

Highlights and Issues of the New Wave of Góngora Studies

Este ensayo pretende evaluar la ola reciente de estudios gongorinos surgida al calor del cuarto centenario de las obras mayores del poeta. Al ofrecer una perspectiva general de este "boom", quiero asimismo definir y analizar tres áreas de producción crítica. Me centro primero en el nuevo libro sobre las Soledades de Mercedes Blanco, una obra cuyas controvertidas e importantes contribuciones se valorarán en el contexto de la bibliografía existente sobre el poema. Reviso después algunas intervenciones críticas recientes sobre el Panegírico al duque de Lerma, con especial atención a una notable tesis doctoral española y al concepto de "inacabamiento estratégico" de John Beverley, objeto ahora de renovado interés. Examino también las cuestiones de eros y alteridad con el fin de encuadrar otro grupo de trabajos. Finalmente, desarrollo algunas observaciones sobre la tensión metodológica entre el nuevo historicismo y el marxismo - evidente en el contraste entre Beverley y Blanco - y entre las diferentes academias nacionales, divididas entre la filología y la crítica basada en la teoría contemporánea.

The Spanish Baroque poet Luis de Góngora, controversial in his day, has captivated modern readers and no less, modern critics. Góngora studies experienced a sea change over roughly the last 35 years, associated primarily with Anglo-American Hispanists who embraced a varied range of new approaches, many informed by contemporary theory.¹ Now it appears that the tides have begun to shift again, this time towards enhanced continental philological production, which, while always active, builds on its strengths in textual editing, genre studies, and investigation of the polemic around Gongorism, and is also beginning to respond more dynamically to the legacy of theoretical criticism. As will be demonstrated, the great divide between Anglo-American and continental criticism is beginning to dissolve in the emergence of new constellations of collaboration, contestation and dialogue.

There is currently an unprecedented boom in Góngora scholarship, most of it continental, brought on by the combination of an infusion of funding in the wake of European integration and the attention given to the

poet's work at the time of a number of quadricentennial anniversaries. 2011 marked the 450th anniversary of Luis de Góngora's birth; 2013 marks the 400th anniversary of the first circulated manuscript of the *Soledad primera*. Begoña López Bueno gives an early sense of the scope of the boom in one of the first quadricentennial forums by listing a series of recent editions and studies of Góngora's poetry (328). These include two books on Góngora's poetry by Mercedes Blanco, a new Cátedra edition of the *Polifemo* by Jesús Ponce Cárdenas, volumes of essays on the *Panegírico* and the *Décimas*, and new editions in progress of the *Sonetos* by Juan Matas Caballero and of the *Décimas* by Sara Pezzini. A number of Góngora's works, which had been edited by non-Spaniards (for example, Parker's *Polifemo* and Ciplijauskaitė's *Sonetos*) are now being replaced or supplemented by new, updated volumes edited by Spaniards.

Since López Bueno's initial statement, conferences and publications on Góngora have only continued to proliferate. Joaquín Roses, who has played a pioneering role in his history of reaching out to integrate scholars from different national academies, organized a conference to mark the poet's birth in 2011. There, he presented a transatlantic anthology of poetry in honor of Góngora edited by Carlos Clementson as well as a collection of Laura Dolfi's essays on Góngora's theatre. Roses also prepared an exhibition (now on tour) for the Biblioteca Nacional de España, "Góngora, la estrella inextinguible," with a companion volume published in an edition by Mercedes Blanco and Susana Urraca Uribe. One hopes that further publications will emerge out of similar conferences related to Góngora in Pisa (2013), Bern (2013), in panels at the Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas meeting in Buenos Aires (2013) and at the Modern Language Association convention (2014).

New work has emerged on the polemic over Gongorism and its documents. The Spanish academy has set an example of open access, teamwork and manuscript digitization; the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona now hosts the "Todo Góngora" website with related digital projects, and Salcedo Coronel's commentaries, once a scarce resource, are now available online through the library of the Fundación San Millán de la Cogolla.² José Manuel Daza Samoano has prepared a new edition of Góngora's "Carta en respuesta," for me the new standard, and is attending as well to the commentaries of Angulo Pulgar as part of his dissertation (López Bueno 280 n. 13). All of this complements María José Osuna Cabezas's new books on the debate, which continue the work of Roses's now classic study. Special issues of the *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* (91.1, 2013, on the *Polifemo* and the *Soledades*), edited by Terrence O'Reilly and Jeremy Robbins, and of *Ínsula* (2012, on the *Polifemo*) coincide with the

anniversaries, as do recent monographs from U.S. Hispanists by Julio Baena and Víctor Pueyo Zoco. Finally, the interaction of Góngora's poetry with its sister arts has garnered renewed attention; Rafel Bonilla Cerezo and Paolo Tanganelli just published a monograph on the *Soledades* and the emblem tradition (see Saez),³ and the discovery of Góngora's music manuscripts has sparked recordings of his compositions by the early modern group *Cinco siglos*, as well as scholarship on musical performance as a factor in Góngora's poetry (see Waissbein's essay in the new Noble-Wood and Griffin anthology). Some of this fascination for Góngora and the sister arts has been expressed in a renewed enthusiasm for the Hispanic Neobaroque in North America, where Hispanists have also encouraged the publication of new English translations of the poet's work.

The scope of this new wave of critical attention to Góngora is enormous, and it will take some time for scholars to absorb the full impact of this work. However, I would like to offer an initial consideration of some of the highlights and the attendant theoretical issues evoked by the contemporary Gongorine resurgence, focusing on Mercedes Blanco's new book on the *Soledades*, on the problem of incompleteness in Góngora's work, on the new studies of the *Panegírico*, and finally on the issue of Góngora and alterity. My hope is that this initial assessment will assist Hispanists working in the early modern period to define better a response to the new work in the context of a reconsideration of the ongoing methodological conflicts between philology and theoretically oriented literary criticism.

Mercedes Blanco's nearly four hundred and fifty page monograph, *Góngora heroico: Las Soledades y la tradición épica*, published by the Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica, studies the *Soledades* against the epic tradition: classical, Italian, Iberian (including colonial) and Neolatin. In a singular display of erudition, Blanco provides her own translations of quotations from these sources in all the relevant languages while contextualizing her analysis within the full range of documents of the various national literary polemics. She also compares the text to the visual culture of the period, reproducing many sumptuous European Renaissance and Baroque paintings, many of them from royal collections and now at her Paris Louvre, as well as examples from collections of early modern maps. In her integration of such diverse materials, Blanco draws upon her rich experience as a student of French Gongorists Nadine Ly and Maurice Molho (her thesis director). She now occupies their position at the Sorbonne, where she regularly holds seminars drawing the participation of international faculty. Mercedes Blanco is arguably the most prolific scholar on Góngora and her new book is a major and impressive contribution.

BLANCO "CON Y CONTRA" BEVERLEY

Blanco begins with a recognition of John Beverley's influential work, "cuyo plantamiento inicial comparto" (12), probably the most recognized study of the poem in Anglo-American and Latin American criticism, and hence an appropriate term of comparison, *Aspects of Góngora's Soledades*. Indeed, she accepts many of the essential features of Beverley's basic understanding of the poem: its conflicted anthology of Classical and Renaissance poetry as part of an effort to develop "a new mode of epic practice" at a time when "the patriotic epic and the epic hero *per se* are no longer a genuine possibility for Góngora as an artist" (*Aspects* 69), its lack of a *telos* (105), and its function as a "mirror of princes," offered for the contemplation of Góngora's aristocratic patrons as a way of addressing, in the language of poetry, contemporary political and economic questions such as those posed by the poet's *arbitrista* mentor, Pedro de Valencia (7-8; 100-102). Although Blanco devotes less than a page to addressing Beverley's work, her statement of common ground with his "plantamiento inicial" is a significant concession given the intensity of the hostile reception his positions have traditionally met, for the most part, from continental philological circles. Indeed, Beverley's now canonical work was a touchstone for "resistance to theory," demonstrating a symbolic importance even greater than the strength of his individual contribution.

This is not to say that Blanco does not raise objections to Beverley's thesis.⁴ The first, as would be anticipated, is methodological: "Es contrario al buen método sostener que un fenómeno literario está determinado por una situación histórica considerada en términos vagos y generales" (13). It is true that Beverley's method, informed by Marxist literary theory he studied with Fredric Jameson, conceives of history in broad terms, but his Marxism is not of the deterministic, vulgar sort. She further questions Beverley's association of Góngora's aesthetic with Spanish decline:

Puede objetarse además a la tesis de Beverley que desde hace bastante tiempo los historiadores han corregido la tendencia a utilizar la famosa decadencia española como explicación automática y estereotipada. El descenso de potencia y de prestigio, más que un lento declive, fue un fenómeno brusco que se produjo después de la muerte de Góngora, al final de la década de 1630 y en la década de 1640, cuando la Monarquía Hispánica sufrió un descalabro decisivo frente a Holanda, Suecia y Francia. (13)

Lo mismo que la fe cristiana y la organización eclesiástica, la guerra entendida literalmente está ausente del horizonte de las *Soledades*, y pesa sobre la obra con

increíble fuerza la realidad o el ideal del reinado de Felipe III, el de la paz, la *Pax Hispanica*. La navegación parece como el único sustituto de la guerra ... (404)

She concludes that one could not so easily assume that Góngora would have had “una aguda y angustiada conciencia de crisis” which he then expressed in his work (14).

While I find the political histories Blanco references in essays by diplomatic historians Jean-Frédéric Schaub and Antonio Feros enlightening and valuable, I am somewhat skeptical about a definitive revision of the history of the Spanish crisis about which cultural historians such as J.H. Elliot have written so compellingly. One of Blanco’s references, a general essay on “La España del *Quijote*” by Antonio Domínguez Ortiz -a historian of the same *Annales* School formation as Elliot - does not offer any information to prompt a truly fundamental revision here; he cites, for example, the same sources as Beverley on Spain’s agrarian problem (Vilar and Salomon). Both Blanco and Beverley, after all, recognize the impact of *arbitrismo* on the poem, a phenomenon which only arose in response to the reality of the Spanish crisis. Beverley draws his discussion of the Spanish decline from Robert Jammes and actually qualifies Jammes’ position in ways which would accord with Blanco’s concerns about contemporaneity, by suggesting that Góngora’s readers are, like Góngora, “isolated and contradictory figures, aristocratic radicals who sometimes challenge, sometimes celebrate the authority of the social class that nurtures them”(8). He thus emphasizes the role Góngora’s poetry played in engaging the political dynamics of the day in complex, not reductionist terms, as contestatory rather than determined. Blanco, to her credit, deepens this notion of Góngora’s engagement with his patrons.

Blanco’s approach to history appears somewhat colored by New Historicist methodology, a function perhaps of her interaction with the North American academy, where this remains popular among Hispanists who study the early modern. At its best this approach, which seeks a direct correspondence between a text and its particular historical moment, can be very productive, and indeed Blanco’s chapter on the “Canción a la toma de Larache” (1610), one of Góngora’s early heroic poems, is brilliant, mixing traditional philological “cotejo” against Góngora’s precedents in Herrera, as well as against the history of the diplomatic dynamics of the event celebrated, the Spanish conquest of the fort of Larache, guardian of the Strait of Gibraltar. Góngora praises the successful storming of the fort of Larache for asserting Spanish interests dear to his patrons over those of the Dutch and local pirates, thereby safeguarding conduit for the ships from the Americas and protecting southern Spain’s fishing industry. The

analysis of this text, to me, seems complimentary to Beverley's Jamesonian approach,⁵ which associates Góngora with a regional and alternative form of hegemony.

In another new reading, one of the most original in her book, Blanco argues that the *Soledades* emphasizes the Pacific islands in the *discurso de navegaciones* because as Góngora wrote the poem the issue of defending the Iberian Moluccas, Phillipines and associated trade routes against Dutch incursion was the order of the day, an agenda seen as threatened by the missionary zeal and the utopian ambitions of the explorer Pedro Fernández de Quirós. Quirós sought support at the time from Lerma, the Consejo de Indias and the court for colonizing "el quinto continente" which he named "Austrialia [*sic*] del Espíritu Santo," (322) where he hoped to (in Blanco's words) "hacer florecer la Ciudad de Dios o el reino milenario de la utopía" (324). Thus Blanco argues,

...aunque lecturas demasiado apresuradas hayan querido ver en el discurso de las navegaciones el tema americano, de la consideración atenta del texto y de un rápido examen del contexto se deduce que el principal asunto que mantiene vivo este *locus* clásico, literario y filosófico, es el de la posible expansión naval, comercial y colonial de la Monarquía hispana en la zona que separa Indochina de Australia. (325)

While Mercedes Blanco's brilliant elucidation of the historical subtext of the Pacific is to be admired, I question the necessary restriction to the most immediate context for the *discurso*. As she herself recognizes, in Góngora's oblique aesthetics, omitting or minimizing something will at times serve to highlight it. America, if mentioned in less detail, is an issue in Góngora's *corpus*; Beverley reads the political dynamics of the *Soledades* as they are informed by Góngora's other texts and in particular signals the relevance of the depiction of America in the "Égloga piscatoria" (*Aspects* 5). Blanco is also aware of a number of studies on the imagery of America in the poem,⁶ and argues

Es de notar sin embargo que América apenas está presente en el discurso, cuando de hecho tanto política como cognitiva y económicamente es el continente americano el que había modificado y trastornando de modo dramático, desde el primer viaje de Colón hasta la época de Góngora, la situación de los españoles y de sus gobernantes. (372)

Here is a case in which the limited focus on an immediate correspondence between a text and its historical moment points to methodological

limitations. I am similarly critical of the weight given to biography as a tool for interpretation in Blanco's speculations based on notions of creative personality recast in more recent terminology as "self-fashioning" (see, for example, 14, 21, 27, 29). On the other hand, it is not unusual to privilege the "author function" in early modern studies, and this, too, can be quite productive, as for example in the case of Ignacio Navarrete's now classic Bloomian approach to Góngora as an exemplar of Post-Petrarchan poetry.

A further area of disagreement between Blanco and Beverley is the issue of the depiction of violence in the text. Beverley sees sublimated imperial violence in the *Dedicatoria* and the falconry scene, which he reads as an allegory of European war. In a related vein, working in my own way "con y contra Beverley," and following the lead of Mary Gaylord, I have developed an argument on the ideological function of eroticized violence in the poem (Gaylord, "Metaphor and Fable;" Chemris 51-71). Although Blanco does not address these positions directly (she does have a tendency to ignore some relevant Anglo-American criticism, possibly due to methodological differences),⁷ it is clear that they hold no sway over her. In Blanco's words,

Abundan en la historia narrada ... incluso movimientos que implican violencia y muerte. Así sucede, ya lo hemos visto, en la dedicatoria con su estampa cinegética referida al duque de Béjar, y también en escenas de pesca y de cetrería de la *Soledad segunda*, entendidas como ejercicios legítimos, actividades útiles, nobles y deleitosas, en que el peligro sólo figura de manera gozosa y decorativa. (134)

For Blanco, the scene from the *Dedicatoria* of the bear kissing the shaft of the javelin upon which it is impaled is a re-elaboration of the ancient *topos* of the sacred hunt of the ruler, with erotic overtones which come from a yet unnoticed source in Claudian's *Fesceninos* (123-25). She also cites Statius's *Aquileida* as a source as it includes hunting bear (not the typical prey of Spanish aristocratic outings) as one of the rigors of the *educación nobiliaria* of the future hero (121). This is all quite useful and reinforces the function of the poem as a "mirror of princes." But this does not invalidate the perception of sublimated, aestheticized violence observed in the text by critics, as early as in the classic essay by Leo Spitzer. Blanco herself notes, "Al igual que la guerra desde Homero, este tipo de caza ensangrienta las aguas de un río," thus allowing for the possibility of a Homeric framework for seeing in the spectacle of the hunt the image of war (117).

JEWELS IN BLANCO'S CLOSE READING

Mercedes Blanco has combed all the commentaries on the *Soledades* for classical references, which she then proceeds to analyze in a study of sources within the framework of comparative stylistics and thematics, ranging from classical texts through those of Góngora's day. In its span this book is truly a *tour de force*. While comprehensive, this study does not read like a philological catalog; instead, Blanco methodically identifies structures in Góngora's poetics as well as in his cultural context. Her study of the *Soledades'* opening lines continues the splendid reading of Maurice Molho, with new observations on the multilayered meanings of "errantes." She also continues the patient building of an argument only to end in the marvelous sense of paradox for which Nadine Ly is known, as in the notion that Góngora is at his most audacious when he gives the (deceptive) appearance of being most conventional.

One of the more striking terms Blanco coins is on Góngora's technique of "reading from the inside out": "volviendo del revés la epopeya latina, como quien da la vuelta a un tapiz o a una prenda de vestir, Góngora invierte las relaciones entre el marco y lo enmarcado, entre la viñeta y el grandioso cuadro en que se inscribe ... y agranda el detalle hasta incluir en él todo el canto épico" (184). She relates this inversion between the frame and the framed to Gracián's characterization of Góngora's "ingeniosas retorsiones" (186), citing, for example, Góngora's selective inclusion of elements of the Ganymede myth. As Blanco notes, Góngora references Ganymede by a subtle allusion to Virgil's ekphrastic depiction of the youth, which Michael Putnam has read as a tragic miniaturization of the *Aeneid* (182). In like manner, Blanco signals a similar "ingeniosa retorsión" in Góngora's reversal of Tasso's technique in the *Gerusalemme liberata*:

Lo que en Tasso es un breve paréntesis idílico en el relato épico, se expande en las *Soledades* hasta invadir el espacio disponible. Pero, volviendo del revés lo que le ofrece su punto de partida, como hemos visto en el caso del *puer Idae*, Góngora se las arregla para que sea el relato épico el que aparezca como paréntesis del idilio, al incluirlo en el discurso de los dos ancianos. (203)

Blanco's depiction of the dynamics of contemporary reader response in deciphering Góngora's creative plays with scale recall Betty Sasaki's earlier observations on the selective evocation of some of the negative features of classical voyages in the *discurso de navegaciones*: "The allusions to Tiphys and Palinurus echo the epic texts from which they are drawn, thus requiring readers to activate their previous knowledge and experience with other texts ... By naming the more obscure figures of helmsmen

rather than the heroes, Góngora uses Tiphys and Palinurus as metonymic representations for the epic voyages of Jason and Aeneas" (156). These metonymic representations, as Sasaki suggests, are posed to bear on contemporary realities through a strategy of inversion: "Rather than inflate the historical trajectory to epic proportions, Góngora deflates the epic trajectory to mortal dimensions" (157-58). Like Blanco, Sasaki recognizes the importance of the reader's memory of classical sources, and of their often oblique and fragmented articulation in the text, as a factor in Góngora's critique (Cf. Sasaki 163-64, Blanco 219). Sasaki's reading, which represented a new trajectory from Beverley's thesis, while not mentioned, is clearly a precedent for Blanco's insights. This speaks to the perspicacity of this American scholar and her mentor, Emilie Bergmann, as well as to the line of investigation pioneered by Elias Rivers in his study of Góngora and his readers. The dynamics of reception, in evidence in Isabel Torres's work as well, has developed into a major critical issue in Góngora studies today.

A second area of exciting new insights in Blanco's book relates to the Homeric tradition. In a beautiful chapter, Blanco provides a fascinating history of the arrival and incorporation of Homer into the Spain of the Renaissance in order to come to some conclusions about the type of access Góngora would have had to such Hellenic texts.⁸ Blanco defines *enargeia* or liveliness of representation as a central Homeric characteristic for Renaissance writers. She then identifies four manifestations of *enargeia* in the *Soledades*, celebrating the plastic quality of Góngora's poetic art: the use of panoramic vision from an elevated observation point, the use of brilliant and precious vocabulary, the depiction of an object through a reprise of its history, and what she refers to as analytic description or using Lodovico Castelvetro's contemporary term, "scrittura particulareggiata," "la narración analítica que desciende a los pequeños pormenores" (285). Here Blanco reads new Homeric resonance into Góngora's devices, reminding us all of moments of sheer beauty in which descriptions come alive as we read the poem, where myth evokes the "arqueología del objeto" and simple objects such as the *quesillo* of the rustic table are presented in "casi una epifanía" in the spirit of Homer's evocation of Ulysses's scar (278; 282-83). In the *Soledades*, water sparkles with the luminosity Homer imparted to Achilles's shield (276). Blanco ties Homeric description to Pedro de Valencia's political views on the nobility of labor, in the laundering of Ulysses's clothes by the princess Nausikaa or in the workmanship involved in Ulysses's fabrication of a raft to escape Kalypso, and in the nobility accorded to humble figures like the old nurse Eurykleia or the swineherd Eumaios (292). These are some of the most

poignant pages in Blanco's book and greatly enhance our understanding of the Hellenic roots of Góngora's master work.

A final area of special note in *Góngora heroico* is Mercedes Blanco's discussion of the role of contemporary mapmaking, sure to create further dialogue on Góngora and visual culture. Here Blanco shifts from a New Historicist approach to one which engages early modern cultural studies, presenting an exciting history of the development of mapmaking, looking at cosmographers and cartographers not only as scientists, but also as artists who use a full range of contemporary literary devices, participate in literary culture (by creating maps of epic and Biblical journeys, for example) and who create visual artifacts which lend themselves to iconographic readings. As she writes, "En ambos tipos de documento se detecta la presencia de análogas estructuras semióticas, icónicas y simbólicas" (342). To gain new insights into the significance of poetic geography in the *Soledades*, she applies the model of Alexandre Dorozlaï, who identified places referenced in Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* against maps of the poet's time. By comparing references to places in Góngora's poem to period maps, Blanco makes the striking discovery of Latin toponyms used by the cartographers in a kind of etymological play. Thus the reference to "mar del Alba" is not simply a generic literary description but rather the literal Spanish translation of *Oceanus Eos* or *Mare Eoum* of contemporary maps which denotes the sea of the eastern islands of Indonesia. As Blanco writes,

...mediante este juego de mostrar y esconder el nombre se está imitando, con los medios del lenguaje poético, el movimiento mismo del descubrimiento de nuevos mares y nuevas tierras, y su apropiación por una nomenclatura que aspira a ser estable y universal. ...De hecho, la nomenclatura es una construcción parcial y provisional, del mismo modo que es provisional y conflictiva la apropiación de las tierras descubiertas por las potencias europeas con ambición colonial. (367-68)

Similarly, Góngora's play with borders that dissolve, in a game of dividing and uniting into a single world areas which were previously unreachable is a singularly cogent schema for Blanco (371). One of the most striking readings she offers in this regard is that of the passage describing the illusive and ever receding western horizon, the legendary "lecho del sol":

...[E]ste lecho occidental del sol y de las estrellas es lugar que una vez recorrido se disipa como la fantasmagoría que siempre fue. Lo que Góngora sugiere representándolo por unas *turquesadas cortinas* en un *lecho azul de aguas marinas*,

unas cortinas de agua que no son ni cubren otra cosa que el agua misma, como un velo pintado cuya condición ilusoria descubre quien intenta correrlo. Como este velo o estas cortinas, se disuelve aquí el lenguaje del mito en el artificio de la metáfora. (352)

The imagery of a world divided but one resonates with the Familist context with which Pedro de Valencia has recently been associated by Francisco Márquez Villanueva (163-87). Without making the argument for a literal encoding, Blanco offers implicit support for the idea that Góngora may have been referencing related sentiments in her remarks on the mapmaker Abraham Ortelius's association with the group. The "cordiform projection" of the world, its cartographic representation as a great heart, as Blanco argues, referencing Mangani's study, "es un mundo organizado visualmente por el jeroglífico de la caridad. En el caso de Ortelius este símbolo vincula su actividad gráfica y científica y su afiliación al pensamiento neoestoico y al grupo secreto de los piadosos partidarios de la tolerancia, la *Familia Charitatis*" (340).

If Beverley reads the *Soledades* in terms of Pedro de Valencia's utopian ambitions, Blanco suggests a more specific inflection of these, in the context of the contemporary debates on the dystopian colonization and evangelization project of Quirós:

La utopía de un orden social perfecto en que todos prosperan y disfrutan con templanza y alegría, sin opresión, sin violencia ni envidias, había sido colocada por ciertos navegantes con ambición apostólica en las "Indias", en nuevos mundos en el sentido lato. Góngora la traslada a una sociedad rural y marinera afincada en el territorio europeo, sociedad que puebla con su hospitalaria felicidad tres días de vagabundeos del peregrino de las *Soledades*. La verdadera riqueza se halla cerca, en un trabajo que es también goce, abundancia y regocijo. Para la Edad de Oro de una barbarie culta y de un candor político, figuras disonantes con papel decisivo en el poema, basta dejar que el pueblo de los campos y las riberas viva sin cargas, sin impuestos, sin misioneros y predicadores, en unas amenas soledades protegidas de toda intrusión. ...La forma poética y nebulosamente no localizada en que se nos presenta este ideal no impide que esté en armonía con la parte más original y más radical del pensamiento económico y político de estos años, tal como hallamos en un Pedro de Valencia. (405-406)

Mercedes Blanco has provided a stunning volume, opening new veins of ore for those of us who study Góngora to mine. She reads the *Soledades* under a more peaceful sign. In this regard the ramifications of her difference with Beverley play themselves out as a shift from a view of

constellation between early modern and late modern imperial decadence - one which resonates in the Latin American impasse of underdevelopment - to one of negotiation within the "Pax Hispanica" with its sites of contestation in the European monarchy - which resonates with the vexed ebullience of Spain within the European Union, - a counterposition in keeping with the difference between a Marxist and a loosely New Historicist approach.⁹

THE *SOLEDADES*, THE *PANEGÍRICO* AND BEVERLEY ON "STRATEGIC INCOMPLETION"

One of the most original and controversial contributions Beverley has made to the interpretation of the *Soledades* is his notion that the abrupt and inconclusive appearance of the final lines of the poem was an intended effect on Góngora's part (*Aspects* 105). In his view, Góngora's peculiar strategy is "not unlike Brecht's alienation effect" (*Essays* 52). By this Beverley means not literally that the workings of twentieth century aesthetics can be located in Góngora's Baroque poem, but rather that, in his words, "the effect of Góngora's truncation of the *Soledad segunda* is to alienate the reader from the poem, to force him to complete it somewhere else and in another language. ...The appeal beyond is to the kind of community Spain might become 'another day'" (*Aspects* 112-13). He describes a similar strategy in Góngora's cultivation of the *romance* "a sentimental *episode* broken away from the teleological design of a larger narrative pattern" (105). Thus he writes,

The beautiful *Angélica y Medoro*, for example, is an erotico-lyrical dilation of an "interruption" in the ongoing process of sectarian war depicted in Ariosto's epic: hence the recourse to the enigmatic or subjunctive ending of the traditional *romance lírico*: "el cielo os guarde, si puede / de las locuras del conde." This is a form of strategic incompleteness; Góngora knows the idyll will be destroyed, the epic process of conquest and domination will resume. But he wants to leave in his reader's mind the image of the idyll so that it can be posed against the experience of a world torn apart by class aggression and colonialism. (*Essays* 51)

Without the political inflection, this concept of an early modern alienation effect is formally not unrelated to Blanco's notion of Góngora's Homeric interpellation of his readers. Furthermore, Beverley argues that such "strategic incompleteness" is "characteristic throughout Góngora's literary production" (*Aspects* 105) and compares to a similar pattern, the "tricked identity of end and beginning" in Gracián's *Criticón* (106).

Andrés Sánchez Robayna takes up the notion of the ostensible incompleteness of the *Soledades* in a recent essay for Begoña López Bueno's collection. Sánchez Robayna argues that Góngora did not need to finish the poem and wanted the *Soledades* to remain as it was in the style of *non finito* common in Góngora's work as well as in classical and contemporary arts and letters, citing examples in Michelangelo, Sor Juana, Ariosto, Virgil, Ovid, Lucan and Claudian. While his examples are new and most valuable, his position, although this is not acknowledged, is quite close to Beverley's, as well as to that of Pedro Ruiz Pérez, who reads the poem as an open text within the poetics of Baroque space (241-42). It seems to me that he is making a case for incompleteness as an intended effect in a new addition to an ongoing debate.¹⁰

"Strategic incompleteness" is an issue as well for Góngora's *Panegírico al duque de Lerma* (1617), not studied extensively until the recent collection of essays: *El duque de Lerma: poder y literatura en el siglo de oro*, edited by Juan Matas Caballero, José María Micó and Jesús Ponce Cárdenas (see Dadson). This elegant volume, published by the CEEH, also contains many illustrations of European courtly visual culture of the period. The essays draw on a dissertation by José Manuel Martos Carrasco, a student of José María Micó, which is available online. Martos's dissertation, an edition of the poem with detailed annotations, is essential for new scholarship. It is my sincere hope that Martos will be able to publish this soon as a new critical edition, informed by the latest insights of the new collection of essays.

Mercedes Blanco wrote the lead essay for the collection and implicitly works "con y contra" Beverley (who only devotes a few paragraphs to the poem) in her thoughts on the reason behind the poem's incompleteness, suggesting something similar to Beverley's notion of a "highly unstable" "tension between subject and genre" (*Aspects* 105). For Blanco the poem is subjected to "tensiones violentas:" "Por un lado, la estética del modelo ... y del género;" "Por el lado opuesto, las circunstancias históricas y la naturaleza del reinado que excluyen o alejan el drama; y también las posibilidades de la octava, los hábitos estilísticos y la personalidad de Góngora... Estas tensiones y contradicciones frenan o paralizan el vuelo del poeta ... y son quizá el motivo interno que buscábamos por el cual el poema no llegó a terminarse" (Matas 48). The historico-political reasons, however, remain to be worked out.

As Beverley notes, in the *Panegírico* the biography of Lerma "breaks off suddenly, as if Góngora had lost interest in continuing it because of Lerma's sudden disgrace in 1618. The final section describes his negotiation of the Spanish-Dutch peace treaty of 1609. The last *octava* allegorizes the

deposition of arms..." (*Aspects* 105). Building on Jammes's position, Beverley remarks, "This last *octava* seems a rather calculated way to abandon the biography... A continuation is not possible because it would involve the necessity to depict the intervention of antagonistic circumstances and forces which do not correspond to the poet's ideal" (105). But why?

Martos seems to have a promising hypothesis, namely that Góngora intentionally stops the *Panegírico* in the chronology of the Duke's political accomplishments right after the truce with the Dutch but before the expulsion of the Moors, both of which occurred on the same day in 1609 (Carreira 108; Martos 24-26). J.H. Elliot suggests that the timing of the expulsion, a popular measure, was designed to mitigate the truce with the Dutch, an unpopular measure (301). Martos's suspicion that Góngora meant to critically signal the expulsion makes sense, as the expulsion of the *moriscos*, rather than their forced assimilation, was opposed by Góngora's mentor Pedro de Valencia, whose concerns for local agriculture, in which the Moors participated, are expressed obliquely in the *Soledades*.¹¹ Martos's thesis represents a very important contribution to Góngora studies. His hypothesis on the suspended ending, while contrary to the current critical consensus, implicitly builds support for Beverley's theory of strategic incompleteness as a characteristic of Góngora's *corpus*.

EROS AND ALTERITY

A final area of new work on Góngora is in the area of alterity, a focus I would loosely define as the partisan investigation of the marginal and silenced aspects of literature. In this group I would include those whose work draws on the theories of the Spanish Althusserian, Juan Carlos Rodríguez (Baena and Pueyo Zoco), those who work on the transatlantic dimension of Góngora in Latin American modernity (continuing Andrés Sánchez Robayna's pioneering trajectory), and a prolific circle of scholars who have taken up the erotic overtones in Góngora's work. While my own scholarship is too close to Julio Baena's recent book for me to offer an objective appraisal, I note that both Baena and Víctor Pueyo Zoco's work employ a polemical and experimental format which makes for thought-provoking reading. Pueyo Zoco, as a product of the Golden Age scholars Victoriano Roncero and Malcolm K. Read of the Stony Brook Department, employs a much needed synthesis of formal, sociopolitical and psychoanalytical critical traditions: Spanish, Continental and Anglo-American. His chapter on *arbitrismo* continues the work of Francisco Sánchez on the sociopolitical context of the picaresque, now applied to Góngora's poetry. He also offers a compelling, integrated view of Góngora's

mixture of high and low styles through an original application of Fredric Jameson's concept of the vanishing mediator. Finally, his expressed concern to address the intersection of libidinal relations and the relations of production places him in an ideal position for dialogue with recent work on the erotic and Góngora.

Joaquín Roses has addressed the theme of eroticism in two volumes of the *Góngora Hoy* series, on "Góngora y la mujer" and on "Góngora y lo prohibido: erotismo y escatología." Adrienne Martín has concentrated in this area, what she has termed "erotic philology," convening, with José Ignacio Díez Fernández, the participation of other scholars in forums which have led to a two-part *Venus venerada* collection, which includes essays on Góngora and the erotic by Emilie Bergmann and Ignacio Navarrete. My essay on violence and *eros* in the *Soledades* is also representative of this trend (Chemris 51-71).

"Erotic philology" is especially evident in studies of Góngora's *Polifemo*, a poem whose exegesis has been developed extensively by Jesús Ponce Cárdenas, who has edited the new Cátedra volume of the poem, informed by his book, *Cinco ensayos polifémicos*. Ponce Cárdenas develops his ideas on the erotic in the *Polifemo* (1612) in a new monograph, *El tapiz narrativo del Polifemo: eros y elipsis*, which addresses the notion of elipsis in the poem as a way of alluding to erotic encounter (see Plagnard).¹² Ponce's thesis resonates with Egido's, Gaylord's and my evocation of the impact of silence, "señas mudas," in Góngora's *corpus* (Gaylord, "Footprints;" Chemris 63-64). His work is otherwise strictly philological in its detailed tracing of sources, Classical, Italian and Neolatin, for Góngora's poetry, whether it be the *Polifemo*, or more recently, the *Panegírico*. However, "erotic philology" seems to be a point where scholars who work in literary criticism informed by theory and those who work in more traditional philology collaborate, on the whole, with a minimum of disciplinary friction.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Nadia Altschul and Bradley Nelson have written compellingly of the alienation between Peninsular and their own North American Hispanism. In their words,

The relatively direct access peninsular scholars enjoy with respect to archival resources, especially in fields such as medieval and Golden Age studies, should position Spanish philology to both support and critique the more theoretically-oriented work being done on this side of the Atlantic. This is decidedly not the case. While the traditional practice of extracting authorial intent through refined textual

editing methods and increased linguistic sophistication has reasserted its institutional and even national preeminence in Spain, in theory-oriented North American criticism philology has become somewhat of a foreign, even quaint, term. (55-56)

The current boom in Góngora studies suggests some evolution of this divide in the continuation of an impetus to cross-fertilization between different academies, which are not, in any case, as Altschul and Nelson are quick to point out, homogeneous formations. Mercedes Blanco's book is groundbreaking precisely because it begins to engage the sort of possibilities Altschul and Nelson envision, whatever her differences might be with Beverley, who has functioned as a symbol of theory-oriented critique in the discourse of the methodological debate. Indeed, new areas of research have been opened, and the Spanish academy in particular has generated an impressive array of new editions and materials. In pioneering projects in the digital humanities, it has also offered a glimpse into the prospects of open access to Gongorine manuscripts.

Open access, however, is a vexed ideal. The wealth of First World libraries, intellectual property rights and patterns of energy consumption are not available to Latin American scholars dependent upon Third World resources and technology and who remain underrepresented in the recent new wave of work. Yet Latin American intellectual wealth, its rich theoretical tradition, is vital to accessing the significance of Góngora's poetry, both within its own time and in its trajectory from the colonial period to the present. If recent contributions are any indication, there is indeed much potential for new constellations and paradigms of scholarship, which might integrate the best in textual definition and theoretical elegance. One can only hope for increased international collaboration and respect for diversity within international Hispanism at this time of the Góngora quadricentennial.

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NOTES

- 1 These include semiotics, structuralism, deconstructionism, reception and psychoanalytic theory, visual and material culture, Marxism and feminism. For a sense of the state of the field as of 2008, see Chemris xi-xii and *passim*, where the critics I have linked to this sea change include Sinicropi, Ly, Molho,

Beverley, Gaylord, Smith, Mc Vay, Ruiz Pérez, Saski, Bultman, Huergo, Bergmann, Cancelliere, Rivers, Padrón, Close, Dolan, Ball, Nelson, Gutiérrez and others. I also note the importance of fresh approaches in comparative Renaissance and Classical studies by Callejo, Collins and Mc Caw, as well as of the *Calíope* collection of essays on Góngora edited by Quintero, who in addition published a major study relating Góngora's poetry to his theatre. Please see the Works Cited in Chemris for bibliographical details for the critical studies mentioned above. It also bears noting that Read contributed an important psychoanalytic reading of the poem. I am currently Courtesy Assistant Professor of Spanish.

- 2 I thank Antonio Rojas Castro, of the "Todo Góngora" project, for pointing this out to me.
- 3 There is an important cluster of international dialogue on Góngora and visual culture in the interaction of Collins, Cancelliere, Poggi, Bonilla and Tanganelli, facilitated by Roses's forums.
- 4 Elsewhere Blanco is more polemical: "Cierta crítica americana que interpreta el poema como un síntoma de grandes convulsiones históricas, la pretendida descomposición del imperio hispánico y la crisis de la modernidad, cree al contrario que Góngora calculó este final truncado para producir un efecto de 'ruina,' siendo esta 'ruina' una metáfora del antiguo orden arruinado, orden teocrático e imperial [Here she references Beverley and those who reiterate his ideas 'en formas cada vez más extremosas en otros trabajos']. Esta interpretación además de basarse en las categorías de decadencia y de modernidad, tan confusas y recargadas de ideología que cabe dudar de que sean utilizables en un discurso racional, además de proyectarse sin mayores precauciones en un autor del pasado los prejuicios del presente, tiene el defecto de observar el poema de modo parcial y distraído y de exagerar caprichosamente la melancolía que se desprende de los objetos presentados..." ("La extrañeza sublime" 132-33 and n. 23). Similarly, in *Góngora heroico* Blanco cites Ricardo Padrón, whose contribution she admires, but complains that it is "lastrada de ideología" (346 n. 24). In this regard, I simply comment that Beverley's reference to the text as ruin is intended as a Benjaminian reflection, that Blanco's admonition against projecting from a modern textual reception is pre-Gadamerian, and that neither literature nor literary criticism can ever not be ideological. See Torres, *Love Poetry*, especially x-xi, and Moser for further discussion of the issues involved in the "historicized" reception of Baroque literature and its later appropriations.
- 5 Jameson allows for such potential compatibility in his book, *The Political Unconscious*. While he proposes "a rival hermeneutic" which explores "the multiple paths that lead to the unmasking of cultural artifacts as socially symbolic acts," he also argues that "the assertion of a political unconscious"

does this “not so much by repudiating” ... [the findings of other approaches] “as by arguing its ultimately philosophical and methodological priority over more specialized interpretive codes whose insights are strategically limited as much by their own situational origins as by the narrow or local ways in which they construct their objects of study” (20-21). Historians like Elliot and Domínguez Ortiz, the latter being cited by Blanco herself, are solidly *Annales* School historians, even when critical, who incorporated the anthropological turn to cultural history. Jameson’s approach was also very influenced by anthropology, based on applying Lévi-Strauss’s notion of socially symbolic acts to literature. In contrast, the other historians Blanco cites, Schaub and Feros/Gilabert, are clearly practitioners of diplomatic history, a completely different type of historiography which lends itself well to the mapping of the changing “points of contestation” such as is favored by the New Historicists. Blanco tries to reconstruct Góngora’s historical context and to match an example of his political occasional poetry (“Canción a la toma de Larache”) to contemporary diplomatic tensions. Beverley, on the other hand, following Jameson, tries to reveal historical class contradictions within the *Soledades* as a socially symbolic act. Thus, their emphasis on different types of historiography corresponds to differences in their interpretive regimes. It should also be noted that Nigel Griffin offers another recent meticulous and different reading of this poem, which, as he points out, has been studied at Oxford as part of a paper in historical linguistics for over half a century.

- 6 See for example, Cancelliere, “Las rutas;”; Roses, “Ara;” and Rivers, “Nuevo Mundo.”
- 7 These would include L.J. Woodward on Pedro de Valencia, as well as Lorna Close, Paul Julian Smith and Andrée Collard on the deconstruction of genre. I will also add that my analysis of erotic violence in the poem leans on detailed research in art history, based on feminist art historian Diane Wolfthal’s pioneering study of rape imagery (Chemris 51-71).
- 8 Here Blanco builds on the work of Rafael Bonilla Cerezo, who attempted to reconstruct Góngora’s library of books in a beautiful anthology for an exposition of rare books of Góngora’s time.
- 9 Here I am reminded of Alejandro Mejías López’s admonition that “recognizing Spain’s imperial past must come accompanied by the recognition of its own past subalternity in order to address meaningfully the ghost of empire, and devise more humble, solidary and egalitarian ways to think of itself, especially now that the economic winds are blowing in its favor” (26). Mejías López’s words are perhaps even more poignant in the context of the latest economic crisis.
- 10 See Chemris xii – xiii, n. 5 and n. 6.

- 11 As Woodward; Beverley, *Aspects* 7, 101; and Blanco, "Góngora y el humanista" have shown. Martos has referenced Elliot, as well as Jammes and Sánchez Robayna on Góngora's *tercetos* of 1609, and I suspect will develop an interpretation commensurate with all the work he has already invested in studying the *Panegírico*. It bears noting that there is an emerging body of scholarship in the US, in the wake of Iberian Studies and Barbara Fuch's work, on Góngora and the *morisco* question. See Irigoyen-García and Martínez Góngora.
- 12 The sociolinguist Lucia Binotti has taken this notion a step further in her controversial reading of the *Polifemo* as early modern pornography.

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