated concepts staged in *Soledades* that directly participate in generating the conditions for the emergence of greed refer to the stages of navigational enterprise: the forests in which several kinds of trees are found; each kind of tree with different use value, including poetic symbolism; the ships made from these trees; and navigation with its literal and metaphorical dangers, often culminating in wreckage. The poem's representation of the failed shipbuilding process reflects the imperial aim of bringing back mineral wealth from the Américas, especially silver from Potosí in present-day Bolivia. In early modern poetry, terms related to navigational enterprises were commonly substituted in terms of part/whole or material/object. As studied by Betty Sasaki (1992), in Hispanic baroque poetry, hoarding gold, the main goal of the navigational enterprises, became a metonymy for the exploitation of the Américas. For Sasaki, Juan de Jáuregui's “*Canción al oro*” (1618), Góngora's *Soledades* (1612–26),

and Francisco de Quevedo's "Sermón estoico de censura moral" (1625–27) develop different styles that imply varied responses to the colonial imperial politics metonymized as gold. Jáuregui objectifies greed as gold itself, avoiding an ethical critique of its consequences by externalizing the problem (*ibid*, chapter 2). Quevedo, a traditionalist like Jáuregui but critical of empire, emphasizes how nature, as a vehicle of God, hides gold in the mountains, and how the desire for gold becomes a metonymy of the traditional values driven by the extractivist economy (*ibid*, chapter 4). On the other hand, Góngora's distorted syntax and the endless metonymic chains that delay sense-making reflect the failure of the colonial economy to benefit Spain. The implied man reader is transformed into a humble recipient rather than an avaricious consumer of textual meaning, now conscious of his actions (*ibid*, chapter 3).

Similarly, I analyze how figures made of "wood" are constantly re-associated throughout *Soledades*. Hence, this constellation is a privileged perspective into the desire that the poem tries to detach from greed. At first glance, the association of forests, trees, logs, navigation, shipwrecks, and planks suggests a teleology of navigational enterprises appropriating nature for shipbuilding to carry gold from the Américas to Europe under the ever-present menace of drowning; however, each iteration of these associations foregrounds new associations outside of this teleology. As Julio Baena proposes, there is a tendency in Góngora to reverse this direction of value, constantly replacing ships for the logs they are made of and the logs for the trees or even the forests from which they come (2012, 273–75). Instead of instrumentalizing wood for an abstract exchange value based on gold, in *Soledades*, the myriad values of "wood" are a metaphor for a new form of desire that escapes such a rapacious, avaricious economy. The playful impulse to constantly redirect the value of wood is incompatible but coexistent with the conventional associations of the poetic figures used. In this way, the poem crafts a world of endless relationality that escapes appropriation as mere exchange value. This poem thus models a new type of desire conceived through exhaustion of what it diagnoses as a new libidinal economy in which gold displaces God and subordinates Eros and poetic fame. Instead, "shipwreck" is a metaphor for the event of the exhaustion of the libidinal economy that produces greed and its constant refiguring as an ethico-aesthetic exercise. In this poetic practice, desire constantly displaces its objects, ultimately becoming desire without a final object.

Góngora's poetics of shipwreck constantly recontextualizes all figures and distorts predetermined meanings, requiring the application of a logic of non-exclusive categorizations. Influenced by Deleuze and Guattari, Brian Massumi opposes the logic of mutual exclusion to the logic of mutual inclusion. While the former promotes indifference to in-between spaces that do not fit within categories, the latter categories only show differences in degree (*What Animals Teach Us about Politics*, 53-54). One example of mutual inclusion is how animals' general characteristics can also be found in different degrees in plants, and vice versa (*ibid*, p. 57). This creative logic is opposed to Giorgio Agamben's "zone of irreducible indistinction," which recognizes the excluded middle but without providing an alternative to mutual exclusion (*ibid*, note 60). This zone allows exclusion by inclusion, as in the case of how humans include animals within human politics as a category ruled only by instincts, thus outside of the *polis* but constitutive of it. For Massumi, the non-exclusive ability of animals that transcends instinct is "playfulness," which disturbs the belief that the human capacity for invention is

exclusive. A similar non-exclusive quality for plants could be provocatively labeled “modesty” (58) because plants’ creative adaptability to their environments is not easily discernible to most humans, for the plants apparently keep silent as if out of decorum. So, the difference between human qualities and animal playfulness or plant “humility” is a matter of degree, not of categorical difference. This distinction can be seen in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz’s *gongorine* poem *First Dream*, which can be read as a philosophical response to the epistemological problems raised by *Soledades*. One section describes the soul’s struggle to apply exclusive categories:

inordinado caos retrataba
de confusas especies que abrazaba,
sin orden avenidas,
sin orden separadas,
que cuanto más se implican combinadas
tanto más se disuelven desunidas. (550–55)

it formed a picture of inordered chaos—
associating species in no order,
dissociating them in none
so that the more they mix and intermingle,
the more they come apart in disarray. (Trans. Trueblood)

Every perception is also an act of projection that tries to impose an order on things that are never entirely different or identical. Similarly, “trees” in Góngora, though apparently available for exploitation, resist objectification as if displaying false modesty to the poem’s readers. The constant reconfiguration of related metaphors arranges binary categories of mutual inclusion, such as gods and humans, humans and animals, nature and culture, masculine and feminine, high culture and low culture, appearance and substance. Applying this logic of mutual inclusion to how Góngora constantly replays the figures associated with shipbuilding, shipwrecks and trees leads to a discussion of the process of reading Góngora’s text as a “bark” or surface. The bark serves as a metaphor that highlights how readers are pulled in to participate in producing their own reading experience, their own trees and ships. *Soledades* responds to Góngora’s implicit diagnostic that all desires in the seventeenth century are subordinated to the production of greed with clusters of images related to trees and ships that are associated away from the teleology of accumulation in each recontextualization.

II. The Sisters of Phaeton and the Poplar Tree

In *Soledades*, the two passages that mention Phaeton—emblem of the highest aspirations—favor the perspective of his moaning sisters. The first time, the *serrano* shows the *peregrino* the peasant wedding celebration; the second time, the fisherman shows the *peregrino* his island's landscape. According to most versions of the story, after Phaeton dies, his sisters, the Heliades, grieve his death for months, and the gods turn them into poplar trees, *álamos*, solid trees that usually grow on the banks of rivers. Thus, instead of emphasizing the dangers of Phaeton's bird-eye view, Góngora situates this myth from the horizontal view of his sisters on the ground.

In *Soledad Primera*, after spending the night with nomadic shepherds, the shipwrecked *peregrino* encounters a group of young mountain people on their way to a wedding party. An older man accompanying them serves as his guide. This *serrano* complains about the dangers of using excessive fireworks for the wedding celebration, which, evoking Phaeton's example, could burn the whole village to the ground (I, 652–58). Then, the *serrano* shows the *peregrino* some poplar trees, which in early modern culture are associated with Alcides (Hercules) (659). These trees are “trenzándose el cabello verde a cuantas/ da el fuego luces y el arroyo espejos” (braiding their green hair to the given lights of the fireworks and the mirrors of the stream) (661–62). Though the *serrano* worries about the fires, his worries are displaced by the joyful view of the *álamos*, which evoke the grieving sisters turned into trees. However, in this alameda of trees braiding their hair, which serves as a forest canopy, and tending to their beauty, the sisters have suspended their grief. This evocation of a feminine space forms a shade for the young men and women who dance among the entangled trees next to the river illuminated by the fires. Through the poem's wandering, fear and grief are left behind for the playful perception of environmental resonances, remaking the myth in the process.

Similarly, in *Soledad Segunda*, an old fisherman entertains the *peregrino* while his daughters make dinner. Showing his bird farm, the fisherman describes a tree by combining the myth of the sisters of Phaeton with nautical imagery. Around an *álamo*, “Hermana de Faetón, verde el cabello” (sister of Phaeton, whose hair is green) (II, 263), the fisherman had braided in his youth, with wicker, artificial bird nests for the doves, birds of Venus, “donde celosa arrulla y ronca gime/ la ave lasciva de la cipria diosa” (where jealous lulls itself asleep, and while snoring moans, the lascivious bird of the Cypriot goddess) (270–71). Góngora thus brings out two anthropomorphic behaviors associated with doves: the turtledove mates for life and grieves in widowhood, but he emphasizes their erotic association with Venus. This new reference to the sisters of Phaeton, this time collaborating with the bird of Venus, suggests a feminine space. The recontextualization of the trees has allowed them to leave behind grieving for the tragedy of the brother, who goes unmentioned here. Similarly, the “lascivious” turtledove of Venus merely enjoys her time, not considering Adonis's death at all, transgressing expectations placed on her by omission. Moreover, her artificial nests, made by the fisherman and surrounding the tree, suggest another widespread early modern figure: the ivy. For Alciato, in his emblem # 205, “The Ivy,” this evergreen climbing plant symbolizes restlessness and provocation. It is usually depicted in the garlands for poet's

temples, like the wicker the fisherman braided around the poplar tree for the restless and provocative bird of Venus. Thus, through this chain of associations, femininity is linked to the entanglement among trees as a space of enjoyment.

At the same time, the poem refers to the tree trunk via a navigational metaphor: “Mástiles coronó menos crecidos,/gavia no tan capaz: extraño todo,/ el designio, la fábrica y el modo” (Shorter masts crown smaller topsails [in the ships]: everything is strange, the design, the materials and the way of building it) (II, 272–74). The tree’s body, surrounded by nests, is a mast with a topsail on a strange ship, an indescribable ship. Although this big ship evokes an epic scene, its previous “feminization” associates this image with a pastoral/piscatorial scene in which navigational skills are analogous to the fisherman’s skill in building this ship/tree of Venus. Thus, the myth of Phaeton is not only supplemented by the story of his sisters turned into trees; this second story is associated with feminine spaces and analogized to navigation as a product of ingenious creativity. As enacted in this section of the poem, the Poplar tree refigures fear and navigational enterprises as creativity and collaboration. Nevertheless, the refiguration of wood continues—the empire is then projected onto a community of bees living inside a trunk, bound by it like greed, unlike the freedom of the wild goats (282–313).

Baena clarifies the difference between goats and sheep in pastoral literature, such as in Montemayor’s *La Diana*. Sheep were an economic asset; wool prices affected the financial security of actual shepherds, and the animal’s labor in pastoral novels was associated with the erasure of moriscos and women (*Dividuals*, 271). On the other hand, the goat stands as a symbol of untamed desire, as in the goat Manchada at the end of *Don Quixote I* (ibid, 168). As in *Soledades*’s image of the wild goats, the desire of the *peregrino* never fixates on an object, as exemplified by the endless refiguration of wood in the process of shipbuilding and shipwreck. The sisters of Phaeton are a departure point for my analysis of the many transformations of desire in *Soledades*.

III. The Laurel Tree and Poetic Desire

One influential example of a transformation of desire can be seen in early modern poetry's tendency, following Petrarch, to represent erotic love as a failure. According to John Freccero (2015), Petrarch created the model of modern poetic desire emblemized in the laurel tree. Reanimating the medieval emblem of the fig tree provided by St. Augustine for a narrative of self-conversion through worldly objects toward God, Petrarch made the *laurel tree* a symbol of a modern autonomous poetic desire. In Augustine, a chain of successive desires is metonymically related in an ascending hierarchy of abstraction that expresses an inexhaustible desire toward God (140). The fig tree represents the theological doctrine that interprets desires, whose shadow represents grace that satisfies the ultimate desire to communicate with God. However, Petrarch redirects Augustinian desire toward Laura/laurel, not as a guide toward God, as Beatrice was for Dante, but as an end in itself. Furthermore, though the poetic voice longs for Laura, she has become his poetic creation in the text, an idol carved in laurel (146). This construction of Laura serves as an illusion of poetic autonomy, a way for the poet to conceal the "anxiety of influence" (149) while simultaneously borrowing from St. Augustine's model through Dante. Furthermore, Elena Lombardi (2010) explains how Petrarch rearticulates Dante's notion of a teleological "pilgrimage of desire," transformed through an Ovidian, disordered, "idolatrous" desire for an unattainable body (20). The myth of Daphne and Apollo best exemplifies this conversion. Daphne, fleeing Apollo's erotic desire, turns into a laurel tree, the tree of poetic glory. This myth is thematized in one section of Petrarch's poem 23, a *canzone* that was originally the introductory poem to his influential poetry collection *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, known as "Il Canzoniere" or "Rime Sparse."⁹ The body of Daphne-turned-poem/tree is absent from the description of Petrarch's object of desire, rejecting and inflaming him. In early modern poetry influenced by Petrarch, erotic desire, pointedly not redirected toward God as a natural destiny, performs failure: love is an impossible pilgrimage outside itself.

Petrarchism became popular in sixteenth-century Spain through poems by Garcilaso de la Vega published by his friend, the poet Juan Boscán. Garcilaso expanded the bounds of poetic decorum by making the eroticism of Petrarchism more evident through the Spanish *Cancionero* tradition of erotic tropes. Garcilaso's Sonnet #13 and its reiteration in his "Égloga tercera" reconceptualize poetic desire as

⁹ [...]

That savage adversary of whom I speak,
 seeing at last that not a single shot
 of his had even pierced my clothes,
 brought a powerful lady to help him,
 against whom intellect, or force,
 or asking mercy never were or are of value:
 and the two transformed me to what I am,
 making green laurel from a living man,
 that loses no leaves in the coldest season.

[...]

(Poem 23, line 32-40) (trans.A. S. Kline, 2002)

represented in Ovid's narrative of Daphne and Apollo's myth. Contrary to Petrarch's song #23, Garcilaso explicitly mentions Daphne's body parts as they become a tree. As Ignacio Navarrete explains in *Orphans of Petrarch*, instead of making Apollo become the tree, Garcilaso uncovers the myth's eroticism and reaffirms Ovidian desire by leaving Daphne to become the tree (Navarrete, 95–97). The circularity of this poetic desire is paradoxically reaffirmed in the final tercets. In Petrarch, Apollo is converted into the Laurel tree that keeps his desire alive upon Laura's rejection. In Garcilaso, what keeps desire alive is Apollo's tears over Daphne, transformed into a Laurel tree:

A Dafne ya los brazos le crecían
 y en luengos ramos vueltos se mostraban;
 en verdes hojas vi que se tornaban
 los cabellos qu'e l oro escurecían:
 de áspera corteza se cubrían
 los tiernos miembros que aun bullendo 'staban;
 los blancos pies en tierra se hincaban
 y en torcidas raíces se volvían.
 Aquel que fue la causa de tal daño,
 a fuerza de llorar, crecer hacía
 este árbol, que con lágrimas regaba.
 ¡Oh, miserable estado, oh mal tamaño,
 que con llorarla crezca cada día
 la causa y la razón por que lloraba! (Soneto XIII, 9–14)

Daphne's arms were growing: now they were seen
 taking on the appearance of slim branches;
 those tresses, which discountenanced gold's brightness,
 were, as I watched, turning to leaves of green;
 the delicate limbs still quivering with life
 became scarfed over with a rough skin of bark,
 the white feet to the ground were firmly stuck,
 changed into twisted roots, which gripped the earth.
 He who was the cause of this great evil
 so wildly wept the tree began to grow,
 because with his tears he watered it himself.
 O wretched state, o monumental ill,
 that the tears he weeps should cause each day to grow
 that which is cause and motive for his grief. (trans. Dent-Young, p. 39)

Apollo triggered Daphne's metamorphosis because she wanted to escape from being raped by him. However, realizing that his desire for Daphne is impossible to fulfill because she is a tree, Apollo weeps. His mourning does not exhaust desire, for he waters the laurel, tree of poetic glory and metonymy of his impossible passion, with his tears. What remains, then, instead of Daphne, is the tree as a symbol of poetic creation that feeds on the failure of masculine sexual desire. The performance of grief over the death of Daphne celebrates the poet's glory, as in Petrarch. Sexual desire has been

displaced by the tree, which symbolizes poetry that sublimates sexual desire as a set of literary tropes. However, there remains hope despite the impossibility of desire, its fulfillment forever delayed in the figure of the laurel tree, a pleasurable performance of suffering. As William Kerrigan and Gordon Braden say of Petrarchism in light of Freud, the aim is not to fulfill desire but to keep it alive through endless delays for fear of confirming the intuition that desire has always been impossible (188–89). This mechanism also explains the creation of obstacles in eroticism, which only inflame desire without fulfilling it. In the Garcilasian tradition that reconfigures the Petrarchan version of the laurel tree, masculine desire is represented as an obsession with erotic failure that is kept alive to fuel poetic glory.

This rhetorical masochism of unattainability is opposed to a “pornographic” representation of desire understood as a fantasy of fulfillment beyond the social limits of decorum, a fantasy more applicable to Góngora’s sensuous poetry. However, this fantasy of fulfillment in spite of obstacles is reconfigured in *Soledades* as what exceeds the generalized greed that aligns itself toward the perception of all objects of desire in a metonymic chain, whether erotic love, fame, or economic wealth. However, before turning to the laurel tree in *Soledades*, Góngora’s earlier *canción* “Que de invidiosos montes levantados” (1600) illustrates his poetics of fulfillment that will be further complicated in *Soledades*. The approach to jealousy in the *canción* stands in contrast to the later *Fábula de Polifemo y Galatea* (1613), in which jealousy is the strongest emotion, one that surpasses Polyphemus’s love for Galatea (Wagschal, 2002). In the *canción*, the protagonist, suffering from unrequited love and against his jealousy, fantasizes about seeing his beloved with another man, her newlywed husband. For Steven Wagschal, the description of the newlyweds after having sex evokes not only early modern paintings celebrating the union of Venus and Mars. The jealous voice of the poem also resonates with Vulcan’s jealousy upon finding Venus, his wife, with Mars. However, in this poem, the poetic voice does not chain the lovers to the bed, as in most versions of Vulcan’s story, but metaphorically chained himself to his emotional pain (2006, 152). Indeed, the speaker’s Petrarchan desire for an unattainable woman has become a masochistic desire to see her have sex with her new husband:

¡Qué de invidiosos montes levantados,
de nieves impedidos,
me contienden tus dulces ojos bellos!
¡Qué de ríos, del hielo tan atados,
del agua tan crecidos,
me defienden el ya volver a vellos!
¡Y qué, burlando de ellos,
el noble pensamiento
por verte viste plumas, pisa el viento! (1–9)

What about the snow-hindered
mountains raised,
that contend me your sweet elusive shadows!
What about the ice-bounded rivers,
so grown of water,

that argue against seeing them again!
 So what if, deceiving them,
 the fugitive thought
 wears feathers to see you, steps on the wind! (My translation)

This desire surmounts all obstacles like a bird flying across the mountains toward her beloved, metonymized as her eyes. The mountains and the frozen rivers dramatize the conflicted desire to enter the beloved's and her husband's bedroom at night. This masochist voyeurism intensifies when the speaker notices their mutual pleasure and satisfaction. Unlike most early modern erotic poetry, which conceals the object of desire with obstacles, leaving it to the readers to imagine the concealed object, in this poem Góngora, against poetic decorum, describes fantasy reigning free (Navarrete, 2006). The only (ironic) concealment of this intention comes at the end of the *canCIÓN*. The speaker, addressing the personified *canCIÓN*, asks her to tell his thoughts to come back to him, as if he had no control over them: “Canción, di al pensamiento/ que corra la cortina/ y vuelva al desdichado que camina” (Song, tell the thought/ to draw the curtain/ and return to the failed pilgrim) (55–57). Distancing his will from his fantasy as a mere theater spectator, we get the impression of involuntary thought.

However, the poem does not focus on the sexual act itself but on overcoming obstacles to reach a visualization of the beloved with her husband. The flying thought is driven by the metonymy “invidiosa pluma” (envious feather), which stands not only for the wings of jealous fantasy but suggests the difficulties of writing the poem itself with a quill (line 28). The spatial obstacles, indeed, are described as limitations of thought, as in the second stanza:

Ni a las tinieblas de la noche oscura
 ni a los hielos perdona,
 y a la mayor dificultad engaña;
 no hay guardas hoy de llave tan segura
 que nieguen tu persona,
 que no desmienta con discreta maña;
 ni emprenderá hazaña
 tu esposo, cuando lidie,
 que no la registre él, y yo no invidie. (10–18)

It forgives neither the dark night's
 chaos nor the ice,
 and tricks the largest obstacles;
 there are no guards or such a secure lock
 now negating your presence
 that it can't refute with discrete skill;
 nor will your husband undertake
 any feat when he struggles
 that it does not register and I do not envy. (My translation)

The curiosity despite jealousy suggests the possible exhaustion of the desire to possess the beloved toward another kind of desire, prefiguring the free-floating desire in *Soledades*. Several of the verbs suggesting unrelenting spatial movement also indicate a powerful imagination. The state of confusion in the dark night resonates with the experience of the “dark night” of the soul in the poem by St. John of the Cross, in which the soul also flies toward its object of desire, which is union with God. On the other hand, the jealous soul in Góngora’s poem flies toward the newlyweds’ bedroom, “tricking” this dark night. The impediments to constructing such a fantasy reside within the soul. There is a process of self-persuasion against the inner critic of such indecorous curiosity. The desire to see his beloved with another man refutes the guards of reason against that destination. In the end, arriving at the flight’s destination does not resolve jealousy but manages to “register” what is happening. The implied enjoyment in this poem is in transgressing one’s decorous limitations, represented as spatial obstacles. The creative process of desire representing these obstacles is more important than the attainment itself, which constantly reveals new layers to overcome. Thus, the pornographic aspect is emphasized indirectly, not in the fulfillment of the desire itself but in the process of attaining it in the face of a predetermined reason: the enjoyment of self-transgression. Though jealousy is not initially detached from this desire, it goes through a process of exhaustion that, as in Sor Juana’s *Primero Sueño*’s desire for knowledge, could eventually decouple a paranoid feeling from the failure of desire after several re-iterations.

Thus, *Qué de invidiosos montes* displaces erotic desire, as represented by the laurel tree, for a desire to watch the beloved with another man, which it also displaces for the pleasure of transgressing the obstacles to desire. This poem can also be read as a representation of Petrarch, stuck in Italy but obsessed with Laura, who is in Provence. In that case, the desire for Laura/the laurel tree is much more evident than in Góngora’s lack of real-life addressee. In Góngora, the enjoyment is in the imagination itself creating a spectacle that suspends not only the initial desire to be with the beloved, but also the desire to see the beloved with another man: the poem turns masochism into a wholly imaginary practice. Niklaus Largier, in *Figures of Possibility: Aesthetic Experience, Mysticism, and the Play of the Senses* (2022), discusses masochism as a practice that brings back to desire an aesthetic sense of possibility. The early modern Mystics—exemplars of an early version of masochism in Góngora’s times—perform an imaginary negotiation of surrender to God. Teresa of Avila’s desire for union with God in her *Vita*, performed through imitation of Christian martyrs, exemplifies how desire becomes a practice of delay because of the impossibility of attaining the goal of imitation. However, delay becomes an end in itself, a sensational practice. The exemplary lives of the saints are taken as works of art to be imitated in oneself, not as ends in themselves, but to produce a type of experience, thus bringing to the fore how any sense of reality is mediated by a practice of imagination (171–72). Similarly, Góngora’s poem displaces desire several times until the goal becomes the process of delaying itself, which is alluded to by the poem’s self-reflexivity at the end. Each displaced object of desire (the beloved, seeing her with her husband, and overcoming obstacles to the imagination) is a transitional device that incites the imagination without fixating the subject on one single object.

In *Soledades*, the displacement of erotic desire is triggered by the larger context of “shipwreck.” In the poem’s narrative, the *peregrino* begins wandering the world as a death wish triggered by unrequited love. Though the poem wrecks this initial motivation, it leaves traces of it in the mythological imagery. Apollo’s desire, which converted Daphne into the tree of poetry, silenced her, but in *Soledades*, she comes back through association with the sisters of Phaeton. In this essay’s previous section, the perception of the resonances between the poplar trees and the environment of the pre-wedding celebrations of the young country people displaces the old serrano’s worries about the fireworks’ dangers. This description substitutes the association of the sisters of Phaeton with grief with a playful representation that makes all elements resemble each other. Right after this scene, when everybody falls asleep the night before the wedding, another kind of tree moans: the laurel tree. Instead of Apollo moaning as in the Ovidian myth rearticulated by Garcilaso, now Daphne/the laurel tree moans, as if the poem belatedly recognizes Daphne’s suffering for her transformation after fleeing rape. However, this pain is not a byproduct of Petrarchan poetic production but part of the preparation for the peasant nuptials:

Vence la noche al fin, y triunfa mudo
 el silencio, aunque breve, del ruido.
 Sólo gime ofendido
 el sagrado laurel del hierro agudo.
 Deja de su esplendor, deja desnudo
 de su frondosa pompa al verde aliso
 el golpe no remiso
 del villano membrudo.
 El que resistir pudo
 al animoso Austro, al Euro ronco,
 chopo gallardo, cuyo liso tronco
 papel fue de pastores, aunque rudo,
 a revelar secretos va a la aldea,
 que impide Amor que aun otro chopo lea.
 Estos árboles pues ve la mañana
 mentir florestas y emular viales,
 cuantos muró de líquidos cristales
 agricultura urbana. (686–703)

The night conquers at last, and mute triumphs
 silence, for a spell, over noise;
 only sobs offended
 by sharp iron sacred laurel:
 strips away splendor, strips away
 the green alder of its dense pomp
 the unrelenting blows
 of hefty country lad;
 gallant, the one that had withstood
 Auster the spirited, the hoarse Euros,

black poplar, whose smooth trunk
 paper was for shepherds, though coarse,
 is off to the hamlet to reveal secrets
 Love forbade even other poplars to read.

These trees then the morning sees
 feign the groves, emulate paths
 enwalled in liquid crystal
 by urban agriculture.

(My translation, consulting translations by Grossman [2011] and Dent-Young [2007])

When darkness sets in, only the laurel's moan is heard. However, the contiguous descriptions blur the distinction between the laurel and the other trees, the alder and the black poplar. Mentioning that the laurel moans, the alder is blown down, and the black poplar is chopped, the poem implies that the three suffer the same combined destiny. Traces of Daphne's moaning operate as material for the wedding celebration. However, before becoming decorations, they had already served as "paper" for lovers who wrote their names on the barks. This rustic form of writing is an example of Góngora's thematization of contiguous descriptions that blur distinctions and form a new image, such as the V-shape of the wedding procession compared to a flotilla of ships and storks in flight (I, 602–11), and the Petrarchan origin of writing. From serving to celebrate unwed lovers, now the trees officially serve the newlyweds. However, the shepherds refigured the trees as urban alamedas and bordered them with a peasant simulation of urban canals. In this imitation of the urban world by country people, we enter a zone of indistinction between the so-called natural and human worlds. Urban life serves as the model for decoration, but the urban groves, paths, and streams were already made in imitation of natural spaces. In this sequence, the trees are destined to celebrate the wedding, but endless resonances between destination, source, and environment have diluted the destination. The violent desire that uses the trees is de-emphasized, denaturalized, and dissolved into its endless re-figurations.

Furthermore, the end of *Soledad Primera* reiterates this play of resonances through the myth of Daphne and Apollo. During the celebrations the day after the wedding, young shepherds compete in a rustic Olympic game. However, while they all compete for the first prize in each competition, there is never a single winner. More importantly, for the *peregrino*, what matters is not who wins but the aesthetic appreciation of the games, a perspective made evident when a race is compared to the myth of Apollo and Daphne:

El tercio casi de una milla era
 la prolija carrera
 que los hercúleos troncos hace breves,
 pero las plantas leves
 de tres sueltos zagales
 la distancia sincopan tan iguales,
 que la atención confunden judiciousa.
 De la Peneida virgen desdeñosa,

los dulces fugitivos miembros bellos
 en la corteza no abrazó reciente
 más firme Apolo, más estrechamente,
 que de una y otra meta gloriosa
 las duras basas abrazaron ellos
 con triplicado nudo.
 Árbitro Alcides en sus ramas, dudo
 que el caso decidiera,
 bien que su menor hoja un ojo fuera
 del lince más agudo. (1047–64)

Far off from almost one-third of a mile
 where the long course ended
 the Herculean trunks seemed small;
 but the light soles
 of three swift country lads
 so closely syncopate the distance
 that the verdict of the judges confuse;
 No more firmly Apolo embraced
 the sweet fleeing lovely limbs
 of the disdainful Peneid virgin
 becoming bark, more tightly,
 than from one and another unyielding
 bases, the finishing line they embrace
 in a tripled knot.
 I doubt that arbiter Alcides in his branches
 could have decided the case,
 even if the least of his leaves were eyes
 of the sharpest lynx.

(My translation, consulting translations by Grossman [2011] and Dent-Young [2007])

From one-third of a mile, the two intertwined elm trees that make a finishing line (see also 1035–40) look small, though they are big and solid like Hercules. After this optical illusion, the poem describes the difficulty of perceiving which shepherd first embraces the trees at the finishing line. The firmness of their grip on the trees is compared to Apollo's grip on Daphne's body as she becomes a tree. It is significant that the metonymy "bark" is used instead of "tree." The surface of the tree, like Góngora's style, is where we access the poem, and it must be disentangled so we can make some sense of it. Implicitly, the desire to win the race before the other runners is compared to the desire to grasp the human Daphne before she becomes a tree. At first sight, both desires are similarly focused on winning something. However, the playful element of the competition, together with the inability to determine who wins, de-emphasizes desire's lack of the thing desired, instead asserting the constant refiguration of its desired object. The tripled desire in the narrative of winning the race, grasping Daphne, and revealing who wins also suggests multiple teleologies at play, as in the Petrarchan juggling of

sexuality, poetic autonomy, and fame. Through the *peregrino*'s eyes, the competition to affirm a teleology of desire becomes the perception of multiple temporalities. This multiplicity is represented by the image of Alcides (Hercules) as a tree whose leaves would still be unable to tell who won even if all of them were lynxes' eyes. The object of desire, originally erotic and compared to winning the race, is not delayed and displaced by better things, preserving passion in a sublimated form. Instead, what matters is the aesthetic pleasure of representing its lack of a final destination regardless of difficulty. The displacement of the laurel tree as a metaphor for the race becomes part of a new figure that represents multiple perspectives and creates a space that reconfigures Petrarchan sexual sublimation. The original sexual violence in the source story is thus replaced by a focus on the resonances between the figure and its frame, both considered in the *peregrino*'s focalization under the logic of mutual inclusion in which the tree metaphor accrues new meanings. Góngora's trees, as a reparative reading of desire, detach the masochist performance of failure of desire from the flow of desire, which was constantly replayed in Petrarchism in the service of poetic fame. Desire is not doomed to fail but becomes a free-floating process, not dependent on specific objects of desire that are constantly recreated.

IV. The Shipwreck of Greed-Production

Soledades also associates these resonances among different trees with ships, recreating the meaning of both at a more explicitly political level. Góngora reiterates the early modern poetic association between trees and ships through the “leño” (lumber) that can stand for both in the poem. However, Góngora potentializes this association, connecting these images as part of an implied critique of the teleology of imperial desire. As symbolized by the constellation of forests, trees, logs, and ships, all objects of desire are implicitly diagnosed as driven toward shipwreck by the imperial economy of greed. There is simply no way to avoid greed because all aspirations are related as metonymies of the final (but impossible) imperial colonial desire. As Dana Bultman suggests in her comparison to the poetry of Fray Luis de León a generation earlier, Góngora shifts the understanding of greed, now not as a matter of moral, personal choice but as a structural problem (448). The critique of greed implied by Góngora is a historicized change of perspective on greed as socioeconomically produced. Still, before Góngora, Fray Luis characterized the rejection of greed as a transformation process that promotes a different kind of culture, adding another layer of understanding of what is at stake in the “shipwreck” that triggers the “pilgrimage” represented in *Soledades*. In the poem “Vida retirada” (*The Life Removed*), Fray Luis praises the act of withdrawing oneself from urban greed and enjoying the beauty of nature as a divine manifestation. In this sense, Fray Luis Christianizes the topic of “Beatus Ille” from Horace’s Epode II. In Horace’s poem, praise of life in the countryside is ironized by revealing at the end that it was a fleeting fantasy by a moneylender harassed by his debtors. However, as in Garcilaso de la Vega’s paraphrase of Horace in *Egloga II*, 38–76, which eliminates the ironic setting, Fray Luis figures the countryside as a way of life, linking it to his critique of early modern courtly greed promoted by the need of gaining favors in order to succeed. This focus on critique and escape reconfigures the stoicism of Virgil and Seneca by dramatizing it as a vital Christian choice (Gallagher, 1969). However, moving to the countryside is not enough. Amid the mountains, a garden is kept, implying that nature in itself is not enough to leave greed behind: “Del monte en la ladera/ por mi mano plantado tengo un huerto,/ que con la primavera,/ de bella flor cubierto,/ ya muestra en esperanza el fruto cierto” (40–44) (On the slope of the hill, with my hand I have planted an orchard, which in the springtime, covered with lovely blooms, is already giving hopeful signs of sure fruit) (trans. Rivers, p. 92). Amid the wilderness, the poet must cultivate a “garden” to help him forget postlapsarian city life. This garden may imply that the “nature” to which the speaker retreated has been interiorized to transform desire and be ready to receive the fruit of grace. Furthermore, though the poet has built an inner garden, as in the allegorical garden of Teresa of Avila’s *Vita*, intentional gardening is not enough to reap the fruit:

El aire el huerto orea
y ofrece mil olores al sentido,
los árboles menea
con un manso rüido,
que del oro y del cetro pone olvido.

Ténganse su tesoro
 los que de un flaco leño se confían;
 no es mío ver el lloro
 de los que desconfían
 cuando el cierzo y el ábrego porfían.
 La combatida antena
 cruje, y en ciega noche el claro día
 se torna; al cielo suena
 confusa vocería,
 y la mar enriquecen a porfía. (55–70, ed. by Lera)

The breeze flows through the orchard
 and offers many fragrances to one's senses;
 it sways the trees
 with a gentle sound,
 which makes one forget gold and scepters.
 Let them have their treasures,
 those who put their faith in frail logs;
 I won't have to see the tears
 of those who lose their faith
 when the north and south winds compete.
 The strained mast
 creaks, and the bright day turns
 into dark night; a confused sound
 of voices rises to heaven, and they strive
 in throwing their riches to the sea. (Adapted from the prose translation by
 Rivers, p. 93)

This fragment positions life in the countryside as a retreat from colonial greed. The breeze activates the garden's smells and sounds, making the speaker forget his desire for riches and power. Through the sensations generated by interaction with the garden he built and the sudden breeze, desire detaches from courtly politics. As a divine messenger through nature, the breeze brings out fruition only after the speaker has already made an effort to cultivate the garden. Those who do not retreat remain in a precarious position, represented as a "frail log." Translators often replace the metonymy "leño" (log, lumber, or timber) with its associated meaning in the context of navigation as a ship or boat. I have left the same word to highlight the relevance of the figure in Fray Luis and Góngora. The metonymy "logs," which is the material for the object (ship), suggests not only the origin of the ships but also the possibility that in a shipwreck they could revert to lumber, their raw material; thus, their frailty is revealed against rough weather. The strained mast also resembles the image of the mast/trunk of the tree in *Soledad Segunda*, which we already analyzed. The epic ship's mast represents a nurturing nesting space associated with the fisherman's skills. Here, the mast is emasculated not by feminization but by creaking, which blends with the confused voices of the ship's crew. The straining on the mast produced by the clashing of opposing wind currents could break the mast and cause shipwreck; thus, if they sank, the voices would

feed the ocean with the riches they carry. Despite the dangers, the imperative to acquire wealth surpasses the urge to survive. However, Fray Luis implies that it is still possible to merely decide, by an act of will, to exit this world ruled by the machinery of greed, to cultivate a garden, and to wait for greed's imperative to recede. The option is immanent to a Christian teleology of salvation that Fray Luis aims to restore in times of crisis, through which a recreation of the garden of Eden overcomes the corrupted world as a pilgrimage of sin.

Like Fray Luis a generation before Góngora, some of Francisco de Quevedo's sonnets propose displacing colonial greed, not with nature but with eroticism. Quevedo published Fray Luis's poems in 1631, four years after Góngora's death, probably as another "antidote" to the influence of *gongorismo*. Indeed, for Navarrete, Quevedo's sonnet sequence of love poems to Lisi works as a response to the "poetics of fulfillment" in Góngora's sonnets. As in Góngora's canción *Qué de invidiosos montes* analyzed above, this poetics of fulfillment represents the fantasy of fulfilling an indecorous desire. Quevedo responds to such a pornographic version of Petrarchism by bringing back the original decorum of the style. However, some of his poems overlap Petrarchism with a critique of greed metaphorized as navigation, as in a sonnet in the Lisi sequence:

Tú, que la paz del mar, ¡oh navegante!,
molestas, codicioso y diligente,
por sangrarle las venas al Oriente
del más rubio metal, rico y flamante,

detente aquí; no pases adelante;
hártate de tesoros, brevemente,
en donde Lisi peina de su frente
hebras sutil en ondas fulminante.

Si buscas perlas, más descubre ufana
su risa que Colón en el mar de ellas;
si grana, a Tiro dan sus labios grana.

Si buscan flores, sus mejillas bellas
vencen la primavera y la mañana;
si cielo y luz, sus ojos son estrellas. (ed. Garcia-González, CCLXVII a)

You, who molest the peaceful sea,
oh navigator! greedy and diligent,
so as to bleed the Orient's veins
of the blondest metal, rich and flaming,

stop here; go no further;
glut yourself with treasures, quickly,
where Lisi combs across her brow
slender threads into fulminant waves.

If you seek pearls, more reveal her proud
 laughter than Columbus in a sea of them;
 if carmine, then her lips lend that to the Tyre.

If they seek blooms, her beautiful cheeks
 defeat morning and Spring;
 if heavens and light, her eyes are stars.
 (My translation, consulting translations by Navarrette pp. 213–14, and
 Walters # 6)

This sonnet, addressed to the reader/navigator, equates the material riches of the colonies to the erotic charms of Lisi. Though any explicit image of the ship is absent, this vessel is the implied material instrument of greed, a vehicle for “bleeding” the “Orient” of their natural resources. The call to stop and redirect the desire for material wealth toward the beauty of Lisi, as a symbol of female erotic beauty, interrupts colonialism. The implied critique of colonialism here, as in the work of Fray Luis, is about moral calculation: one benefits more from some objects of desire, like the beauty of nature or erotic love than from gold. Lisi produces sensations equivalent to the excitement of colonial extractivism but without its dangers or moral compromise. Furthermore, in the last two lines, Lisi’s beauties are displaced from erotic metonymies of desire to spiritual symbols as a sublimation of eroticism in the analogy of her eyes to the harmony of the heavens. This simulation of sublimation is the work of poetry, performing its autonomy as a rationalization of desire. However, as Navarrete mentions, Quevedo’s use of gongorine tropes and the language of his poetics of fulfillment signals a possible ironic tone against his poetic enemy, an exaggeration of the possibility of actually displacing greed with eroticism; a false exit. However ironic, this analogy tells of a similar diagnostic of desire subsumed by greed, which was the basis of Góngora’s and Fray Luis’s responses. As Góngora shows in *Soledades*, eroticism is not a sublimation of greed but stands in a continuum with it and other problematic objects of desire.

However, unlike Fray Luis, in *Soledades*, the shipwreck brought upon by greed prompts an exit not toward God but toward recreating its ruin, toward internalizing the accident. This internalization follows the opposite direction to the *huerto* in Fray Luis, which aims at internalizing the retreat to create the conditions for receiving spiritual grace. Instead, the shipwreck is kept in form, but the reiteration is free from its association with catastrophe. In *Soledades*, this transformation where erotic love and greed come together in navigation is evident in the *peregrino*’s speech in *Soledad Segunda*. The fishing scene observed by the protagonist from the smaller of two fishing boats serves as a preamble to his speech. On the one hand, the wanderer compares the foam on the front of the larger ship to a pearl necklace worn by a Peruvian Coya (Quechua queen) (II, 62–67). For John Beverley, in “The Production of Solitude: Góngora and the State” (1980), this comparison is one of Góngora’s many “mercantilist metaphors,” which show how the poem, as opposed to representations of nature in the baroque *comedia* and the colonial appropriation of *gongorismo*, does not serve to educate the nobility in how to govern through the experience of nature and rural life as analogous to court politics; instead, the metaphor reveals the real source of power—that is, the primitive accumulation of other people’s work and wealth (p. 32-33). The

seawater's foam, as added decorative value worn by the animated ship like pearls, is juxtaposed to the description of the fishers using fish like colonizers use the riches of the Americas. This parallel ironically implies arbitrary projection of exchange value. However, the focus on multiple re-figurations of "foam" is another example of how the poem imagines a reconstitution of value as a range of possibilities inherent in alternative perceptions of things.

Likewise, the metonymic chain of desire—forest-trees-logs-planks-ships, not only shows the material sources that enable navigation but also recreates their meaning without forcing an economic value. The *peregrino* has climbed on a small boat from which he watches the other, larger fishing boat, characterized as a metonymy that reverses the teleology of the ship, returning it to its original material, "negligente roble" (negligent oak) (105). The nets trap countless fish from the estuary, all destined for the fisherman's hut. Like fish trapped by the destiny of the fishers' boat, greed traps desire in a colonial shipwreck. The epic ships are not so different from the rustic ships, one of which will become a lyric ship. The smaller boat becomes a guitar's body, the oars its chords (111–14) from which the pilgrim utters his song. This contrast between the big and small ships is cognate with two significant contrasts that resonate throughout the poem. On the one hand, this pairing is parallel to the contrast between the trumpets of fame and lyric flutes in the *Dedicatoria*. Both wind instruments, one evoking the epic desire and the other the *peregrino*'s erotic desire, align with greed throughout the poem. Similarly, the boats parallel the contrast between the idealized amebian chant by two fishers and the cruel falconry hunting as an allegory of greed, both at the end of *Soledad Segunda*. These ironic contrasts suggest that the lyric form, associated in the poem with erotic desire analogized to colonialism, is a rhetorical refuge from the corrupted epic of colonial greed and not a potential transformation of imperial desire.

The *canción* then sung by the *peregrino* from the smaller boat is apparently a song about unrequited erotic love because erotic love becomes a metaphor for navigation. On the one hand, the *canción* of the second serrano in *Soledad Primera* (I, 365–502) is premised on the loss of the son as a byproduct of colonial greed and prompts a lament and critique of the dangers of colonialism. On the other hand, this *canción* of the protagonist (II, 116–71), speaking in his voice for the only time in the poem, re-appropriates the failed navigation enterprise. In his song, the protagonist, having survived five years of his pilgrimage of failed erotic desire, offers his life to the uncertainties of the ocean:

Tuyos serán mis años,
 en tabla redimidos poco fuerte
 de la bebida muerte
 que ser quiso, en aquel peligro extremo,
 ella el forzado y su guadaña el remo. (124–28)

Yours will be my years,
 redeemed on a fragile plank
 from my thirst for death,
 which wanted to be, in such an utmost danger,

she the galley slave, her scythe the oar. (My translation, consulting Grossman's and Cunningham's)

He has been rescued by a "plank," which, in Beverley's note, resonates with the dolphin-like plank that rescued him at the beginning of *Soledad Primera* (15–18). However, he tries to accept his destiny and transforms his Petrarchan grief in the process with the paradoxical image of Death working on the ship as a galley slave. Death becomes a metaphor for the exit from this destination, a submission that transforms his hope of preserving his love in some form. This residue of hope is expressed through the image of Icarus, whose death eternalizes his ambition. However, in this case, the *peregrino's* death does not memorialize his name but his lover's name. This love can be compared to greed in its insistence and all-encompassing force, as in Quevedo's poem. However, this *canción*, as in Sedgwick's "reparative reading," aims to detach a paranoid feeling (in this case, the obsessive attachment to the lover who rejected him as a form of greed) from failure:

[. . .]
 Esta pues culpa mía
 el timón alternar menos seguro
 y el báculo más duro
 un lustro ha hecho a mi dudosa mano,
 solicitando en vano
 las alas sepultar de mi osadía
 donde el Sol nace o donde muere el día.
 Muera, enemiga amada,
 muera mi culpa, y tu desdén le guarde,
 arrepentido tarde,
 suspiro que mi muerte haga leda,
 cuando no le suceda,
 o por breve, o por tibia, o por cansada,
 lágrima antes enjuta que llorada.
 Naufragio ya segundo,
 o filos pongan de homicida hierro
 fin duro a mi destierro;
 tan generosa fe, no fácil onda,
 no poca tierra esconda:
 urna suya el Océano profundo,
 y obeliscos los montes sean del mundo. (143–63)
 [. . .]

Thus this guilt of mine
 alternate the most unsafe rudder
 with the hardest staff
 for a lustrum has made my doubtful hand,
 ever attempting in vain
 to bury the wings of my boldness

where the Sun is born or where the day dies.
 Die, beloved enemy,
 let my guilt die, and your disdain keep for it,
 too late in regret,
 a sigh that makes my death sweeter,
 though it's not followed by
 a wary, reluctant or careless
 tear that dries before it's shed.
 Whether second shipwreck
 or the edges of homicidal iron put
 a harsh end to my exile;
 such a generous faith, neither trifling waves
 nor a handful of earth can hide:
 deepest Ocean be its urn,
 hills of the world its obelisks. (My translation, consulting Grossman's and
 Cunningham's)

"Guilt" is not just a moral fault previously associated with the flight of Icarus. It is also a naturalization of the performance of grief that keeps hope alive even after death and has guided the wandering of the pilgrim through sea and land. However, instead of pursuing the assemblage of love and greed, the protagonist wants to exhaust his remorse about the failure of love. Initially, this love and greed entail letting the lover who had rejected him regret his death as late poetic justice. At the same time, imagining the beloved's sigh helps him exhaust his guilt. It is a second shipwreck, like being killed in war, that is, an external force that completes this reconfiguration of a death wish of love. This second shipwreck enables the aimless wandering that expresses the de-linking of shame from the failure of greed. This reparation that frees desire as pilgrimage without a goal is the precondition to surviving afloat the plank after the shipwreck. Also, the spiritual humility in waiting for God's grace, as in Fray Luis, here, becomes the willingness to receive the wreck, to remain in it—a constant reconfiguration of shipwreck as the exhaustion of compulsive desire. The laurel tree of the poet's erotic desire is the same material as the ship of greed, and both are reconstituted through a poetics of the exhaustion of greed. Thus, the death of Icarus, who becomes famous despite his moral transgression, is reconstituted as the possibility of transforming greed through the failure it brings upon itself.

Góngora, from his perspective as part of the lower Spanish nobility, theorizes how colonial greed may exhaust itself. While this greed is a byproduct of the economic extractivism driving the political class, greed reinforces this process as an epidemic of the will. Thus, the exhaustion of greed can generate a parallel culture promoting different values. Góngora's social class also benefited from colonialism, but his poetics of exhaustion recognizes the reverberations of colonial violence against the colonizers themselves and suggests a radical response based upon that recognition. This mapping of exhaustion extends Fray Luis's sincere spiritual aspiration toward a critique of imperial greed from within literary culture. The spiritual *huerto* has become the exhaustion that greed may bring upon itself. This exhaustion is first hinted at in *Soledades's* preference for the ways of life of shepherds, peasants, and fishers. Like

the conquistadors in the Américas, the *peregrino* wanders through strange islands and marvels at other ways of life. However, unlike them, he remains in a state of wonder, not seeking to impose his perspective or benefit from them. As Beverley also explains in “Góngora and the State,” Góngora’s “mercantilist metaphors,” like the foam/pearls, suggest awareness of the need to oppose things themselves to their use-value, and this use-value to exchange-value. This effect is exemplified in the metonymic chain trees/ship/logs/planks of imperial navigation that, in deferring meaning toward each other and playing with the context of each utterance, trumps readers’ expectations. This focus on the process of signification, rather than the fulfillment of meaning, is analogous to a critique of the colonial economy. In *Soledades*, the implicit diagnosis is that exchange value enables colonial greed through the drive for gold as the measure of all things, but proposes that, instead of a desire for abstract gold, a focus on multiple uses of each figure implies a constant recalibration of desire, its *pilgrimage*. This vision against the extractivist empire may have been prompted by Góngora’s patrons, the Medina-Sidonia, a powerful Andalucian family that was part of a bloc that wanted to keep their morisco vassals working their fields, and thus opposed their expulsion by the government which was incited by conspiracy theories (Chemris, 2021). Years after Góngora’s death, in 1640, this family led a failed conspiracy against Philip IV influenced by contemporary independentist movements in Catalonia and Portugal but without popular support. Anti-mercantilist tendencies might also have influenced Góngora through his friend from Córdoba and the University of Salamanca, Pedro de Valencia, royal chronicler of Spain and the Indies (Chemris, 2021). *Arbitristas* like Valencia claimed that the real source of value was not idealized gold but the use of nature, especially agriculture. Also, Góngora knew the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega from humanistic circles in Córdoba (ibid), who might have influenced Góngora with an alternative form of government in the Inca Empire, similar to a “feudal socialism” that protects the needs of its vassals.

However, the possibilities of Góngora’s poetics—as manifested in the metonymic chain that mimics the chain of production/shipwreck of navigation, do not lie in imagining a new form of government. Petrarchan desire, as in the myth of Apollo lamenting the death of Daphne, is historicized as anachronistic in the face of resistance to perform desire as a loss. Sor Juana’s modeling of the process of exhaustion of violent desire in *Primero sueño* elucidates Góngora’s representation of a desire that is already exhausted of naturalizing its objects of desire. Speaking of Sor Juana’s gongorine poetics, for Emilie Bergmann (2006), *Primero Sueño* refigures the Petrarchan violence of Polyphemus in Góngora’s *Fábula de Polifemo y Galatea*. In *Primero Sueño*, the violent desire is not sexual but rather a desire for absolute knowledge; however, the subject of this violent desire for knowledge is always limited according to gender and legal status within the colonies. For Rob Ter Horst (1997), *Primero Sueño*’s simultaneous aversion and attraction to forbidden knowledge is symbolized by Nyctimene stealing olive oil from temples and compared to Prometheus stealing the fire of civilization’s knowledge (lines 25–38). Sor Juana transforms male predation of feminized objects into female predation of patriarchal knowledge (248).

Similarly, in this chapter, a refiguration of violent sexual desire is already present in *Soledades* at the level of the internal economy of desire that reconfigures the greed correlated with colonial enterprises in the creation of an alternative cultural space.

Greed functions similarly to Augustinian desire as explained by Freccero, in which all kinds of desires relate in a metonymic hierarchy with God at the top. The difference is that individualized and generalized greed is the new, corrupted, inverted order in its modern form as a colonial enterprise, like an *inferno* without the possibility of purgatory. Conventional religious experiences cannot escape colonial greed because the new general economy casts greed as more important than figuring oneself within alternative libidinal economies. Crystal Chemris, speaking about violence and eros in *Soledades*, applies the “heroic rape” theories of Diane Wolfhal to understand the rustic wedding in *Soledad Primera* as containment of a basic masculine rape impulse (2003). Bergmann analyzes lines 722–32 of *Soledad Primera*, where, during the wedding celebrations, the older man introduces the *peregrino* to the groom, then to the bride decorously hiding behind her father, suggesting marriage as a homosocial transaction between the two men. Compared to a flower’s red, the young bride’s decorous blush resonates with the bear’s blood on the snow in the *Dedicatoria*. According to “heroic rape” theory, the bride can be seen as ironically sacrificed for the sake of containment of violent erotic desire (96–98). This homosocial exchange parallels the violence of exchange value that enables colonialism. Besides exchanging women to reinforce the economy, natural resources are abstractly quantified and exchanged through the value form of “gold.” The cycles of violence through exchange, both gendered and colonial, are on a continuum. Even aristocratic leisure ends up sacrificing lives; thus, hunting, as in the *Dedicatoria* and the hawking party, like marriage, is understood as sublimation or lesser evil than war or rape. However, sublimation, like the *huerto* in Fray Luis, could not alone change the underlying logic of sacrifice in the social fabric driven by profit and sexual violence. An event is needed, the expected “grace” in Fray Luis or the unwanted “shipwreck” in *Soledades*. Highlighting the possibility of desiring outside the exchange system, “shipwreck” does not tend toward an abstract destination. The event of “shipwreck” is an end in itself, sparking endless re-figurations, as represented in *Soledades*’s endless narrative and metaphorical detours. The pleasure of the pilgrim in *Soledades* does not reside in transgressing the other as an object of knowledge but in exhausting and refiguring oneself, adopting a perspective that always escapes the violence of compulsive desire for gold. While from the perspective of imperial realism this escape is a mere fantasy, it is actually a real possibility that exceeds colonial empire, as evident in greed’s constant failure to contain desire.

V. *La corteza del texto: Reading as Shipwreck*

The reception of Góngora's *Soledades* mirrors this poetics of shipwreck as the exhaustion of compulsory greed. Sor Juana's figuration of an ironic dissemination of exemplarity elucidates the initial reception of Góngora's poem. The dream of knowledge in her *Primero Sueño* finishes with an analysis of the figure of Phaeton. Despite his failed attempt at riding the chariot of the Sun, he becomes an exemplary figure. Sor Juana compares this effect to criminals becoming famous because of their executions. As John Braithwaite says, following Foucault, public shaming that sought to stigmatize criminals failed as a form of warning in seventeenth-century Europe. In reality, the public identified with petty criminals, turning the shame against the executioner, the judges, and the king, potentially engendering cultures of resistance to the law (7-9). Similarly, regardless—or perhaps because—of the fierce opposition to the poem by many contemporary poets, *Soledades* became a turning point in baroque Hispanic poetry. Those passionately opposed to the poem may get closer to perceiving the full effects of the new poetry and thus spread its effects through their critiques, but with a mistaken evaluation of its difficulty (Molho, 1960, pp. 39–41; Baena, 2016, p. 10). Publicly criticizing the poem promoted a desire to imitate its style, implying a repressed enjoyment of its stylistic transgressions. These contradictory reactions showcase the emergence of a modern aesthetic of transgressing tradition against the habitual decorum of concealing such desires. This paradoxical reception of *Soledades* does not mean that tradition had not been transgressed before but that the poem's shameless and excessive innovation triggered a new, uncanny awareness that the experience of reading any text depends on a praxis of reading. *Soledades's* reading experience, for its contemporaries, privileged neither the extant ways of reading literary genres nor the mere pleasure of innovation. The anxiety produced by this new liberation of the reader was made evident by both the loyal defense and opposition the poem provoked (Smith, 1986, p. 89). The figure of Phaeton in Sor Juana's *Primero Sueño* applied to Góngora's *Soledades* in the context of its contrarian dissemination, highlights a constant disturbance of the conventions of all the genres to which the poem alludes. It is impossible to idealize epic violence as virtuous in light of the poem's critique of individualized and compulsory greed, as the default tendency of all aspirations is, whether violent or not, consciously or not, complicit with it. Still, this is not a bucolic poem because the *peregrino* is not posing as an aristocratic shepherd but meeting actual country people. Thus, rigid poetic adherence to the generic rules that privilege the epic becomes a synecdoche of the new libidinal economy of gold. Shipwreck liberates the subject from this obsession, becoming a pilgrim of objectless desire.

Soledades's modeling of free-floating desire liberated through the exhaustion of greed promotes a reader who is not merely “uncovering the bark” that sets an interpretation of the text. Instead, reading becomes a process-oriented interpretation that only finds more bark, more ships, more logs, planks, trees, and forests to continue with the process. The *bark* was mentioned as a writing surface during the wedding preparations, when they cut the trees, including the carvings lovers made on their trunks. The poem constantly rewrites the bark in the description of the wedding celebration that transforms it. Likewise, the reader's attention is dragged across multiple

rearticulations of metaphors, much as the wedding preparations transform the cortex of the trees into urban alamedas in the middle of the forest. Góngora himself ironically defended the “difficulty” of reading *Soledades* as edifying for his readers, who need to do the work of uncovering the bark (Carreira, 44) as if reading was part of a humanist project of producing eloquent citizens. However, the problem is that there is no way to uncover the bark of *Soledades* without finding the impossibility of making sense of a constantly deferred text. Whether fictional or not, a letter sent to Góngora from Madrid serves as one example of the importance of the encounter with the surface of the text without assuming there is only one correct interpretation, revealing the anxiety that the poetics of *Soledades* generated.¹⁰ The sender complains that another poet, Andrés de Mendoza, is losing his mind and even forgetting to eat because of his enthusiasm about an early manuscript of the poem (ibid, 40). This reaction resembles Don Quixote’s “madness” after reading so many books of chivalry; however, this madness, unlike that in *Don Quixote*, is not a nostalgic satire of a literary genre but an effect of the new poetry. This madness, for the sender, threatens to spread like a contagious vice despite

¹⁰ Letter sent to Góngora from Madrid (fragment, followed by my translation): “[...] Y como ni en estas ni en las demás lenguas del Calepino no están escriptos los tales soliloquios, y se cree que wuesa merced no ha participado de la gracia de Pentecostés, muchos se han persuadido que ha alcanzado algún ramalazo de la desdicha de Babel, aunque otros entienden que wuesa merced ha inventado esta jerigonça para rematar el seso de Mendoça: pues si tuuiera otro fin no lo hiziera tan dueño destas Soledades, teniendo tantos amigos doctos y cuerdos de quien pudiera wuesa merced quedar aduertido, y ellas, enmendadas o declaradas, ya que de todo ello ay tanta necesidad. Haga wuesa merced lo possible por recoxer estos papeles, como lo van haziendo sus aficionados tanto por remendar la opinión de wuesa merced como compadecidos del juicio de Mendoça. Y sobre esto encargo a wuesa merced la conçiencia, pues pareciéndole que sirue a wuesa merced y que él adquiere famoso renombre, haze lo possible por persuadir que entiende lo que wuesa merced, si lo escriuió, fue para que él se desuaneciera, y lo va estando tanto, que ha escrito y porfia en ello muy copiosos corolarios de su canora y esforçada prosa, diziendo que disculpa y explica a wuesa merced: mire en qué parará quien trae esto en la caueça y vn ayuno quotidiano en el estómago. Y si esto no, muéuanle a wuesa merced dos cosas que sus amigos hauemos sentido mucho: vna, que este su comentador no le llame el señor don Luis, pues por lo poeta no se juzga este título autorizado. La segunda, por *corregir el vicio que introduciría entre muchachos, que procurarán imitar el lenguaje de estos versos*, entendiendo que wuesa merced habla de veras en ellos [...]” (my emphasis) (in Carreira, # 40).

My translation: “[. . .] And since these soliloquies are neither written in these [greek and latin] nor in the other tongues of Calepinus, and since it is not believed that you have been granted the grace of Pentecost, many have come to think that you have been hit by some of the lashes of Babel’s fortune, though others believe that you have invented this gibberish to finish off Mendoza’s brains: for if it had another end it would not have made him so obsessed about these Solitudes, since you have so many sane scholar friends that could have warned you; and the poem, amended or censored, since it needs it so much. Make thou everything possible to withdraw these papers from circulation, like your admirers are already doing not only to mend your reputation but out of pity for Mendoza’s sanity. And we make you responsible for his conscience, for, believing that he serves you and that he acquires famous renown, does everything possible to persuade us that he understands that which, if you wrote it, you did it to be praised, and he has done it so much, that he keeps insisting on writing excessive corollaries of his canorous and overdone prose, saying that he defends and explains yours: look what will happen to someone who has this plus daily fasting in the head. And if this doesn’t move you, there are two things that your friends have lamented much: one, that your commentator calls you *señor* Don Luis, because being a poet does not grant you such a title. The second one, to *correct the vice that would be introduced in young men, who would try to imitate the language of these verses*, believing that you are the one who really speaks through them [. . .].”

other poets' censorship (ibid, 40). However, the "madness" does not merely reside in excessive enjoyment but in the pleasure of a new kind of poetry, one that does not follow the conventions of poetic taste. Madness is thus equated with enjoying something that most do not enjoy. Anxious about the spread of the *gongorine* plague, the sender recommends withdrawing the poem from circulation.

Anxiety about enjoying the poem invites developing an intimate type of reading, a relationship between reader and text. A similar type of enjoyment to Mendoza's above, one that could evade codified readings, is explicitly promoted in Teresa of Avila's first book, her *Meditations on the Song of Songs* (1567). Permission was required to read this erotic book of the Bible, and the only books available to most literate Spaniards were the Psalms and the Gospels. Seeking to authorize women's reading of that book, St. Teresa develops a Marian hermeneutic of humility based on enjoyment (Slade, 1986). Rather than appealing to theological knowledge, this way of reading appeals to the feelings that emerge from reading confusing passages as a medium for accessing God's will. Teresa modeled this way of reading on the example of Mary, who, when the Annunciation gave her knowledge of the incarnation, never questioned her role and, indeed, surrendered to it with humility. Meaning is subordinated to a desire for communication with the divine, undermining rational interpretations associated with masculinity (ibid, 32-33). Passion, not just intellect, is the site of real meaning, and this passion can only be accessed with humility; that is, humility, like the "shipwreck" in the Augustinian tradition, is what allows recognizing that we do not own our desire, which is always already part of something bigger than oneself. Still, this passionate reading is not against intellectual understanding, as it can be a method for reading those sections that the intellect alone cannot apprehend.

Fray Luis de León's prologue to his translation and commentary on the *Song of Songs* from Hebrew into Spanish elucidates the cognitive aspect of Teresa of Avila's feminist affective reading.¹¹ This erotic-spiritual eclogue incites feelings upon engagement with its form. There are already many doctrinal readings of the book, of which he will not say anything; instead, he proposes a return to the reader's encounter with the features of the text: "Solamente trabajaré en declarar la *corteza* de la letra, así llanamente, como si en este libro no hubiera otro mayor secreto del que muestran aquellas palabras desnudas, al parecer, dichas y respondidas entre Salomón y su esposa" (prologue, edited by Lera, my emphasis) ("I will only work on declaring the *bark* of the text, just plainly, as if in this book there was not any other secret than that which is shown by those naked words, seemingly uttered and replied between Solomon and his wife"). Through an initial encounter with the "bark" of the text, that is, an engagement that considers its qualities, ambiguities, and fragmentary thoughts, readers can generate singular elusive feelings that are the actual ground of their reading. The "bark" metaphor promotes a constant return to this encounter. Reading as self-figuration in St. Teresa can be understood as a metaphor that expresses submission to a web of relations that determines the feelings of reading the text, not an interpretation but a digestion of the text. Such reading is emblemized by the example of Mendoza,

¹¹ Fray Luis spent about five years (1572–77) in prison for this translation, and this imprisonment may be why he did not include Teresa's *Meditations* when he published his edition of Teresa of Avila's works in 1588.

implicitly critiquing authorized readings in the same way that *Soledades* critiques the libidinal economy that generates subjects driven by greed.

Like passionate reading's evasion of doctrinal readings, the constellation of wood and shipwreck promotes alternative values and reappropriations of forests and trees outside of the shipbuilding economy of the empire. As shown above, in the combination of Augustinian and Petrarchan desire to characterize and critique the libidinal economy in *Soledades*, Góngora historicizes religious mistrust of secular desire and mystical emphasis of experimental practice, as if *shipwreck* were a new form of grace. However, he avoids using any religious terms, perhaps to evade censorship from the Church, especially given that he worked as a prebendary. Indeed, Dana Bultman has suggested that one reason that the poetry of *Soledades* sounded heretical was that it reflected "heretical" forms of reading scriptures. Bultman says that in the Zohar (Book of Splendor of Jewish mysticism), there are multiple ways of perceiving the divine order, which, applied to the reading of the Bible, could threaten authoritative Christian interpretations. Under suspicion of such scriptural Christian-Jewish mysticism in early modern Iberia (Christian Kabbalism), Góngora, a descendant of Jewish converts now working for the Catholic church, may have raised suspicion of going against authorized ways of readings or of enabling conflicting interpretations. This surveillance may be why Fray Luis used the metaphor of the bark of the text to avoid openly contradicting doctrine in his edition of the *Song of Songs*, though he was still imprisoned for studying and translating Hebrew.

In reading *Soledades*, instead of being dispossessed by an aesthetic correspondence between form and content that would drive desire, contemporary readers are dispossessed of poetic taste through engagement with registers that genre rules cannot contain. Reader's expectations are constantly rerouted. The event of shipwreck is insistently reaffirmed in the representation of its afterlife. The endless reconfigurations of driftwood haunted by the trees and forests from which they come is a constant performance of the shipwreck of desire. In this way, the poem's transmission of affect does not promote a predetermined ethics but lets the historical intensities otherwise suppressed by conventional poetic taste resist their suppression, a response Fred Moten calls "the resistance of the object" (2003). The suppressed others of these navigational enterprises in the poem, the unmentioned colonized Amerindianism, are reflected in the peasants and fishermen as well as in erotic objects of desire. Nevertheless, these internal others, destabilizing the poetic means of representation, only serve as a contrast to the dominant libidinal economy that produces greed. That is, instead of a poetics of an impenetrable other, Góngora focuses on how the medium of representation itself frames the other outside of the picture and then proceeds to shipwreck the frame. This blurring of categorical boundaries is how Massumi analyzes the logic of zoos: the spectacle of watching the animals conceals our awareness of the situation of captivity (69–72). However, that zone concealed by the frame is revealed through the driftwood in *Soledades* as an autonomous site of resistance, reflecting the observer's perspective that shipwrecks the discipline without which the frame could not exist.

Indeed, for Carlo Ginzburg, there was a seventeenth-century shift in the meaning of mythological figures of daring like Icarus and Prometheus, like the Phaeton myth in Sor Juana's *Primero sueño*. From offering a warning against intellectual ambition and

pride in the Middle Ages, they become figures that promote daring, merely acknowledging its dangers. Like in Góngora's poetics of "wood" and Mendoza's way of reading Góngora, this daring implies a new allegiance, more to an autonomous intellectual sphere than to religious or secular authorities (40). "Wood" exemplifies a tendency to describe how the singularity of any particular thing exceeds categorical knowledge. However, in *Soledades*, the categorical drive to match poetic figures with the events represented is already exhausted. Thus, instead of a sequence of attempts, the poem produces a whole field of greed already burned out as a new poetic field itself. Instead of gradually exhausting desire, Góngora speculates with a perspective predicated on the wreckage of desire. The trunk of doctrine, desire for poetic fame and eroticism has become driftwood freed from the ship of colonial greed after going through shipwreck endlessly reconstituted in infinite, wandering planks, the bark of a text without a trunk, a pilgrimage without destination. This wood, both a vehicle of empire and a potential escape from it, models a new type of defiant humility as a rejection of naturalized greed. As with false humility, humility is no longer an ideal virtue but a response to a double bind, a performance of humility. Góngora may have been influenced by gambling, one of his favorite activities, in which one must pretend not to have good cards. However, to be able to gamble with poetry, Góngora was in the double bind of needing support from the court while opposing their values. Thus, he took the route of intensifying tradition to the point of shipwrecking it, a defiant way of internalizing tradition through implosion. Neither epic nor lyric is the answer; the contrast between the (now corrupted) trumpet of epic fame and the lyric flute of poetic fame in the *Dedicatoria*, and the contrast between the amebian chant and the bird hunting at the end of the *Soledad Segunda*, are reminders that *Soledades* pierces through both dystopian and utopian alternatives.

CHAPTER FOUR:
Primero Sueño: Exhaustion of Knowledge, Knowledge of Exhaustion

I. Introduction: Between Religious and Secular Study

This chapter provides an affective map of how the emergence of the baroque aesthetics of exhaustion correlates with the project of infinite expansion of modern knowledge and the inevitability of its failure. In the previous two chapters, I analyzed a transformation of obsessive desires as naturalized by new tendencies in Counter-Reformation marriage and imperial navigation. In *Persiles*, I highlighted how Auristela's desire to escape an arranged marriage is exhausted and becomes the desire to perform that gesture from within marriage. In *Soledades*, I focused on the pilgrim's material and emotional "shipwreck" that exhausts his Petrarchan erotic desire in the same way his imperial greed is exhausted. In this chapter, the transformation of obsessive desire for knowledge goes beyond late 17th-century tendencies in natural philosophy. In the long philosophical poem *Primero sueño* (1692), the soul renounces its flight toward impossible absolute knowledge. In comparison to St. Teresa's spiritual humility, I analyze how the poem redeploys the trope of the mystical unknowability of the divine as a gendered iteration of Icarus and Phaeton that resists sexual and epistemic violence.

Sor Juana's intellectual production not only went beyond that of contemporary women but surpassed her male peers. Unlike most women writers in New Spain, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz did not exclusively write spiritual autobiographical texts. She also gained entry into the male-dominated intellectual spheres of secular poetry, philosophy, and theology. In the theological realm, she wrote a refutation of a famous sermon delivered forty years earlier by the Jesuit philosopher António Vieira on the finest gifts of Jesus to humanity. In this rebuttal, known as "Carta Atenagórica" (1690, in Salceda, 2017, 331–346) but published later as "Crisis de un Sermón," Sor Juana claims that the most valuable gifts deliberately deny believers what they want when such a gift could reinforce self-delusion. This giving by omission resembles how she approached her desire for knowledge.

Sor Juana is perhaps best known for her theological-autobiographical essay addressing the debate triggered in Mexico City after the anonymous "Sor Filotea" circulated the "Carta Atenagórica" without her consent. This essay, *Respuesta a Sor Filotea* (1691), revisits arguments from an earlier letter, "Carta de Monterrey," or "Autodefensa espiritual" (around 1682) in which she dismisses her confessor, Antonio Núñez de Miranda, for his undue censorship. The *Respuesta* addresses Sor Filotea, who published Sor Juana's reply to Vieira while criticizing her for daring to study and write—in contravention of the traditional role of women in the Church. Akin to the deaf Spanish nun of Jewish descent, Teresa de Cartagena, two and a half centuries before her (Bergmann 2017), Sor Juana, a *criolla* writing from a convent in New Spain, defends her intellectual vocation and women's right to study. She always endeavored to study, write, buy books, and hold salons with Mexican intellectuals who visited her in the convent's parlor. While fulfilling her full-time commitments to the convent, for which she was the accountant, she had to steal time in order to study. At one point in the *Respuesta*, Sor Juana, cautiously complaining about her secluded sisters, confesses a preference to study instead of enjoying their company:

Y esto es continuamente, porque como los ratos que destino a mi estudio son los que sobran de lo regular de la comunidad, esos mismos les sobran a las otras para venirme a estorbar; y sólo saben cuánta verdad es ésta los que tienen experiencia de vida común, donde sólo la fuerza de la vocación puede hacer que mi natural esté gustoso, y el mucho amor que hay entre mí y mis amadas hermanas, que como el amor es unión, no hay para él extremos distantes. (405–411)

And it is always so, for the times I devote to study are usually those left over when observance of the Rule is fulfilled, and the same time is left to the other nuns to come and interrupt me. The truth of this can be known only to those who have experienced life in community, where strength of my vocation alone assures that my nature can find enjoyment, together with the great love that exists between me and my dear sisters. For as love itself is union, it admits no distant extremes (trans. Arenal/Powell, p.59)

Sor Juana portrays her impulse to study and write as more potent than her inclination to socialize with her sister nuns. It is not enough that she has not married and entered the convent to have more time to study; she must also isolate herself from others within the convent. Unlike the Carmelite convent in which she had previously lived, the Hieronymite convent allowed for this partial independence because it did not strictly observe the rule of *vida común* (common life), and thus nuns could spend substantial amounts of time in their cells (Ramírez-Santacruz 2019, 83). As Asunción Lavrin tells us in her study of Mexican colonial nuns, the *holy marriage* was a respectable choice for women (2008, 6), but Sor Juana made it serve her own intellectual call.

Since her youth at the viceregal court as a lady-in-waiting, Sor Juana had gained fame for her prodigious intellect. She even recounts in the *Respuesta* that the viceroy tested her knowledge with several wise men of New Spain—a trial from which she emerged with an even greater reputation. For Francisco Ramírez-Santa Cruz, this early experience resonates with the *tertulias* she later hosted at her convent's *locutorio* (50–51). Although she did not have an intellectual community at the convent, the leading intellectuals in New Spain—secular and religious—came to talk and even attend her lectures. These debates were even more important than the discussions at the *Universidad Real*. Even the debates about Vieira's sermon that had stirred conversation in intellectual circles were sparked in the *tertulias* at her *locutorio* (ibid, 230). This coincidence of theological debates and secular salons suggests that secular and theological knowledge in New Spain circulated through the same channels and were mutually influential. After the meetings, these *tertulias* continued through letters. However, Sor Juana's relationships with the prominent intellectuals of her city would not have been possible without her more intimate relationships with the vicereines, especially the Condesa de Paredes, who published the first volume of Sor Juana's works when she returned to Spain. According to historian Alejandro Cañeque, in Spanish imperial courts, where all spheres of government interacted through clientelism and patronage, queens and vicereines created parallel courts like the one in which Sor Juana's talents became public (7).

Sor Juana's intellectual production was even more exceptional if we consider that she wrote in the convent while facing church censorship, pitting her secular patrons against her religious superiors. Nuns legitimized the Hispanic colonial order because they modeled passive obedience, though their relative autonomy often conflicted with the authority of male ecclesiastics (McKnight 198). Given the symbolic importance of nuns, authorities exercised more limitations over women's publications in the American viceroyalties than in Spain itself (Lavrin 16). This regulation may explain why Sor Juana continually reminds her readers about the extraordinary efforts she must undertake to gratify her intellectual ambitions. Even when she was already famous in Iberian and colonial intellectual circles after the publication of her collected works in Spain, she complained that she was not appreciated for her efforts but was idolized as though her creations came to her as a gratuitous gift. In one of her *romances*, she even compares the effects of this excessive praise to the sun's rays that almost burned Phaeton as he tried to prove his divinity. Rather than a figure of daring, in this case, Phaeton serves as a humbling reminder:

o cuántas [veces], encandilada
 en tanto golfo de rayos,
 o hubiera muerto Faetonte
 o Narciso peligrado,
 a no tener en mí misma
 remedio tan a la mano
 como conocerme, siendo
 lo que los pies para el pavo! (Poema 51, in Alatorre, 2012, 69–76)

Oh how many [times], dazzled
 in such a gulf of rays
 Phaeton would have died
 or Narcissus been in danger,
 if I did not have in myself
 remedy so handy
 as knowing myself, being
 as the feet for the turkey! (My translation)

Whether her protests are ironic or not, these verses elucidate her concern about the dissonance between her self-image and the public image generated by fame. The poetic voice remains vigilantly self-aware so as not to sell her soul, like the turkey looking at its ugly feet as a remedy to vanity.

Sor Juana's determination to study despite the restrictions of her social position emerges in the narrative of *Primero sueño*, most likely written before the *Respuesta*. The poem's speaker describes her dreaming soul flying toward its impossible desire for absolute knowledge.¹² The soul is not grammatically gendered until the very last line

¹² This ambitious desire echoes debates in late seventeenth-century New Spain and Europe about the possibilities and limitations of rational knowledge influenced by the new experimental sciences. On the one hand, *Primero sueño* seems to have appropriated Athanasius Kircher's poetic-oneiric speculation about the production of certainty through scientific knowledge. On the other hand, Carlos de Sigüenza y

when it wakes up: “y yo despierta” (v. 975). This delayed identification has prompted several interpretations about the influence of gender in the poem; for example, for Jean Franco and Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel, the poem’s genderless soul performs a tactical postponement of the representation of gender to authorize the entrance of a female subject into the sphere of masculine knowledge (Franco, 1989; Martínez-San Miguel, 1994, 1999); for Georgina Sabat-Rivers, Sor Juana’s focus on feminine characters punished by the male gods whose sexual advances they had resisted reveals her feminism (Sabat-Rivers, 1991); in contrast, Tamara Harvey finds that the poem’s traces of the material body are not necessarily gendered (Harvey, 2008). These points of view highlight the tension between the need to bracket gender during intellectual activity (metaphorized as a dream) and the inevitability of gender in social life. Even though a woman cannot be fully assimilated into the intellectual sphere of her time, the soul continues to desire the same type of forbidden knowledge. Indeed, the speaker’s desire defies the institutionalization of power in the colonies, which depends on subjectivities that abide by viceregal and ecclesiastical limitations on who can produce knowledge. For Rob Ter Horst (1997), the poem’s simultaneous aversion and attraction to forbidden knowledge is symbolized by Nyctimene stealing olive oil from temples compared to Prometheus stealing the fire of civilization’s knowledge (lines 25–38). Sor Juana transforms male predation of feminized objects into female predation of patriarchal knowledge (248).

However, like these thematizations of gender in the poem, neither theological nor emblematic approaches consider the exhaustion of the sense of failure. On the one hand, approaches emblemized by Soriano Vallés’s *El Primero Sueño de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Bases Tomistas* (2000) argue for Sor Juana’s Thomistic and Aristotelian sources, assuming a pure Catholic Sor Juana (Luiselli 183). He defends her from the widespread assumption by critics like Octavio Paz that one of her main influences in the modeling of knowledge was the Jesuit polymath Athanasius Kircher. These debates impose a dichotomy between a scholastic/Aristotelian Catholicism and a platonic/hermetic, almost heretical Catholicism. On the other hand, critics like Jose Manuel Buxó and Rocío Olivares-Zorrilla, also following the lead of Octavio Paz, have mapped allusions in the poem beyond Kircher to early modern emblems. As an assemblage of image, motto, and explanatory text, the emblem was popularized as a source of wisdom by Aldrea Alciato’s collection *Emblemata* (1531, 1534). Such a reading of the poem treats its allusions, secular or religious, as sources to decode according to contemporary secular European culture embodied in the emblems. These resonances with early modern emblematic wisdom are a valuable source of clarification for the references. However, the present study does not focus on single images but rather on how desire is expressed across multiple images linked in the poem. Because the poem associates all figures in the style of Luis de Góngora’s *Soledades* without ever fully reconstructing or acknowledging any particular source, their meaning is

Góngora, Sor Juana’s friend, emphasized the experimental aspect of Kircher’s approach in his *Libra astronómica y filosófica* (Trabulse). He introduced mathematical proofs to early astronomical speculations about the origins of comets (Trabulse 65). While *Primero sueño*, indeed, represents a dream of rational and empirical knowledge, this dream anticipates the dangers of extreme reliance on reason and the senses as exemplified by Sigüenza’s approach. He became an Inquisitorial Censor, advocating for the instrumentalization of science to improve governance and the silencing of what he considered superstitious beliefs, such as those based on astrology (More).

subordinated to the narrative of desire. For example, Phaeton serves as a synthesis that exhausts all previous figures of failure right before the dreamer starts to awaken.

The poem represents this desire for knowledge as an inner voyage toward a bird's-eye view of existence. Miguel de Cervantes had already ironized this possibility in the early 1600s with his novel *Don Quixote*. After their imaginary flight blindfolded on the wooden horse, Clavileño, the esquire Sancho claims to have peered down and seen Earth the size of a mustard seed with humans the size of a hazelnut. Don Quixote argues with Sancho about the veracity of his vision, but they reach an agreement. If Sancho believes what Don Quixote says he had seen in the *Cueva de Montesinos*, in turn, Don Quixote would believe what Sancho says he had seen from Clavileño (DQ II, Ch. 41). *Primero sueño* also ironizes the possibility of a total vision. However, instead of comparing that aspiration to a negotiation of credibility, she takes its possibility seriously despite its impossibility. In seventeenth-century European cultures, official institutions were suspicious of unrestricted intellectual autonomy, as in the case of the new sciences, because they undermined religious and secular power (Ginzburg 1976). For example, astronomical observation, practiced by Sor Juana and cited in her poems, questions the “harmony of the spheres,” which served as a symbol of enduring religious and secular power (Bergmann 2013, 142–143). However, Sor Juana’s texts do not set religious and scientific knowledge in opposition. For instance, in the introduction to her *Ejercicios devotos* (Devotional Exercises), a nine-day preparation for the celebration of the Incarnation of Jesus, she remembers Sor María de Ágreda’s account of the Virgin Mary taken away by angels to the Emyrean Heavens where she can see the fabric of the universe as if represented in a painting (Alatorre, note to lines 435–445). Furthermore, though Sor Juana wants women to share modern aspirations for knowledge, she imbricates a new level of suspicion of the potential symbolic violence of knowledge. In *Primero sueño*, the potential complicity of this impossible knowledge, whose violent structures of feeling promote social alienation and sexual violence, compels the soul to search for alternatives.

The dreaming soul is disappointed with her failed aspiration to develop knowledge capable of understanding the totality of the world’s relations. At the same time, this aspiration affords a vantage point from which to understand that aspiration’s precarious condition and to eventually transform it. This disappointment is evoked in *Primero sueño*’s proliferation and remixing fragmentary narratives of mythological figures punished for their ambitions. Rather than emphasizing the punishment for daring to pursue a desire, this combinatorial approach highlights the constant displacement of its objects of desire; in doing so, it empties myths of fixed meanings, signaling a destabilization of their exemplary functions. Moreover, the assemblage of mythological narratives with biblical episodes frees the value of failure and punishment from its association with guilt and shame. The sensational aspects of the (failed) process are more important than their ethical or epistemological values. In this way, the poem proposes a “reparative reading” (Sedgwick, 2003) that disentangles humiliation for not knowing from the subject’s identity. The speaker is constantly resituated in the imminent implosion of the categories that enable the desire for externalized knowledge. Actual knowledge becomes a process of constantly resituating oneself in the failure of knowledge.

The speaker's identification with the finitude of human knowledge implies a type of humility, a mode of addressing the objects of desire. In representing this performance of humility, Sor Juana signals the influence of Góngora's poetics, which stages a conflict between forms and contents of representation. His groundbreaking poem *Soledades* reiterates metaphors in several different contexts, loosening their references to predetermined meanings. For example, figures related to shipbuilding—forests, trees, logs, and shipwrecks—are de-linked from the extractivist imperial economy by foregrounding the new resonances they bring up in each iteration. Similarly, *Primero sueño*, rather than a straightforward narrative of humility, foregrounds the parallels between philosophical, mythological, and religious discourses about overpowering desire. In this way, Sor Juana intellectualizes the notion of "spiritual humility," as articulated by one of her women writer models, Teresa of Avila, de-coupling it from moral meaning by emphasizing the inescapability of her situation. According to Alison Weber, Teresa of Avila's approach to humility exhibits anthropologist Gregory Bateson's paradox of the "double bind." This "double bind" is a false dilemma because it presents itself as two exclusive options, but the options are actually a simultaneous interpellation. For Weber, Teresa's double bind of humility can be regarded as social or spiritual. Socially, while she had to act unworthy of her visions, she also had to prove their divine origin and make them public to gain approval despite the silent nature of humility (45–48). If she had been unable to convince others that her communication with the divine was genuine, the Inquisition might have sanctioned her for heresy. However, convincing others requires rhetorical skills to persuade them about the truth of her visions. Her rhetoric of humility was, paradoxically, a form of self-affirmation, exposing humility's self-negation. On the other hand, spiritually, humility is inverse to false humility based on excessive scruples about the difficulties of pursuing spiritual desire (Weber 72–76). Excessive scruples imply a lack of trust in the possibility of receiving spiritual gifts. On the contrary, true spiritual humility is an affirmation of the private commitment to pursue that possibility despite social and political pressure.

This bold spiritual humility offers a model for Sor Juana's solution to her double bind of desiring absolute knowledge while seeking to avoid complicity with alienation and gender violence. However, Sor Juana's case complicates the differentiation between spiritual and social humility. Her reiteration of the myth of Phaethon, who became famous despite his failure, metaphorizes a desire for absolute knowledge that resists the exteriorization of knowledge as cultural capital. *Primero sueño* turns humility about the impossibility of absolute knowledge into a performance of failed knowledge. With this exteriorization, which cannot be a source of social prestige, the performance of social humility in itself becomes the goal of spiritual humility.

Building on this long introductory contextualization, the following sections focus mainly on textual analysis of the poem. I trace the process for the birth of a figure of defiant epistemic humility in five steps. First, I analyze how the collective dream space implied by the beginning and end of the poem establishes the preconditions for the desire for knowledge; second, I trace the initial perseverance of this desire despite the failures; third, I map out how the soul avoids failure in a paranoid manner and, fourth, how the gendered soul resists objectification; and fifth, I conclude by analyzing how a desire to perform the failure of understanding replaces a thirst for knowledge. Like gongorine poetics, in which each figure appearing in the narrative may re-metaphorize

the previous figures, these steps do not happen exclusively one after the other in the poem but are mutually inclusive with differences only in degree.

II. The Dream Space, Heterotopia of Labor

Primero sueño's imagined space reflects the contradictory nature of desire. Similar to how life in the convent enabled and limited Sor Juana's study, the poem evokes a dream space that both allows and limits the aspiration of the dreaming soul toward knowledge. The poem's opening imagines entry to the dream as liberation from everyday constraints to study. Free of new sensory impressions, the imagination has more room to experiment with the perceptions and judgments stored in the memory. The poem opens with the metaphor of an earthborn shadow in its futile attempt to reach the moon (1–24), which becomes the voice of a group of mythological night birds, originally humans shamed and punished for disobeying the gods (25–55). Among the birds, mixing Greco-Roman and medieval folk traditions, the poem invokes Nyctimene as an owl who steals the olive oil produced by the hard labor of the tree of Minerva, the goddess of knowledge.¹³ The poem depicts the shadow of this group of mythological birds as musical notation signaling a low-frequency murmur (56–72) that, joined by Harpócrates, the god of silence, who places a finger on his lips (73–79), subtly induces all beings to the silence of sleep. Night rest from the anxieties about knowledge production has been internalized in the dream as the allegory of the sleep-inducing night birds.

Nevertheless, the act of dreaming is subordinated to the care of daily business. Inner surveillance is expressed through the combined figure of the eagle/crane that, while sleeping on one foot, holds a pebble in the other so it wakes up if it loses its grip (130–140).¹⁴ Even when sleeping, the soul may be prompted to labor for external goals. Indeed, the suspension of social inequalities in the universal surrender to sleep at night (141–150) is presented as the shared human dream. This imaginary space is both a respite from daily work and an improved version of work. Social life is abstracted as a world without inequalities, which may be why the desire driving the dream is not explicitly gendered. Resting at night in this sublimated version of society supports the maintenance of that society. A long parenthetical discussion overtly compares this complicity between day/night and wakefulness/sleep to the dyad work/leisure:

—y no sólo oprimidos
del afán ponderoso
del corporal trabajo, mas cansados
del deleite también (que también cansa
objeto continuado a los sentidos
aun siendo deleitoso:
que la Naturaleza siempre alterna
ya una, ya otra balanza,

¹³ The tension between Minerva's effort and the owl's theft resonates with Sor Juana's situation as a female intellectual. For the relevance of the brutal and haunting story of Nyctimene to Sor Juana's role as a female intellectual, see the feminist approaches mentioned in our Introduction.

¹⁴ The poem alludes to the eagle (*ave real*) but tradition at least since Pliny attributed this habit to the crane (*grulla*) on guard when the others are sleeping. Sor Juana seems to conflate the crane's watchful diligence with the eagle's association with royal power.

distribuyendo varios ejercicios,
 ya al ocio, ya al trabajo destinados,
 en el fiel infiel con que gobierna
 la aparatosa máquina del mundo). (Pérez-Amador 154–165)

oppressed not only
 by the heavy burden
 of bodily exertion, but fatigued
 by pleasure as well (for any object
 continually before the senses,
 even if pleasurable, will cloy them:
 hence Nature is always shifting weight
 from one side of the balance to the other,
 setting the unsettled needle to its task
 of logging all activity—now leisurely,
 now toilsome—as she directs
 the universe’s complicated clockwork) (trans. Trueblood, p. 175).

In this explanatory sequence of verses,¹⁵ work and leisure exhaust the body, which needs to rest at night in compliance with the regimented organization of time. Work and leisure are implicitly abstracted, quantified, and made equivalent according to the effort expended. Moreover, “Nature” enters the scene as an organizational principle that balances the total amount of pleasure and pain against each other to stabilize the needle of the balance. Nature becomes comparable to the human organization of the world. Balancing day with night and pain with pleasure coincides with the human distinction of labor from leisure, symbolically neutralizing any dissent from the work schedule. In this homeostasis of pain and pleasure analogous to work and leisure, a corresponding amount of pain corrects any amount of pleasure. Nothing seems to escape this machinery, but, as we see at the beginning of the poem, the silenced night birds are active at night when nobody notices; they are almost invisible to an organization of the world that is only getting ready to sleep at night. These opaque birds foreshadow the hopeful flight of the soul that will soon emerge in excess but is mediated by this organization of time. Then, the speaker’s soul, free from waking life, transitions into the dream space, the “retrato contrario de la vida” (173–174). However, before the mind takes flight, the poem provides a chain of images of bodily organs working in unison. The heart, the lungs, the stomach, and the liver produce the essential vapors that fuel the brain. The brain recycles the images stored in the memory, setting into motion the laboratory of the imagination. The dream then deploys specific trajectories of the desire for knowledge, highlighting the pitfalls of its sense of reality. The poem’s oneiric space has set up the desire to escape for failure, since nothing can escape the structural homeostasis.

By the poem’s end, this failed desire to escape is feminized in the form of a ritualistic victory. The soul stops its speculative work as the body exhausts its supply of

¹⁵ The parenthetical punctuation in this quote was inserted by Plancarte (1951). He replaced from early editions the comma from the previous verse and the period at the end with dashes (Pérez-Amador 76–77).

nutrients. Then, the focalization of the poem leaves the dreaming subject and returns to the symbolic battle between night and day. Daytime's army intimidates nighttime's army, which retreats without fighting (vv. 887–939). Resonating with the poem's critique of the complicity between work and sleep, the sun and the moon have performed a ritualistic antagonism until the shadows of the night recede. Furthermore, the rays of the "Amazon" Aurora (Roman Goddess of Dawn) lead the forces of the Sun before encountering the Moon (895–905). In the seventeenth century, the image of the Goddess Aurora in battle against the night often served as an allegory for the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary and was commonly represented in *villancicos*.¹⁶ Sor Juana herself composed many *villancicos* and a book of preparatory meditations for the Virgin Mary's Immaculate Conception, the *Ejercicios devotos*. Therefore, the poem's end is gendered by its association with Aurora through Christian and Greco-Roman allusions to represent the waking of the soul that aspires to knowledge. The figure of Aurora / Virgin Mary anticipates and elevates the recuperation of social gendering in the poem's last line, "y yo despierta." Sor Juana's dream space, which blurs the difference between work and leisure, resonates with her situation that blurs the difference between the inside and the outside of the convent. Sor Juana lived in relation to, but separate from, the cultural life of both the convent and the court, confined to a place of betweenness that, loosening the ties to the everyday as in dreaming, favors artistic experimentation. However, the poem's ironic representation of the dream space suggests the tendency to believe that there is no escape from the social organization of work and gender.

However, the possibility of a subjectivity with desires not predetermined by societal categories only comes with the cost of social alienation. This obstacle is why it is easier to imagine these excesses in those apparently incompatible with Western civilization, like the previously uncontacted Amerindians in colonial Latin America. While the process of colonization attempted to transform indigenous people's desires under Western values, there may always remain allegiance to cultural values incompatible with modern civilization. *Primer sueño's* narrative that associates with femininity the impossible categorization of all beings resonates with the failure to colonize indigenous populations. The poem's analogical way of freely associating mythological images makes it possible to expand its content to this social context in Sor Juana's colonial Mexico. The logic of conversion, like the attempts at controlling women's intellectual activity, assumes passive subjects of control, an assumption doomed to failure. Sor Juana's liminal life, though from a relatively more privileged perspective than indigenous people, may have enabled her to be sympathetic to their situation. Living in a convent not only meant escaping marriage for a different form of gendering but at least partially escaping the ideologies of the colonial system. From the spiritual heterotopia of the convent, though she never revealed she was an illegitimate *criolla*, Sor Juana's concealed past could have influenced her consciousness as an author writing from the Spanish colonies. This awareness is reflected in her indirect critiques of colonization. She was indeed aware of the debates about the possibility of conversion of indigenous populations to Christianity. One strategy of persuasive conversion was making analogies between local and Christian beliefs. In Sor Juana's short allegorical play "Loa al Divino Narciso," she compares the practice of human sacrifice to the Eucharist. Del

¹⁶ Perez-Amador 427, XXXVI.4.

Valle shows how Sor Juana's auto sacramental this loa introduces, *El Divino Narciso* (1689), compares Christianity to Aztec culture and Greek mythology through the practice of sacrifice. In the *Divino Narciso* and its Loa, the equivalence made between ancient Greek, Christian and Aztec rituals begs whether spiritual conversion ever happened. Indigenous practices are imagined as basically equivalent to Christian practices in order to persuade indigenous people to convert. Thus, there was no guarantee that the natives would spontaneously reject those practices which indeed survived against such contradictory prohibitions. In *Primero sueño*, there is no explicit mention of indigenous practices. Still, the subordination of Christian knowledge and Greek images to the narrative of knowledge-seeking is cognate with the failure to convert indigenous populations fully. Even though knowledge always fails, the desire for knowledge is also always reconfigured and persists.

III. The Resistance of Desire

After staging the fragile conditions that enable the soul's pursuit of knowledge, the poem represents this desire in the form of a flight of ascent. The inner senses picture a perfect regularity in the stars, although they are full of irregularities (301–305). The poem compares the task of depicting the whole world to the impossibility of an observer on Earth seeing Mount Olympus (310–326) and compares it, even more hyperbolically, to an eagle attempting to build its nest on the sun (327–339). Next, the Egyptian pyramids, which were meant to sing the grandeur of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, become famous themselves, as the copy is as important as, and inseparable from, the original (340–353). The dream space, conflating the human organization of work and leisure (including sleep) as inseparable from the understanding of Nature, preconditioned this conflation of original and copy. The pyramids symbolize the ascent toward making the human world correspond to the totality of existence. Vision is represented as a lynx's eyes incapable of seeing the tip of the pyramids, thus much less capable of apprehending the aspiration that the pyramids were meant to represent. This aspiration is temporarily exhausted:

hasta que, fatigada del espanto,
no descendida, sino despeñada
se hallaba al pie de la espaciosa basa,
tarde o mal recobrada
del desvanecimiento
que pena fue no escasa
del visual alado atrevimiento. (Pérez-Amador 362–368)

until, worn out by sheer astonishment,
it found itself below by the spacious base
after, not smooth descent, but downward plunge
in giddiness that only gradually
gave way to level headedness—
no minor punishment
for the winged boldness of the eyes (trans. Trueblood, p. 180).

The intense proximity to the specificity of things overwhelms the soul, which suddenly finds itself as if thrown over a cliff. The soul recovers from a temporary loss of consciousness for transgressing the limitations of knowledge, represented as eagle vision. The eagle, thought to be able to look directly into the sun, dramatizes the kind of total representational knowledge to which the soul aspires. Vertigo is triggered by the anticipation of a transcendental realm of universal patterns that are impossible to grasp through the senses. The opposing terms “espanto” and “atrevimiento” resonate with the mythological night birds metamorphosed for daring to disobey orders the gods gave at the poem's beginning. Instead of moralizing failure, this section highlights the affective experience of the limits of sensory knowledge as a form of transgression. The intensity of this failed transgression reappears several times, emphasizing the attempt itself. The

image of the pyramids is presented again as an example of the illusion of matching original and copy (379–381). This illusion resembles the celebration of Ulysses's feats, narratives to be believed by virtue of Homer's prestige (382–390). For Homer, the pyramids were symbols of human aspiration toward the First Cause of all things (399–411). By this chain of associations, the impulse toward the essence of all things becomes a metaphor for the aspiration of mapping out all existence until map and mapped coincide.

The poem then reconfigures a biblical narrative as another metaphor for the limitations of secular knowledge. Like the pyramids, the Tower of Babel is another typical figure of daring. Sor Juana focuses on comparing the consequences of Babel to the failure of knowledge, characterizing God's multiplication of languages as a source of social estrangement among humans. She compares this linguistic alienation to the incapacity of classificatory logic to contain nature:

los idiomas diversos que escasean
el sociable trato de las gentes
(haciendo que parezcan diferentes
los que unos hizo la naturaleza,
de la lengua por sólo la extrañeza). (Pérez-Amador 418–422)

[...] the diverse tongues which still obstruct
the easy intercourse of humankind
(causing those Nature formed as one
to seem entirely different
simply because their tongues are unfamiliar). (trans. Trueblood, 182)

This proliferation of languages reflects how a single logic cannot contain the multiplicity of nature. Humans trying to develop systematic knowledge of all creation fail like people speaking to those who do not speak the same language. This attachment to a system of knowledge metaphorized as language alienates humans from the singularity and plurality of nature. The Christian prelapsarian nature as one of boundless inclusion is broken by the original sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge, a tree that only creates exclusionary perspectives. The Tower of Babel's failure, like the failure of Icarus (466–468), is then metaphorized as the failure of the intellect. Again, the immensity and diversity of the world and the specificity of every single thing led to failure:

como el entendimiento, aquí vencido
no menos de la inmensa muchedumbre
de tanta maquinosa pesadumbre
(de diversas especies conglobado
esférico compuesto),
que de las cualidades
de cada cual [...]. (Pérez-Amador 469–475)

Far less quick, I say, than the mind, which, overcome
no less by the immense agglomeration

of a congeries so weighty
 (a globe compounded
 by multiple species densely packed)
 than by the several qualities of each (trans. Trueblood, 183)

The constant revelation of more layers of singularity causes overwhelming confusion in the configuration of the senses that the mind cannot abstract. Yet, this desire for absolute expansion perseveres due to internal pressure to maintain the coherence of its knowledge structure upon clashing with the specificity and immensity of things. Akin to a lover who persists in courting the beloved despite rejection or like a mystic persevering in following the divine call despite temptations and envy, the subject of desire keeps insisting on exposing itself to failure.

In the section just analyzed, the dream resists internalizing an image of the object of the desire without getting confirmation of its accuracy from without. This struggle with the impossibility of producing unshakable knowledge is opposite to the resolution of Sor Juana's sonnet "Detente, sombra de mi bien esquivo." Though the central theme is erotic love, it still represents desire in general and its relationship to knowledge. Faced with the impossible task of achieving the realization of a desire, the speaker "imprisons" it by making a copy of it:

Detente, sombra de mi bien esquivo,
 imagen del hechizo que más quiero,
 bella ilusión por quien alegre muero,
 dulce ficción por quien penosa vivo.

Si al imán de tus gracias, atractivo,
 sirve mi pecho de obediente acero,
 ¿para qué me enamoras lisonjero
 si has de burlarme luego fugitivo?

Mas blasonar no puedes, satisfecho,
 de que triunfa de mí tu tiranía:
 que aunque dejas burlado el lazo estrecho

que tu forma fantástica ceñía,
 poco importa burlar brazos y pecho
 si te labra prisión mi fantasía.

Don't leave me, shadow of elusive love,
 image of the spell I most desire,
 lovely illusion for whom I gladly die,
 honeyed fiction for whom I sadly live.
 If to the magnet of your loveliness
 my breast turns obedient as steel,
 why do you woo me first with flattery
 only to spurn me next with mockery?

But your vain declarations cannot flaunt
 the triumph of your mandate over me:
 for though, in flight, you mock the narrow bond
 that once encircled your fantastic form—
 it little matters that arms or breasts may fail
 if my imagination frames your jail (trans. Arenal/Powell, poem # 165).

This sonnet starts like *Primero sueño*, with a fugitive shadow, though the shadow does not represent desiring itself but the elusive object of desire. The distinction between desire and object is blurred. The sonnet recognizes its object as mere fiction that gives hope despite its ungraspability. What is illusory is the possibility of actually satisfying the desire, though it still affects the speaker in life, as if it was between life and death. However, in the second quartet, this sonnet recognizes agency in the object of love, which tricks the speaker into staying in love by constantly delaying the possibility of union. The specificity of the world beyond thought in the *Sueño* may be equivalent to the elusiveness of the beloved in this poem, which thus implies that the possibility of correspondence is a fantasy. On the other hand, in this sonnet, desire is turned inward, for instead of pursuing love to the point of rejection or intense *desengaño* (disenchantment), it re-fabricates the object of love entirely in the imagination so completely that it seems to have the lover prisoner in it, thus reaching a resolution.¹⁷ *Primero sueño*, in contrast to this sonnet, while it also represents the possibility of union as a fantasy, the imaginative work actually keeps its dialectical relationship to the external world in its constant readjustment to the specificity of things, exposing itself to failures and the shocks they imply. It is as if the soul let itself be trained by the rawness of the world.

Sor Juana may have modeled this secular persistence of grasping the infinite singularities and multiplicities of the world on mystic models of desire. In the biography of St. Mary by María de Ágreda, *Mystical City of God* (1670), which was another model of female writing for Sor Juana, an elusive object of desire like in the sonnet just analyzed corresponds to God's will. However, in Ágreda, the divine is characterized as doing pedagogical work. St. Mary herself reveals to Ágreda that God does not reveal in advance the projects he has in store for his subjects because, in their preparation for death, doubt will serve as a stimulus to discipline the soul to constantly discern between what fits his will or not. (Book I, chapter 25, # 410). This process of development of discernment is characterized as a battle between reason and the body:

411. Contra esto procede la contienda de la parte inferior y sensitiva, que con el *fomes peccati* inclina a los objetos sensibles y mueve a la concupiscible e irascible, para que turbando la razón arrastren a la voluntad ciega para abrazar la libertad del deleite. Y el demonio con fascinaciones y falsas e inicuas fabulaciones oscurece el sentido interior y oculta el mortal veneno de lo deleitable transitorio (Ágreda, Book I, chapter 25, # 411).

¹⁷ Powel and Arenal, in Bergmann, 1990, p.163

Opposing all this are the tendencies of the inferior and sensitive nature, infected with the fomes peccati, the foment of sin, tending toward sensible objects and by the lower appetites and repugnances, disturbing the reason and enthraling the will in the false liberty of ungoverned desires. The demon also, by his fascinations and his deceitful and iniquitous suggestions obscures the interior light, and hides the deathly poison beneath the pleasant exterior. (trans. Reverend George J. Blatter, 1912)

The object of this inquisitive wonder is the constant dispute in the subject's will between an inclination toward sense desire and a tendency toward reason. The role of the "devil" in this passage is to prevent suspicion of sense desire by confusing the subject and tricking it into enjoying a "poison." This dialectic functions in a framework of a general debt to a promise of salvation from suffering on earth. The payment is the constant sacrifice of the senses to the internalized divine voice that becomes the unattainable object of desire. However, this spiritual intuition depends on the uncontrollable impulses of the flesh. Some impulses are selected and figured as an exemplary body, in this case, based on the image of St. Mary. This spiritual socialization model uses the body as the raw material for salvation: its limitations are a constant source of dialectical adjustment for disciplining the self.

The adjustments of the soul upon sensations of the "flesh" or the body that exceeds its metaphorization as sin, like in *Primero sueño*'s sensations of the failure of reason and the senses, thus confirm the logic of desire. In its flexibility, desire constantly incorporates what exceeds itself, so it is always dependent on an elusive, fugitive materiality of the body that never completely fits¹⁸. This fugitive materiality is a metaphor pointing to the limited character of all representational knowledge, always exceeded by what it attempts to represent. These limitations of representational knowledge are not faced in the sonnet we just analyzed, where the subject rejects entering into dialectical encounters with the object of desire, thus refusing to enter the possibilities of failure. Therefore, *Primero sueño*, in the section analyzed in this part (lines 301-475), shows a third way, neither resisting a teleology nor sacrificing itself to it like in the quote from Ágreda. Instead, it situates itself in those experiences that the social imaginary cannot adapt: it takes the point of view of the possibility of failure as a condition for nature to be objectified as nature. However, the desire for knowledge has not yet been exhausted.

¹⁸ For "fugitive materiality" as a metaphor pointing towards the limited character of all representational knowledge, see Moten 281.

IV. Paranoid Reparation

After the shock of experiencing the limitations of exteriorized knowledge, though aware of human finitude, the speaker's desire is still captured by a drive to anticipate and prevent failure. This attempt is first exemplified by adapting Plato's allegory of the cave. After the eyes fail to look into the sun directly, they are covered with both hands to gradually admit the sun's rays (495–515). This process is compared to medical knowledge of poisons that become medicinal when administered in small quantities (515–539); next, the body is protected like the hull of a damaged ship that has been repaired with caulking (560–574). This ship—safe once it has been repaired—is analogous to a gradual form of reflection through the Aristotelian step-by-step method ascending from more particular to more general categories of being (575–599). Then, ascending through a hierarchy of beings on Mother Earth—from minerals through vegetables and then to animals, who can feel and imagine (617–651), the poem considers human beings as the closest to God. After having qualified the gradual method as a reparation of the senses, the soul has ascended to higher abstractions that take the “human” as the highest form. However, this transcendental human is contrasted with the possibility of union with the divine through grace:

el hombre, digo, en fin, mayor portento
 que discurre el humano entendimiento;
 compendio que absoluto
 parece al Ángel, a la planta, al bruto;
 cuya altiva bajeza
 toda participó Naturaleza.
 ¿Por qué? Quizá porque más venturosa
 que todas, encumbrada
 a merced de amorosa
 Unión sería. ¡Oh, aunque repetida,
 Nunca bastantemente bien sabida
 merced, pues ignorada
 en lo poco apreciada
 parece, o en lo mal correspondida! (Pérez-Amador 690–703)

In short, I speak of man, the greatest wonder
 the human mind can ponder,
 complete compendium
 resembling angel, plant and beast alike;
 whose haughty lowliness
 partook of every nature. Why?
 Perhaps that, being more fortunate
 than any, he may be lifted high
 by a grace of loving union.
 Oh, grace, repeated often,
 yet never recognized sufficiently,

overlooked, so one may think,
 so unappreciated it is
 so unacknowledged it remains (trans. Trueblood, p. 188)

Modeled after the incarnation of Jesus, the human represents the unification of animal and spiritual beings. This divine animality is the primary source of wonder for the reflecting mind. Humans are the link between nature and the possibility of direct communication with God through “grace.” Indeed, the speaker laments that although believers recognize this possibility as a sacrament, they do not sufficiently appreciate it. Thus, Sor Juana has schematized the reparation of the aspiration toward complete knowledge as a gradual climb toward more intense types of wonder, a climb that ultimately fails. The poem has compared this epistemic failure to a religious crisis signaled by external recognition of Jesus that lacks internalization of the figure of Jesus. Instead of instrumentalizing wonder for the reification of knowledge as something external to the subject, Sor Juana’s comparison to mysticism reveals a focus on the reappropriation and internalization of knowledge.

This section has described the soul’s last justification for its ascent toward knowledge while recognizing the impossibility of basing the full realization of knowledge on mere representations. The dreaming soul’s recognition of the impossibility of its task—like the infrequency of transformative religious practices—is symptomatic of the dominance of cumulative knowledge. Knowledge is externalized as part of things themselves and not as a product of relationships in which things gain value; thus, the poem again implies that such knowledge has an alienation effect. Like Bernard Stiegler’s (2014) remarks on the cognitive aspect of neoliberal capitalism,¹⁹ Sor Juana critiques equating knowledge of things with the things themselves. This poem outlines how a form of dissociation similar to cognitive capitalism is already taking place in the intellectual class of late baroque New Spain and beyond but without reference to any capitalist context. However, Sor Juana’s anticipation of the dangers of projecting a single system of knowledge onto the whole of nature resonates with how the libidinal economy of cognitive capitalism traps desires within exchange value. On the one hand, the poem compares this emerging critique of modern knowledge’s limitations to the superficial performance of Christian rituals. On the other hand, a process of interiorization, such as the spiritual humility explored in our introduction, serves as a tactic for the reparation of alienation. This dramatic awareness of human finitude is absent in the drive for modern knowledge. Reparation for this modern dryness of the soul through spiritual humility is exemplified in Teresa of Avila’s allegory of the garden in her *Vita*. Each step in the cultivation of the garden is a step closer to the transformation of the soul in the form of grace metaphorized through rain (*Vita*, Chapters 11–22). This grace appears in the context of spiritual exercises that enable communication with the divine within oneself. In contrast, the soul in Sor Juana’s poem does not repair the spiritual path, which, like attempts at the reparation of the senses, becomes part of an

¹⁹ For Stiegler, when the libidinal economy fixates the libido on exchange value, desire becomes desingularized and unable to desire objects outside of the logic of consumerism. This tendency makes subjects believe they can possess knowledge of what they want, while obscuring that they are only compensating for their incapacity to desire incalculable things with hyper consumption.

allegory of the crisis of knowledge. Instead, the excess that is not translated in the implied analogy is the possibility of communication between subject and object, as in Teresa's allegory of the garden. The desire for absolute knowledge never appears in any positive form. This lack of possible realization promotes a constant refiguration of failure in attempting to repair failure. Despite trying to anticipate and overcome failure, this obsessive mode of knowledge only proliferates a sense of failure.

More than a spiritual exercise, this section of *Primero sueño* serves as a metaphor for a reading practice that produces a type of feeling. In "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading," Eve Sedgwick conceptualizes paranoia as a flexible fear of failure that expands its scope by evading the humiliation of failure. Though paranoia tends to subordinate all other affects, it allows for the loose assemblage of "weaker" feelings, like *Primero sueño*'s loose assemblage of images. For Sedgwick, paranoia equates knowledge with the elimination of the failure to disseminate a sense of paranoia. However, the eventual exhaustion of paranoia allows the transformation of the self that has faith in the critique of the dominant social order as an end in itself, the so-called "hermeneutics of suspicion." This transformation happens through the disentanglement of humiliation from the failure of the paranoid mode of knowledge. *Primero sueño*'s paranoia resonates with Sedgwick's characterization of "hermeneutics of suspicion." However, unlike Sedgwick's explication, this poem's version of paranoia is not a critical mode of knowledge but the dominant form of knowledge itself, supporting the process of (Christian/European) civilization. The dreamer's paranoia expands its scope through complicity with the project of modern knowledge itself as generalized epistemic violence to both subjects and objects of knowledge. Here, the poem suggests that people stop aiming for the actual fulfillment of the perfectionist drive for knowledge, which is parallel to the drive for self-control under the process of civilization that institutionalizes paranoia. However, the capacity for desiring has not yet been repaired. Sor Juana has portrayed a between stage of paranoid reparation before actual reparation. Rather than complicating the bond between failure and humiliation, this stage reaffirms it, reflecting the hegemonic production of knowledge as self-control in an increasingly globalized economy.

V. Gendering of the Soul, Resistance of the Object

Next, the poem describes the soul as not just suspicious of knowledge but also hesitant to persist in reaching its goal of absolute certainty. While the poem considers the inaccessibility of ordinary things to one's understanding, the examples are relevant to women's shared experiences. The first example metaphorizes the course of a small river. The poem relates the river to the Greco-Roman myth of Arethusa, who escapes from the river god Alpheus, who is trying to rape her. Artemis transforms her into a creek that flows underground and reemerges in Sicily. While underground, Arethusa finds Persephone, who had been abducted by Pluto, and tells Persephone's mother, Ceres, about what has happened to her daughter (712–729). While this example reiterates the problem of representational knowledge, the metamorphosis suggests an excess of social value for the river, which is not just a transformed Arethusa but also a tactic of escaping sexual violence through solidarity between women. The river is an autonomous, safe space in which women are not subordinated or prey to men. Knowledge of the myth of the river makes certain that sexual violence is known. In both kinds of desire—violent sexual desire and desire for absolute knowledge—the subject believes in the availability of an external object for the satisfaction of desire. Instead, Sor Juana revisits mythological narratives of “heroic” rape from the point of view of the objects of desire.

Similarly, focalizing on objects of desire reconfigures the representation of desire in love poetry. For example, the poetic figure of the rose, whose aesthetic effects through color are inaccessible to rational understanding, is associated with Venus's bleeding wound. Running from Adonis amid white roses, she hurts her foot, and her blood taints the roses, from which they get their scarlet (730–750). The beauty of the rose is as elusive as Arethusa escaping the violent male desire. Thus, the aesthetic effects of the rose represent a resistance to the male gaze. This assemblage of the rose with the myth of Venus and Adonis displaces the Petrarchan focalization of a male lover mourning the loss of the female object of desire. John Freccero (2015) analyzes the myth of Daphne and Apollo in Petrarch's Sonnet 34 of the *Canzoniere*. Much like in the myth of Venus and Adonis, Daphne flees from Apollo's erotic desire and turns into a laurel tree—the tree of poetic glory. Although the poetic voice now mourns the loss of his beloved Laura, she has become his poetic creation, an idol carved in laurel (146). However, Sor Juana, rather than emphasizing how the object of desire has been lost and then imagined by the subject, emphasizes how the woman was never accessible to the male gaze in the first place.

However, this reconfiguration of love poetry's desire is problematized with examples that evoke suspicion of appearances. Women themselves are suspects when, like Sor Juana in the intellectual sphere, they fall for the men's point of view of the exemplary rose,

preceptor quizá vano
 —si no ejemplo profano—
 de industria femenil que el más activo
 veneno, hace dos veces ser nocivo

en el velo transparente
de la que finge tez resplandeciente. (751–756)

perhaps a tutor in the vanity—
unless indeed an impious demonstration
of the feminine duplicity which makes
the deadliest poison twice as deadly
in the conspicuous overlay
of the woman who feigns a glowing countenance. (trans. Trueblood, p.
190)

Here, the rose represents women's doubly toxic makeup, whose chemicals, usually made either with lead (*albayalde*) or mercury (*solimán*),²⁰ are poison both for the woman who wears it and the man who touched his face to hers. Sor Juana associates the production of heteronormative beauty with chemical violence against women that, in turn, affects their male lovers. In using poison to captivate the man's attention, the woman falls prey to her own tactic within the economy of desire. Similarly, the desire of the soul that aspires to knowledge is incited by an appreciation of surfaces that conceal the violence that enables their abstraction as knowledge. The failure of knowledge here is attributed to its being always a fragment or an abstraction from the social logic of relations between subjects and objects that ignores its surplus of violence. This paranoid anticipation of the possibility of violence thus proliferates as a protective mechanism that satisfies a need for safety—not just an abstract desire for absolute knowledge. The emotional labor of desire for knowledge contaminates and is contaminated by social needs; but paranoia has not yet generated an alternative to the underlying social relations it implies.

Anticipation of mutual contamination of subject and object by a desire to apprehend abstracted surfaces can serve as a warning. Men praise an image of women created by men themselves, with which, in turn, women may identify, which is addressed by Sor Juana in her famous sonnet to a portrait:

Este que ves, engaño colorido,
que, del arte ostentando los primores,
con falsos silogismos de colores
es cauteloso engaño del sentido;

éste, en quien la lisonja ha pretendido
excusar de los años los horrores,
y venciendo del tiempo los rigores
triunfar de la vejez y del olvido,

es un vano artificio del cuidado,
es una flor al viento delicada,
es un resguardo inútil para el hado:

²⁰ According to Cobarrubias, in Alatorre, note v. 754.

es una necia diligencia errada,
 es un afán caduco y, bien mirado,
 es cadáver, es polvo, es sombra, es nada. (in Alatorre, poem # 145)

This object which you see—a painted snare
 exhibiting the subtleties of art
 with clever arguments of tone and hue—
 is but a cunning trap to snare your sense;
 this object, in which flattery has tried
 to overlook the horrors of the years
 and, conquering the ravages of time,
 to overcome oblivion and age:
 this is an empty artifice of care;
 a flower, fragile, set out in the wind,
 a letter of safe-conduct sent to Fate;
 it is a foolish, erring diligence,
 a palsied will to please which, clearly seen,
 is a corpse, is dust, is shadow, and is gone. (trans. Arenal/Powell, p. 159)

This sonnet reads as a critique of the same type of knowledge the *Sueño* critiques. Both the ekphrastic and epistemological portraits are situated on the boundaries of consciousness (Bergmann, 1990, p. 163). The portrait referred to stands for the type of representation that is mistaken for the thing represented. The aesthetic, air-brushing qualities of the portrait seduce the mind into mistaking it for the original. This exchange places the abstracted object beyond time, ignoring the body's mortality. However, the poem's ambiguity of address achieves the effect of conflating both body and portrait. We are unsure if the temporality referred to in the final two tercets is about the original or the copy. Both the body and the portrait are inseparable in the representation of mortality, suggesting the inevitability of mediation; even though object and representation are different, there is no way to approach desire without implicit representation. In this way, this poem has already reached a resolution similar to but different from the sonnet mentioned before, "Detente sombra de mi bien esquivo," which chooses the fantasy of a stable representation over the elusive original. Instead, this portrait poem renounces both the original and the copy but does not offer an alternative. While the previous sonnet attaches to fantasy, this one attaches to resistance. Paranoia has not yet been displaced with a social assemblage alternative to the underlying social relations implied by *Primero sueño*'s case of the toxic makeup that poisons both subject and object.

Sor Juana has problematized the relationships between subjects and objects through the topic of deceptive and potentially harmful surfaces (cosmetics or portraiture). Though power hierarchies remain in place, everybody is affected, as shown in the emergent paranoia about the impossibility of desire for knowledge of these surfaces. Knowledge is not just information but a medium to establish a relationship, and intuiting the inescapability of this fact generates paranoia. This toxic paranoia that affects object and subject in the futile prevention of the failure of representing an elusive

otherness resembles the limitations of colonial discourses when representing the colonized in a way that justifies their evangelization. Instead of sheer exploitation, educating indigenous peoples into serving their colonizers makes domination seem less exploitative and more beneficial for the empire. Some groups of indigenous peoples are closer to the Western ideals of humanness than those whose ways of life challenge the possibility of systematic evangelization. More than individual resistance, however, there are whole groups about whom the model's assumptions do not apply. This dissonance is evident in the preface to the missionary manual by Jesuit naturalist José de Acosta *De procuranda Indorum salute* (Salamanca: 1588-89). In the foreword, Acosta classifies human groups according to three elements: whether they have a Republican organization, a symbolic writing tradition, and believe in the Christian God. Belief in Christianity is the primary mark of the West's superiority that justifies the colonization of its others. However, Acosta points out that the Chinese also have a similar republican organization, followed by the Incas and the Aztecs in the Americas, who have a similar organization but do not have similar ways of writing. Then he goes down the ladder to human groups he cannot differentiate from animals for their lack of stable state-like organization, symbolic writing and apparently any disciplining of the body to ideas. Paradoxically, though he states that these people are barely human and thus do not necessarily fit within the plan for salvation, he emphasizes the need to adapt evangelization techniques to these groups:

A todos estos que apenas son hombres, o son hombres a medias, conviene enseñarles que aprendan a ser hombres e instruirles como a niños. Y si atrayéndolos con halagos se dejan voluntariamente enseñar, mejor sería; más si resisten, no por eso hay que abandonarlos, sino que si se rebelan contra su bien y salvación, y se enfurecen contra los médicos y maestros, hay que contenerlos con fuerza y poder convenientes, y obligarles a que dejen la selva y se reúnan en poblaciones y, aún contra su voluntad en cierto modo, hacerles fuerza para que entren en el reino de los cielos. (Acosta, 48)

It is convenient to teach all those who are barely human or partially human how to be human and instruct them like children. And if attracted with praise, they let themselves be taught, that would be better; but if they resist, this is no reason to abandon them, for if they rebel against their own good and salvation and rage against our physicians and teachers, we have to contain them with effective force and power, and oblige them to leave the jungle to live together in settlements and, in a way even against their own will, force them so they can gain access to the heavens. (My translation)

People who do not fit within the paradigms of progress are compared to children in their relative need for education into assimilation, by force if they resist. This possible use of force is paternalistically justified as good for them from the perspective of Christian salvation allegorized as medicine for the soul, mind, and customs. This pedagogical work may only be possible after they are contained within the same space. A new

relationship to space is needed, a transition that, in theory, enables the manipulation of others' souls, like the dream space heterotopia of *Primero sueño* that allows experimentation with the limits of knowledge. Implied here is that an organization that is nomadically tied to its surrounding geography is antithetical to the work of evangelization. This nomadic way of life escapes the project of civilization that is revealed as a sedentary²¹ way of approaching space for the purposes of contained discipline. This outside of the sedentary space of discipline represents the limitations of the knowledge of evangelization. Given numerous failures, Acosta presents a method in the form of a manual to repair the pastoral power to shape human souls, but this method is problematized by those who are in between the paradigms of the human and nonhuman animal. This implied reliance on achieving what is perceived as impossible—but which preserves the drive toward knowledge—reinforces a paranoid feeling that prevents enjoyment of desiring in itself. The manual's preface has not yet reached, as in the sections of *Primero sueño* analyzed in this section, a point at which the whole project is cast in doubt.

²¹ For a new type of anti-colonial nomadism as a line of flight from forced conversion into sedentarism, see Sanchez-Godoy (2014).

VI. Performative Failure

After exploring the paranoid way of preventing failure, the soul in *Primero sueño* eventually displaces its object of desire. The transformation implies a historical reconfiguration of the exemplary value of institutionalized public shaming. This displacement is implied by the speaker's last mythological figuration of the desire for knowledge. To prove his divine origin, Phaeton attempts to ride the sun's chariot but is stopped by Zeus, who sees that Earth is in danger of being destroyed by fire because Phaeton cannot control the horses. Struck by Zeus's thunderbolt, Phaeton falls from the sky (785–802). Sor Juana frames this episode as a failed warning. Comparing Phaeton's failure to public executions of criminals, she claims that instead of dissuading others from committing the crimes that are being punished, executions actually publicize them. Fame turns out to be more valuable than death, "las glorias deletrea/ entre los caracteres del estrago" (809–810) ("pieces together the name of glory/ from letters spelling endless havoc" trans. Trueblood, p. 191). Excessive spectacles only promote the fame of the case regardless of whether they are celebratory praise or condemnatory punishment.²² Survival in collective memory has become more important than preserving life.²³ Moreover, what was previously a negative example becomes exemplary. The affective transfer of failure matters more than its moral content, a contagion that Sor Juana seems to lament:

O el castigo jamás se publicara,
 porque nunca el delito se intentara:
 político silencio antes rompiera
 los autos del proceso
 –circunspecto estadista–;
 o en fingida ignorancia simulara
 o con secreta pena castigara
 el insolente exceso,
 sin que a popular vista
 el ejemplar nocivo propusiera:
 que del mayor delito la malicia
 peligra en la noticia,
 contagio dilatado trascendiendo;
 porque singular culpa sólo siendo,
 dejara más remota a lo ignorado
 su ejecución, que no a lo escarmentado. (811–826)

Either the punishment should not be known
 so that the crime would never become contagious,
 a politic silence covering up instead,

²² For the difference between identity as continuity of the body and identity as social positioning, see Caroline Walker-Bynum.

²³ Perez-Amador p. 415.

with a statesman's circumspection,
 all records of the proceedings;
 or let a show of ignorance prevail
 or the insolent excess
 meet its just deserts by secret sentence
 without the noxious example
 ever reaching public notice,
 for broadcasting makes the wickedness
 of the greatest crime all the greater
 till it threatens a widespread epidemic,
 while, left in unknown isolation,
 repetition is far less likely
 than if broadcast to all as a would-be lesson. (trans. Trueblood, p. 191)

Ironically, this fragment speaks in a legal voice but from the perspective of the "criminal," critiquing the effectiveness of public punishment even as it broadcasts it. For the paranoid speaker, the public execution of criminals, like a plague, spreads the desire to commit the crime. However, the poem proposes performing strategic silence like politicians pretending ignorance or executing the punishment in secret. Conducting an execution in private seeks to prevent criminal acts that the spectacle of punishment promotes, but the poem is ironically publicizing. The gesture toward the forbidden goal is preserved while pretending to surrender to the law. Similarly, the gesture toward absolute knowledge is retained, but now the gesture itself is knowledge.

As such, Sor Juana is historicizing the myth of Phaeton in relation to the effectiveness of shaming as a tool to prevent crime in emerging urban centers in Europe and the Hispanic viceroyalties modeled on them. Building on the work of Michel Foucault and Norbert Elias, the criminologist John Braithwaite (1993) outlines the historical evolution of public shaming for crime as a form of justice in European cities. In the late seventeenth century and through the eighteenth century, with urban expansion, crime increased. Though without differentiating between civil and inquisitorial justice, Braithwaite convincingly explains how a parallel increase took place in corporal punishment on the scaffold against the lower classes. A process of "civilization" as a refinement of manners in the court contrasted with a simultaneous class war against the new impoverished people. Shaming—without casting the miscreant out of society—was the preferred mechanism of social control among the upper classes and in their relationships with the emergent bourgeoisie. On the other hand, before imprisonment became the preferred method of punishment, public stigmatization and violence were the primary tools of justice against poor criminals (Braithwaite 7–8). However, inscribing power on the body of the criminal began to backfire. Victims sometimes complained about barbarity and injustice instead of complying with forced repentance, and the crowd turned against the executioners and the king himself. Shame was inverted through the public's solidarity with petty offenders turned heroes (*ibid.*, 8), like Phaeton's failure becoming exemplary. Public stigmatization can thus trigger cultures of resistance to the law, also resonating with Sor Juana's ironic call to make executions private. Sor Juana amplifies this potential response to public punishment to create a figure that

reverses the value of failure, implying an irresistible force of spectacle that enables fame regardless of moral value.

As with the poem's deployment of pyramids, the soul's drive to eternalize oneself is the basis of the desire for knowledge. However, *Primero sueño* reverses the medium for eternalization. Now, the source of fame is the contagious intensity of the failure of absolute knowledge, which becomes survival beyond death. Knowledge has been relocated to a performance of its failure and its aftereffects. Knowledge is thus detached from the colonial economy that produces ambitious greed, for it is not focused on the goal but on the act of desiring itself. *Primero sueño*, in this last part of the flight of the soul (lines 781–826), appropriates the failure of knowledge as an empty but transmissible performance that resists its conversion into cultural capital, simulating knowledge without reinforcing the system of representation. Sor Juana has diagnosed a crisis of the desire for absolute knowledge and proposes that this crisis opens up new possibilities. Before a new possibility can emerge, she implies, otherwise realistic possibilities must be displaced by a parody of their failure. Instead of the crisis of presence leading to a new form of consent, the new subjectivity is situated in identification with the impossibility of knowledge itself.²⁴ The dreamer's exhaustion of her desire for knowledge becomes a figure for the performance of the impossibility of knowledge. This performance complicates the theme of humility outlined with regard to Alison Weber's analysis of Teresa of Avila. While social humility is an ironic defense of one's own humility, spiritual humility affirms a spiritual desire despite the humiliations. However, though Sor Juana has modeled her desire for knowledge on spiritual humility, her example of a criminalized but exemplary Phaeton blurs the difference between both kinds of humility. Instead of God, the exhaustion of the aspiration for absolute knowledge produces a new kind of incalculable desire. This exhaustion is reaffirmed by internalizing it as a figure that mediates the desire to constantly reiterate that exhaustion in new situations as a cultural assemblage. This tendency is not an escape from the need for knowledge but a reaffirmation of the crisis of knowledge already happening, thus preventing it from becoming another instrument of epistemic violence. Merely choosing to escape the ideology of total knowledge expansion is to remain contained within the same ideology, a modern ideology that equates nature itself with human knowledge. Therefore, the desire for knowledge must be exhausted before the subject's desire is freed from the dominant drive. Spiritual and social humility, transferred to Sor Juana's intellectual realm as a surrender to the finitude of human knowledge, becomes a constant performance of its simultaneous unavoidability and impossibility.

Sor Juana has created an exceptional situation within the already exceptional space of the dream, in which knowledge can only have practical applications ironically. This exceptionality arises whenever we encounter new situations for which our commonsensical operations do not readily apply. One way to deal with these challenges to knowledge is to consider how similar situations were dealt with before, whether historical or fictional, as in this case with the mythological narrative of Phaeton. In baroque Europe, emblematic literature was one source of reflective wisdom. Carlo Ginzburg (1976) studied how, in seventeenth-century European emblem books, against political control, similar mythological figures associated with knowledge transgression, like Icarus and Prometheus, stopped being only examples of warning against

²⁴ Moten 266.

intellectual pride. They became emblems that promoted transgressive exploration while minimizing its dangers. This new intellectual ambition signaled the emergence of a semi-autonomous cultural sphere with allegiance more to itself than to secular or religious political authorities, favoring freedom of inquiry (40). However, even while being closer to the enlightenment, Sor Juana does not fully share in the project of freeing the intellectual sphere and recuperates the figure of Phaeton as a new kind of reminder of intellectual humility. As an intellectual nun in the colonies, not only she knows that intellectual ambition is not accessible to all, but she also anticipates a critique of the Enlightenment's drive toward unrestricted knowledge production and renews the suspicion of knowledge through her instrumentalization of religious examples. She deploys the lives of exemplary figures like Jesus, the Virgin Mary and the Saints, not as religious figures but as models for embodied, not unrestricted knowledge transgression. For instance, in the case of Maria de Ágreda's system of conduct developed as part of her autobiography of the virgin Mary, prudence is not just a virtue but a form of anticipatory knowledge that, if falling into excessive scruples, can be similar to paranoia. Moreover, the practice of prudence may reach an impasse in some situations that could not have been anticipated. In these cases, superior principles to those ordinary ones should be applied, as St. Mary did:

Y sobre todo alcanzó nuestra Prudentísima Reina las razones superiores y reglas de obrar con todo acierto en los casos que no podían venir las reglas ordinarias y comunes, de que sería muy largo discurso quererlos referir aquí; muchos se entenderán en el progreso de su vida santísima. Y para concluir todo este discurso de su Prudencia, sea la regla por donde se ha de medir, la Prudencia del alma santísima de Cristo Señor nuestro, con quien se ajustó y asimiló en todo respectivamente, como formada para coadjutora, semejante a Él mismo en las obras de la mayor Prudencia y sabiduría que obró el Señor de todo lo criado y Redentor del mundo. (Ágreda, Book II, Chapter 9, # 550)

Above all was our most prudent Queen skilled in the higher principles and rules of action, and such as were above the ordinary and common laws; but it would require a long discourse even to mention the instances here: many of them will be understood in the sequel of this history of her most holy life. In order to conclude this chapter on the prudence of the blessed Virgin, it is only necessary to say, that the rule by which it is to be measured, is none else than the prudence of the soul of Christ, our Lord; for it was conformed and assimilated entirely to his, since She was to be the Coadjutrix in all the works of wisdom and prudence, performed by the Lord of all creation and Savior of the world. (trans. Blatter)

Mary's life is the exemplar of prudence based on superior reason in these exceptional contexts. This foremost reason is not exactly a set of procedures but the identification with Jesus as a model of prudence in thought and action through St. Mary, who embodies the teachings of Jesus, as if she was trained to be his intermediary in the human world. This exemplarity is the superior principle to be applied in exceptional

situations, an act of identification with the figure of St. Mary, who is, in turn, modeling this identification with her identification with Jesus. The first thing to be learned is not a practical rule but the act of identification with a conceptual persona. This first identification enables the exemplary figure to serve as a mediator for knowledge and action. The superior principle implies a re-enactment of the interiorized model in a new context, and the model thus can be modified by its being summoned as a mediator between a perceived exceptional situation and the new knowledge produced. This performance triggered by uncertainty, following the characterization of Mary as a re-articulation of Jesus, enables the subject to change while producing knowledge. Both subject and object are reconstituted in the event of their encounter. Still, the goal is not just to accumulate knowledge about the situation but how to respond according to certain ends in mind. In this case, exemplarity works as an implied destiny, and the spiritual ends are already implied in the figures to be realized. The moment of change is reincorporated as a means to serve spiritual edification. This figuration is unlike the last section from *Primero sueño* analyzed above, where the moral value implied in the exemplarity of the myth of Phaeton is lost.

Rather than the submission to a higher principle, like the prudence of Zeus in preventing Phaeton from setting the whole world on fire, the image is disengaged from teleology. Instead, it becomes contagious not only despite but because a spectacle has been made of punishment. Public discipline, like externalized knowledge, always fails at containment. However, it does not only fail but prompts the dissemination of what it meant to prevent. Public executions prompt a reiteration of the shamed action, an ironization of the failure of the images through which we perceive authority. This exemplarity of failure is a symptom of the displacement of the function previously pursued through those images: their spectacle survives potentially subverted in collective memory. Similarly, *Primero sueño* compares this contamination to the transformation of knowledge from belief in its endless expansion to the performance of its failure from a marginalized perspective.

Sor Juana's apparent retreat at the end of her life can be understood as embodying this conceptual persona of exhausted knowledge. Ramírez-Santa Cruz synthesizes the earliest accounts of Sor Juana's last years:

[...] se retiró de toda actividad relacionada con la literatura, dejó de recibir visitas en el locutorio, no respondió ni escribió más cartas, entregó su biblioteca y alhajas para su venta, hizo obras de caridad, y comenzó un régimen de penitencias y ayunos. (283)

She withdrew from all literature-related activities, stopped receiving visits in the parlor, did not respond nor write further letters, handed over her books and jewelry for others to sell, did charitable works, and began a regime of penance and fasting. (My translation)

Modern biographers interpret this transformation in Sor Juana's life between poles that are not mutually exclusive. Some believe that Sor Juana went through a spiritual crisis and became an ascetic mystic; other critics interpret a silencing by high authorities of the church after the polemic about the "Carta Atenagórica" and the *Respuesta* (ibid,

284). However, Ramírez-Santa Cruz suggests that her life change was only partial. Sor Juana did not stop engaging in financial transactions, did not stop serving as her convent's accountant, and even bought a second cell (285–286). Furthermore, according to the final inventory of her cell after she died, she had 180 books and fifteen manuscripts of religious and secular verses, but no cilice or any other instrument for penitence (288). As such, Ramírez-Santa Cruz correlates Sor Juana's modest retreat to her sudden, overwhelming fame, which clashed with her self-image. *Primero sueño* may add another layer to this biographical speculation. Rather than turn to the life of a mystic, whether through a spiritual crisis, coercion, or disappointment with poetic glory, the figure of the performance of knowledge's failure suggests a displacement of what knowledge really meant to her. That is, we could read Sor Juana's turn to a more modest life ironically, as a performance of retreat from intellectual life, when the performance itself becomes, for her, the new actual knowledge. In doing so, Sor Juana is also broadcasting an ironic example in the reception of her work.

Therefore, in the last section from *Primero sueño*, the moral value of exemplarity is lost. Sor Juana's only example of success disseminates itself regardless of its failure and is based on criminality (but elevated in its linking to a Greco-Roman myth), reasserting the social conditioning of the initial desire for knowledge. In the world of the poem, this conditioning—glimpsed through failures refigured as knowledge and associated with spiritual experiences—channels the feminized voice that is disappointed with the intellectual voice she has adopted. This failure, reframed as knowledge, also reframes Sor Juana's statement in her "Carta de Monterrey": "en querer más que en saber consiste el salvarse" (in Paz 646).

VII. Conclusion

Although *Primero sueño* shows how Sor Juana strongly desired to cultivate the knowledge that allowed her to participate in the male-dominated intellectual sphere, it also reveals an intense disappointment with her attachment to this kind of knowledge. The possibility of realizing this dream of knowledge relies on the reproduction of the social order that opposes her entry into the intellectual sphere. Therefore, the dream of knowledge should be kept more as an incitement than as an actual possibility. She accepts this failure and its paranoid proliferation as a vicious circle without escape and so favors the displacement of this attachment and identifies with failure itself. Failure is no longer a cause for shame but a performance that lies with the truth. After embodying the impossibility of absolute representational knowledge, the only imaginable knowledge is relocated from an externalized knowledge space into an endless performance of failed knowledge. In combining Teresa of Avila's spiritual and social humility, this brand of intellectual humility surrenders to the constant relocation of failure. In my reading of *Primero sueño*, this poem evades making any contribution to the reproduction of social alienation and misogyny and does so without resisting. Instead, it proposes a model of subjectivity that constantly relocates its identity in the dissonance between desire and the world, potentially ironizing Sor Juana's retreat at the end of her life.

CHAPTER FIVE

General Conclusion: Towards a New Approach

I began this dissertation by analyzing how baroque desire produces a subjectivity that exceeds the emergent paradigm of standardized self-control. Along the way, a new concern arose about how this trend also reveals and reinforces complex degrees of community identification and exclusion. The differential accessibility to alternative narratives of self-exhaustion depending on social categories evokes how the baroque questions the capacity of established genres—for example, the picaresque, the pastoral, colonial chronicles, and encyclopedism—to represent the perspectives they cannot avoid anymore. As my primary texts show, this aesthetics of exhaustion is only accessible to the upper classes. These literary subjectivities, while recovering the potential for the nobility to align with the needs of minorities, only uncannily mirror the survival strategies of characters excluded from the baroque economy of desire, such as the *pícaros*, *pícaras*, Jews, Muslims, and members of “barbarian” worlds. Even as the works under consideration nod to women’s perspective or the perspective of nature, they still privilege a heroic virtue that mirrors the marginalized voices that cannot speak and do not have a choice. That is, as in the case of mysticism’s dialectical relationship with the censorship of popular religion, the baroque appropriates and erases parts of popular culture in creating an elite aesthetic that, in turn, affects its sources.

Indeed, the appeal of these figures of exhaustion may be due to a repressed desire to escape social pressures and projected toward outsider figures. The existence of the “uncivilized” both justifies the desire for the expansion of civilization and, at the same time, establishes what is outside of it. For example, the aimless wandering of Góngora’s *peregrino* through islands populated by nomadic shepherds, peasants, and fishers endlessly re-metaphorized as fungible figures by the poetic voice, reimagines the *conquistador* figure. However, actual rural spaces in early modern Spain and colonized Indigenous peoples in the Americas were not static objects of admiration. Under the increasing expansion of early modern cities where displaced peasants seek salaried positions or in missionary spaces where Indigenous people are disciplined as workers, displaced populations prefigure a new working class. Whenever they resist this transformation into the new proletariat, they run the risk of becoming a different type of wanderer from Góngora’s *peregrino*, though still evoked by that character’s wandering and the poem’s critique of empire: homeless beggars in cities increasingly passing laws against vagrancy or Indigenous peoples who flee colonization and may become nomadic networks surrounding the empire. Similarly, we should dwell on the essential differences between actual criminalized people—including the so-called infidels—and Sor Juana’s analogy to Phaeton’s fame despite his failure, as well as Cervantes’s description of Auristela exhausting her desire to resist the sacrifice of her free will in marriage. Sor Juana’s and Auristela’s respective subjectivities, as in this dissertation’s Baroque aesthetics of exhaustion, imply an upper-class resistance by aestheticizing the loss of investment in the impossibility of preserving upper-class culture. That is, the baroque aesthetics of exhaustion produces a new kind of individual that can contribute

to social change. However, this aesthetic repression of the infidel and barbarian figures that inspire it conceals some degree of voluntarism that limits its possibilities.

Indeed, *Persiles's* representation of the so-called barbarians—which evoke the colonial worlds around Sor Juana's New Spain—and *pícaros* and *pícaras*, also borrows an uncanny power from its resemblance to the actual “criminals,” as in Sor Juana's analogy. In *Persiles*, the *maldiciente* Clodio and other picaresque characters who, outside the libidinal economy, lack the option to escalate socially, are not blinded to the fact that love and desire are always already contaminated by political-economic interests—an insight that both contrasts with and reflects Auristela's sublimated insights about upper-class marriage and free will. Similarly, in *Persiles*, only lower-class women are open about their sexuality and fight for their desire, which indirectly implicates and explicates Auristela's own desire to escape by reappropriating spirituality as an exhausted aesthetic. Still, while baroque narratives idealize these examples, they can serve as starting points for a more dialectical examination of similar representations of minorities and lower-class women in dialogue with historical sources across time. This dissertation's focus on the libidinal economy enables this transition to analyze marginal identities as an entry into underground cultures.

As such, the baroque aesthetics of exhaustion, in its focus on the singularity of desire, can be supplemented by situated perspectives represented in the baroque only through inclusive exclusion. The baroque can serve as a medium for solidarity as its all-encompassing perspectivism enables analysis of class relations through its libidinal economy. Its resemblance to the strategies of the marginalized it borrows its force from, rather than just a privileged perspective, can be a first step into those other perspectives on exhaustion from a systemic perspective. For example, this path can be found in a particular deployment of “mestizaje.” Ivonne del Valle examines two types of *mestizo* identities in Colonial Latin American literature. As exemplified by Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's *Comentarios Reales* (1609), *mestizaje* focuses on a rhetorically flexible discourse of hybridity that reinforces Christianity and European values. Indians were only a step in the evolution toward Christianity in a disenchanted world of nature to be exploited by the empire. That is, Inca Garcilaso's discourse is closer to the baroque perspective in its inclusivity from above. On the other hand, Guamán Poma's perspective in *Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno* (1615), while he was not precisely a *mestizo*, represents a *mestizaje* from below. Christianity became an ethos for anybody in Poma, not a civilization drive, as Andean technologies were needed for the colonial economy to adapt to its environment. However, while Poma's perspective represents the kind of hybridity that recovers otherwise silenced voices, the Inca Garcilaso's was the most widespread perspective on colonial *mestizaje*, even influencing Túpac Amaru's rebellion—while Guamán Poma's was never published. This ironic impact of disparate treatment suggests a way to assess the relative autonomy and potential of marginal identities through their resemblance to exhausted subjectivities in the baroque libidinal economy.

The *pícaros* and *pícaras* and the nomadological evasion of colonialism²⁵ can thus be analyzed as reflecting actual semi-autonomous aesthetic genealogies that complement the synchronic baroque approach. Two contemporary examples—blackness and generalized prostitution—can serve as provocations for future

²⁵ Sánchez-Godoy, 2014.

investigations. Fred Moten elucidates a similar opening of perspectives in reader-response criticism through his analysis of photography through the black lens. Roland Barthes's well-known distinction between *studium* (visual culture) and *punctum* (the singularity of an image) favors the deep, touching details of an image's *punctum*. However, Moten focuses on re-iterations across media of a voice otherwise reduced to a touching detail, or "the studium in the punctum" (291). While Barthes does not ask himself why his mother did not want to stand out in a family portrait or Emmet Till's mother decided to leave the casket of her lynched son open, Moten's focus on re-figurations of pain in black music that evoke Till's mother's pain leads to theorizing what "black performance" is. Specifically, the "black falsetto," as a kind of genealogical moaning, is linked to the desire to leave this painful world behind, at once dwelling in pain such as that evoked in Till's photograph and imagining a totally different world. This genealogical performance of exhaustion resonates with Troyan and Gonzalez's essay on the total performance of intimacy and authenticity in the "Girlfriend Experience." The "sugar baby" is compensated not just for sex but also for pretending to be an actual partner, which, in her awareness of the underlying economics of the situation, points towards the possibility of an inner strike. As a figure for the commodified aspects of all relationships that exhaust any belief in authentic, pure romance, the essay suggests a connection to Deleuze's analysis of Melville's "Bartleby, The Scrivener" in the importance of an exhausted desire that finds enjoyment in its own assertion, "I would prefer not to." The figure of exhausted prostitution that sees its work for what it is—finding enjoyment in this delinking of desire from emotional labor—and Moten's fantastic *falsetto*, which is actually a tradition of exhausted blackness, can be models of how to ground an aesthetics like the baroque aesthetics of exhaustion as a starting point for alternative historical genealogies of situated experience. In this way, we can still recover marginal baroque voices. The fugitive colonial nomads counterpoint the wandering of Góngora's *peregrino*, punished criminals inspire Sor Juana's feminized intellectuality, and the *pícaras* pursuit of their own desires contrasts with Auristela's desire for escape. These resemblances, in turn, may allow us to trace the relevance of the baroque to the twenty-first century not only as a style but also as a way of understanding the exclusive inclusivity of the libidinal economy through narratives of exhaustion.

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