

TWO POETS FACE THEIR PORTRAITS: GÓNGORA AND SOR JUANA

The two poets whom I shall be considering as viewers of their own portraits have been objects of intense critical scrutiny in the century now ending. The impetus provided in 1927 by the tercentenary of Góngora's death has not abated since. The figure of Sor Juana was already being freshly examined by Karl Vossler and Dorothy Schons at about the same time, though only in our own day has critical interest reached a flood stage. It crested in 1995 with the tercentenary of her death and still shows no signs of receding.

My own concern with both poets has been principally stylistic and formal, a consequence—to confine myself to the present context—of the experience of translating some of the sonnets which rank among their signal achievements. Methodologically speaking, it should be said that the challenge posed by literary translation—both an art, if a minor one, and a critical exercise—can, ideally speaking, sensitize one to a poem's inner life, to the different levels on which it functions, to what, in short, makes it an organic entity. (Not that such an ideal can be attained in any given case, the present one being no exception.) The "life" of a poem is generated by the contention between the built-in lead of the language from which it is fashioned and the creative drive of the poet. Words, one discovers, invariably bring other words in their train, patterns and formal junctures do likewise. Upon such reverberations, as well as on tones of his own discovery or devising, a creative impulsion that is the poet's very own, operates. Language does not simply call "intertextually" to language. If poems are made of ... words, as Mallarmé famously said, it is the poet who, in the last analysis, is the arbiter of these. The ideal critic will be one who manages to let texts speak for themselves; not, evidently, to the neglect of inherited or contemporaneous resonances—semantic, imagistic, phonic, tonal or rhetorical—or of subsequent elucidation, but avoiding, as far as possible, coating them over with theoretical, ideological or methodological presuppositions.¹

¹ Treatments by three critics of one or another of the two portraiture sonnets I shall be focusing on—I am not aware of any joint treatment—have stimulated my own thinking. These critics, as subsequent references will clarify, are, in the case of Góngora, Maurice Molho, and in Sor Juana's case, Georgina Sabat de Rivers and Frederick Luciani. Less germane to my way of thinking have been the challenging essays by William Clamurro: "Sor Juana Reads her Portrait," *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, 20 (1986), 27-43; and Betty Suzuki: "Seizing the Gaze: the *Carpe diem* Topos in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's 'A su retrato'," *Calíope* 3 (1997), 5-17. Both of these studies regard Sor Juana less as an artist feeling her way than as a literary strategist plotting her every move. Suzuki, in particular, places her on one of the blunter cutting edges of late twentieth-century feminist ideology. Clamurro has greatly benefited, he notes, from the structuralist and semiotic analysis of "Este, que ves" effected by Pina

The natural starting-point for a discussion of poems occasioned by portraits of their authors would be an examination of the portraits in question. In the present case, however, neither portrait can be identified with any surviving one of either poet. In Sor Juana's case there are no clues as to what the portrait actually looked like and I shall refrain from making inferences based on the portraits we do have.² Nor does Sor Juana mention who the artist is. As for Góngora, he did presumably tell Chacón (who dates the sonnet 1620) that the artist in his case was Flemish, and in calling his brush "dos veces peregrino" (fine 2), he may be suggesting that he was a passing visitor to Madrid, not a resident of the Court city.³

Given this lack of firm data, the critic's attention, especially the literary critic's, will of necessity be drawn to the textual record. Here, as I hope to show, a confrontation of these two portraiture sonnets, in both of which viewer and subject coincide, should, despite a lapse of sixty or seventy years between their dates of composition, prove illuminating, allowing each to set off what is distinctive in the other.

It should be said at once that there is no basis for supposing that Sor Juana had Góngora's "Hurtas mi vulto" directly in mind in writing "Este, que ves, engaño colorido." On the other hand, at some point the now—and probably then—more famous "Mientras por competir con tu cabello," a sonnet written in 1582 when Góngora was barely twenty-one years old, evidently began to

Rosa Piras: "I simboli trasparenti di Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz in 'Este que ves, engaño colorido'," *Quaderni Ibero-americaeni*, 53-54 (1979), 171-182. Piras indeed anatomizes the sonnet rigorously with meticulous attention to detail. In the end, though, the crucial ring of vitality in it is completely silenced.

² This paper has greatly benefited from the kindness of Nina M. Scott in allowing me to consult her unpublished study: "Breaking the Mold: Images of Sor Juana in Colonial Portraiture of New Spain."

³ Text of the sonnet as given in the Chacón ms:

A vn Pintor Flam.co haziendo el retrato de dõde se copio el que va al Principio deste Libro
HVrtas mi vulto, i quanto mas le deue

A tu pincel dos veces peregrino,

De espiritu viuaz el breue lino

En las colores que sediento beue;

Vanas cenizas temo al lino breue;

Que emulo del barro le imagino,

A quien (ia ethereo fuese, ia diuino)

Vida le fiò muda esplendor leue.

Belga gentil, prosigue al hurto noble,

Que a su materia perdonarà el fuego

I el tiempo ignorara su contextura.

Los siglos que en sus ojas cuenta vn roble

Arbol los quenta sordo, tronco ciego,

Quien mas vee, quien mas oie, menos dura.

(*Sonetos*, ed. B. Cipliauskaité, Madison, Hispanic Seminary, 1981; p. 199).

resonate in her sensibility. Connecting Góngora's two compositions, written some forty years apart, is a common ground of temporal transience, but this ground is so differently built upon in the two compositions that one can hardly speak of a common theme. On the other hand, evanescence is evidently invoked thematically in Sor Juana's sonnet.

The most remarkable feature of Góngora's sonnet of 1620 is prefigured in the heading: it is addressed to the painter while the portrait is still in progress. The voice speaking is doing so in its capacity as sitter—in other words, as the essential second human component of the art of portraiture. One need not be an expert in the history of portraiture to realize that there can be few instances recorded, especially in literature, in which a sitting subject speaks to a portraitist engaged in brushwork.⁴

There were several ways of recording the portrait situation in verse. In the Anacreontic tradition, the painter is addressed prescriptively by an interested third party. A subject is given him, usually a person loved, and he is told in detail what aspects or features are to be brought out. Essentially we have here a topos for introducing literary portraiture, usually in an affective context. Quevedo's *Anacreón castellano* readily furnishes examples:

Retrata, diestro pintor,
retrátame, pintor diestro,
mi dueño ausente, del modo
que la dibujo en mis versos.⁵

Poems to portrait painters may also be encomiastic, in which case they may turn into rhetorical exercises on themes like the painter as bestower of immortality and perpetuator of fame, as witness to history, and, in the Renaissance, as the recorder of individual character. In Sor Juana's famous literary portraits of her patronesses, particularly noticeable is her presentation of herself as both instigator and executor of the literary portraiture.⁶

Occasionally in the seventeenth century the spinning of elaborate conceits takes a truly pictorial turn, as when Lope presents Nature dozing in a field, with

⁴ In modern Hispanic letters one finds an analogous situation, though involving chisel rather than paintbrush, in Antonio Machado's memorable lines "Al escultor Emiliano Barral."—On portraiture a useful brief conspectus is W.J. Friedländer, *Landscape. Portrait. Still Life. Their Origins and Development*, New York, Philosophical Library, n. d. The definitive work of John Pope-Hennessy (*The Portrait in the Renaissance*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1979) takes in El Greco but stops short of Velázquez.

⁵ Francisco de Quevedo, *Obras completas*, ed. Felicidad Buendía, 2v., Madrid, Aguilar, 1960; I, 757a.

⁶ Georgina Sabat de Rivers has clarified the particular position that Sor Juana's "Este, que ves" occupies within the long Western tradition of literary portraiture: "Sor Juana: la tradición clásica del retrato poético," in her *Estudios de literatura hispanoamericana*, Barcelona, PPU, 1992; pp. 207-223. An earlier study, "Sor Juana y sus retratos poéticos," recently reproduced in her *En busca de Sor Juana*, (Mexico City, UNAM, 1998; pp. 59-78), focuses on the range and variety of literary portraiture in Sor Juana's work.

the colors dripping from her brushes tinting the field flowers. Rubens steals the brushes to paint the King's portrait. Seeing the result, Nature can only exclaim: "Doy por bien hurtados mis pinceles." Awareness of painting as process and not merely as product is evident here.⁷

Maurice Molho, in a perceptive consideration of "Hurtas mi vulto," catches well the mood of the poem.⁸ He sees Góngora becoming lost in thought as he quietly watches the painter applying his brush to the "thirsty" canvas. The organic overtones of the latter strikingly chosen non-epithetic adjective, one might add, bring to a culmination the vitalizing process that has been gathering force throughout the first quatrain. No actual colors are specified, yet the avidity with which the canvas soaks up the paint makes the unseen colors almost physically present. Though of necessity at one remove—a verbal one—from a pictorial depiction, Góngora manages to bring the reader close to his persona in the poem, drawing him thus into the situation of the text, as his early baroque contemporaries, Caravaggio and Ribera were doing by telescoping the space between onlooker and canvas.

The *espíritu vivaz* being stolen by the painter may well refer to the *spiritus vitalis* which the *Autoridades* Dictionary, s.v. *vivacidad*, tells us the phrase translates. In the present non-erotic context the phrase strongly suggests something on the order of a life-force. For a moment Góngora seems to be entertaining the notion that the pictorial artist who creates a likeness is a "thief" of the vitality of his subject. He must have quickly seen that such egregious magic had no place in what is in effect a quiet conversation with a fellow artist. In the second quatrain he quickly reverts to a level of intimate intercourse between two creators who communicate across the boundaries of their respective media.⁹

The first person that re-enters in the fifth line of the sonnet is now less assertive than before, more inwardly oriented. While I would agree with Molho that line 6 ("que emulo del barro le imagino") evokes Biblical Creation, the line strikes me as parenthetical. The antecedent of *quien* (line 7) thus remains the "lino breue" which had moved into prominence at the end of the first quatrain. This reading is borne out by the qualifier of *vida* in line 8; *muda* can

⁷ The poem is briefly discussed in my *Experience and Artistic Expression in Lope de Vega. The Making of La Dorotea*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1974; p. 482.

⁸ "Sur un sonnet à un peintre," *Europe* 55 (1977); pp. 79-81. (Spanish version in his *Semántica y poesía*, Barcelona, Editorial crítica, 1977; pp. 83-85.)

⁹ With some trepidation I would revise the punctuation of lines 5 and 6 as given in the Chacón ms. to make them read: "Vanas cenizas temo al lino breue, /que emulo del barro le imagino;". I would also remove the first comma in line 1, and replace the semicolon of line 4 by a period. The basis of this revision is the following reading of the first quatrain of the sonnet: "You are stealing my countenance and everything else in the way of vital force that the thirsty canvas owes to your doubly strange [sc. foreign and extraordinary] brush." "Cuanto mas" suggests that the painting is a half-length portrait like the famous one of Góngora done by Velázquez the following year (1621).

hardly apply to the Adam of Genesis 2, who quickly proceeds to bestow names on all the creatures brought before him. On the other hand, the concept of *vida muda* accords well with the commonplace then current that equated painting with mute poetry.¹⁰

In this reading the agent of creation is still the *esplendor leve* of line 8. The reference to light, particularly apposite on an occasion of pictorial creation, essentializes the earlier reference to *colores* and, syntactically speaking, releases the tension set up by the pre-positioning of the qualifiers *ethereo* and *diaino* (line 7). While the disjunctive *either-or* (*ia ... ia*) construction leaves unformulated a final degree of correlation, one is tempted to read human agency into the former adjective and divine into the latter. Given Góngora's fundamentally secular cast of mind, one might even see here a survival of a Renaissance conception of the artist as demiurge.

The first tercet reverts to the gently playful tone of the opening and adds an indulgently ironical note. It is reassuring to find the *hurto* now qualified as *noble* but the speaker clearly does not believe in the reassurances he voices in lines 10 and 11.¹¹ He knows better: fire spares nothing, time undoes even what is most tightly woven.

The substantive *contextura* at the end of line 11 marks a shift of focus from the pictorial medium hitherto foregrounded to the verbal one that has surely been an unexpressed referent from the outset. The suggestion of verbliness recurs in the disemic *ojas* of line 12. But Góngora moves on: the last tercet, while still carrying a markedly personal subtext, quickly rises to a plane of quiet stoical utterance, transcending both pictorial and verbal artists. Man is privileged in the broad scope, creative and receptive, of the two highest of Nature's "animal" senses. (Góngora may have the traditional Platonic-Aristotelian hierarchy of the senses in mind.) Members of the vegetable kingdom, in contrast, however long-lived, are simply mute and blind. Still, in the end, both Art and Nature fall victim to temporality. As rarely occurs in the sonnets of Góngora's final years, pathos is here almost entirely forgone, admonition or protest likewise. The sonnet ends on a note of almost professional secrecy, of distress, human enough to be sure, yet capable of being fully plumbed only by a fellow creator.

¹⁰ On painting as mute poetry (and poetry as speaking painting), see Jean Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts. The Tradition of literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray*, Chicago, University of Chicago, 1987 (orig. ed. 1958); p. 10 and *passim*. Compare the second quatrain of Góngora's sonnet of 1621 to the Count of Villamediana: "Quanto en tu camarín pincel valiente / Bien sea natural, bien extranjero / Afecta mudo voces, y parlero / Silencio en sus vocales tintas miente!" (ed. Cipliauskaité; p. 207).

¹¹ The adjective *noble* (which creates an oxymoron) may have been chosen deliberately by Góngora to indicate solidarity with the painters (including El Greco) who had been contending, against local and royal tax collectors, that painting, being a liberal, not a mechanical art, an activity of the mind, not the hand, was not subject to taxation. Julián Gállego studies the controversy in depth in: *El pintor de artesano a artista*, Granada, Universidad de Granada, 1976.

With Góngora both chronology and a certain weariness in the tone of "Hurtas mi vulto" point to composition near his sixtieth birthday. In the case of Sor Juana's sonnet on her portrait such critical guidelines are lacking.¹² We have only a *terminus ad quem* of 1689, the publication date of *Inundación castálida*. In the likely case that the sonnet predates that year, there is no way of pinning down its composition. The references in the second quatrain to "de los años los horrores" and other signs of advancing age are of little help. It is difficult to gage to what second person, if any, they are addressed, in what tone spoken, or whether they refer to a present or anticipate a future. Indeed, they raise the truly basic question: just how *is* Sor Juana reading her portrait?

One obvious, though not very enlightening answer, would be: differently, surely, from the author of the heading to the sonnet. (Let us call him the editor.)¹³ From 1689 on, the heading reads: "Procura desmentir los elogios, que a vn Retrato de la Poetisa inscribió la verdad, que llama passion." (She attempts to prove unfounded the encomiums written into a Portrait of the Poetess by truth, which she calls partiality.) The editor is asserting that, contrary to what the text declares, the beauty of the figure portrayed truly reproduces that of the live original. Sor Juana's text states the opposite: that the portrait is a piece of deception in color (*engaño colorido*). On one thing the two readings agree: that the subject, Sor Juana, is depicted as beautiful. Since it is unlikely that the editor in Madrid ever saw the portrait, which one may presume to have been painted from the life in Mexico, his testimony may be purely conventional.

¹² On its original publication (*Inundación castálida*, Madrid, Juan García, 1689; p. 3) the sonnet reads as follows: Procura desmentir los elogios que a vn Retrato de la Poetisa inscribió la verdad, que llama passion

Este, que ves, engaño colorido,
que del arte ostentando los primores,
con falsos sylogismos de colores
es cauteloso engaño del sentido:
Este, en quien la lisonja ha pretendido
escusar de los años los horrores,
y, venciendo del tiempo los rigores,
triunfar de la vejez, y del olvido:
Es vn vano artificio del cuidado;
es vna flor al viento delicada;
es vn resguardo inutil para el Hado;
Es vna necia diligencia errada;
es vn afan caduco; y bien mirado,
es cadaver, es polvo, es sombra es nada.

¹³ Like Frederick Luciani ("Sor Juana: epígrafe, epíteto, epígono," *Revista Iberoamericana* 51 (1985); p. 780), I would follow Octavio Paz in seeing the Spanish Jesuit Diego Calleja as the most likely editor of *Inundación castálida*. I do not follow their reading of *passion* as "algo que passa," something ephemeral. The editor's use of the word conforms to the fourth entry s.v. *passión* in the *Autoridades* dictionary: "excesiva inclinación de una persona a otra por interés o motivo particular." An example s.v. *apassionado* makes the sense ('partiality') clear: "Es apassionado de San Juan Chrysostomo."

Even assuming composition of the sonnet when Sor Juana was in her late thirties—the latest possible period of composition—and taking into account that in the seventeenth century old age was seen as arriving sooner than now, it is difficult to take Sor Juana's ostensible reading at face value. In any case, the editor, whatever the source of his statement, does not do so, as has been seen. Where editor and subject part company is in the attitude each assumes toward the beauty depicted. Sor Juana's tone is denunciatory; the sonnet comes close to being an exercise in rhetorical *vituperatio*. What exactly is its target? Certainly not the painter: he is never even alluded to by Sor Juana, nor by the editor. It would be closer to the mark to see the painting itself as target. The initial deictic points it out to a beholder-fleetingly addressed here only, as witness—and the focus never strays from the portrait. It is only sharpened by the anaphoric *Este* at the beginning of the second quatrain. The sonnet in fact falls, *mutatis mutandis*, into a category once called by Lope "definiciones": the series of bald metaphorical statements used by him to categorize human emotions—his own especially.

The definitions begin with the *engaño colorido* which closes the hyperbaton of the opening line. Indeed, so anxious is Sor Juana to proceed with defining that she violates both logic, by defining a thing in terms of itself—an *engaño* is an *engaño* (line 4)—and rhetorical prescription, by repeating herself non-periphrastically. It is in details such as this that a tone of voice peculiarly her own in its impatience first comes through in the sonnet. After the parenthesis of the second quatrain, which deviates to denounce flattery, the definitions come back in force in the sonnet's sestet and accumulate at an increasing pace down to the very last word. They are underscored by the concentrated anaphora and the reiteration (in the last line) of the telltale *es*.

Is the painting, as such, anything beside a target in this sonnet of Sor Juana? The answer is no. Despite the fingerpointing we have no awareness of its physical presence, let alone its materiality. Color is twice mentioned. In line 1 the non-specific *colorido*, applied to the non-material *engaño*, comes close to being an abstraction. Nor do we feel any pigmentation in the syllogistic *colores* two lines later. The very opening, "Este, que ves," is purely conventional, adapted (along with the evanescent second person) from epigrammatic tradition—from inscriptional poetry.¹⁴ Adjectives and nouns lack concrete objective referents. Even the "flor al viento delicada" of the tenth line is de-materialized by the colorlessness of the epithet, while the abstractness of the *engaño* of line 4 is enhanced by its epithetic modifier, *cauteloso*.¹⁵

¹⁴ Compare two sonnets on the death of the Duke of Veragua (*Obras selectas*, ed. Georgina Sabat-Rivers, Barcelona, Noguer, 1976; 651-652) which open, respectively "Ves, caminante" and "Detén el paso, caminante. Advierte". In them the inscriptional convention is used with greater propriety, although it is still a third-person voice, not that of the entombed, that is speaking.

¹⁵ The only distinctively attributive modifier in the poem is *inutil* in line 11. It stands out forcefully by

As she writes, Sor Juana must have a particular painting of herself before her mind's eye not before the corporeal one, certainly; or, if so, she can hardly be said to be looking at it. She has no interest in the portrait's particularity. As Nina M. Scott has observed, the recording of individual character was not a goal sought by clerical subjects of seventeenth-century colonial portraiture. The real object of Sor Juana's censure is what the nun sums up, after pausing to catch her breath, in the hingeing phrase "vano artificio" of the crucial ninth line: it is the art of painting itself. But just how are we meant to take this condemnation? Is it heartfelt? Is it a performance in the oratorical manner of the High Baroque? For whose benefit is it written? If for her own, is she speaking self-interestedly, i.e., so as to be overheard by her ecclesiastical superiors, who could hardly have found fault—quite the opposite—with the sentiments she voices? Or is this essentially an exercise in erudition, the recital of a lesson stemming ultimately from Plato's censure of the pictorial arts as pure simulacra, imitations of mere phenomena that ignore the reality of the noumenal?

Some of these possibilities can be quickly eliminated. There is nothing here of the *cri de coeur* so movingly uttered in other sonnets. Nor is this a pro forma recital, although in the dynamics of the sonnet there may well be a Platonic overtone insofar as it constitutes a confrontation of a simulacrum.¹⁶ What the sonnet patently suggests is the conceptual system of medieval scholasticism, phrased here in highly Baroque fashion, with gathering urgency and unmediated emphasis. Sor Juana's tone falls just short of stridency; it could hardly be farther from the *sotto voce* of Góngora's sonnet to his Flemish fellow-artist. It echoes the theatricality of baroque homiletics, without, however, ceasing to strike one as peculiarly her own in its strong emotional timbre and relentless acceleration of pace.

We verge here on an answer to the question left pending: is this a pure performance? The sonnet is spectacularly staged: it practically invites declamation from a pulpit with appropriate gestural accompaniment.¹⁷ Does its coherence of tone then reflect an unequivocal rejection of this portrait, of all portraiture, of visual art itself? Could it even presage Sor Juana's coming renunciation of literary art?

contrast with the others. —For another perspective on the use of "flor", see Frederick Luciani, "Anamorphosis in a Sonnet of Sor Juana," *Discurso literario* 5 (1988): p. 430.

¹⁶ Such a reading of the sonnet, together with echoes of Aristotelian poetics, is suggested by Georgina Sabat de Rivers, *Estudios*; pp. 209-210. Her study also takes note (pp. 213-214) of the Anacreontic strain in the tradition of literary portraiture.

¹⁷ The placing of the sonnet at the beginning of *Inundación castálida* (preceded only by the dedicatory sonnet to the Countess of Paredes) suggests that an exemplary function may have been assigned to it by Sor Juana, her editor or her patroness. In this case it would have served as an irreproachable cover for some of the less conventional poems in the nun's collection.

I think not. I find a clue in the plurivocality of the phrase “bien mirado” just before the whirlwind of the last line. In context the phrase certainly means “rightly considered,” i.e., considered eschatologically, in the light of human transience and the permanence of things heavenly. But the phrase has a peculiarly colloquial ring which sets it apart from the diction of the rest of the sonnet. Colloquially it is a summing-up; it means something like “all in all.” The difference in semantic shading is not great, yet the very colloquiality brings one closer to what might be called the “non-official” Sor Juana.

Moreover, the phrase has a third meaning, closer to its literal sense: in paraphrase, “looked at as an artist would look at it,” that is, as a work of art.¹⁸ Though this sense is manifestly not dominant, we can at least deduce from another sonnet of Sor Juana that she could and did view painting esthetically. The composition carrying the title “A una Pintura de Nuestra Señora, de muy excelente pincel” begins with the quatrain:

Si un pincel, aunque grande, al fin humano
pudo hacer tan bellísima Pintura,
que aun vista perspicaz en vano apura
tus luces—o admirada, si no en vano—¹⁹

The stress is on penetrating scrutiny by a viewer and on the prominence of lighting in the composition. In line 4 the word “luces” implies chromatic values as well.²⁰

Consciously or not, Sor Juana has slipped into the sonnet the hint of an attitude considerably at odds with the fundamental premise of “Este, que ves.” It is safe to infer, I think, that the ascetically based rejection of visual art expressed in the sonnet corresponds to only one strand of a more complex attitude toward painting. While there is indisputable theatricality in the attitude assumed, it needs to be remembered that the borderline between “sincerity”—genuineness—and play-acting is never a very distinct one. Could Sor Juana herself have said to what extent she was striking a pose? Hardly. The question would probably not even have arisen in a seventeenth-century examination of conscience. As a literary artist to whom the High Baroque style had become second nature, however, Sor Juana felt a rhetorical need to maintain the vehemence of her utterance, postponing any relaxation of tension until the fourteen lines came to a dead stop.

¹⁸ For another reading of *bien mirado* see Luciani, “Anamorphosis,” *loc. cit.* Luciani has discerned the increase in perceptivity conveyed by the shift from “ves” (line 1) to “bien mirado (line 13), a shift as significant for his reading of the sonnet as it is for mine.

¹⁹ *Obras selectas*; p. 661.

²⁰ The luminosity that subsequently pervades the sestet of the sonnet will reinforce the “luces” of line 4, though no longer in primarily pictorial terms. The rest of the sonnet develops the Christian topos of God as Artifex—in this case as Supreme Artist.

At some point Góngora's technique of closure in "Mientras por competir" must have come into the nun's mind: the shortening of rhetorical members to support in a non-mediated way what the words were conveying imagistically.²¹ But whereas Góngora's words lose their urgency and simply fade out in the last line, Sor Juana's come to an abrupt halt before silence almost palpable. In Sor Juana's last line there is no relaxation of homiletic solemnity because, unlike Góngora, she continues to hammer away with the relentless anaphoric *es*. She is still making pronouncements, one after another; she is not, like Góngora, letting the words speak for themselves as they run down.

In mood both "Mientras por competir" and "Este que ves" reflect a peculiarly Baroque awareness of what might be called creeping temporality. But between the two sonnets lies the gulf that separates *carpe diem* from *vitam impendere aeterno*. The twenty-one-year-old Góngora can still hear in 1582 the distant siren song of the Renaissance. If Sor Juana can perceive an echo of it carrying across time and space, she is certainly not letting anyone know.

To return now to the late sonnet of Góngora with which we began. Its intense humanity stands out sharply in contrast to the subduing of the personal in Sor Juana's stance. This humanity is based on the speaker's awareness of sharing a strong bent toward artistic creativeness with the painter, on Góngora's evident fascination with the visual in art as in nature, and on an old man's wistfulness as he watches everything alluring slip from his grasp. Such humanity lifts Góngora's sonnet out of the Renaissance-Baroque borderland where it originates and lets it speak enduringly to human experience.

Sor Juana's sonnet, on the other hand, has its origin in a Christian asceticism that goes back at least as far as Isidore of Seville, who writes in one of the *Etymologiarum Libri*: "*Pictura is almost pronounced fictura*. For it is a

²¹ The sonnet as given by Chacón:

Mientras por competir con tu cabello
 Oro bruñido al Sol relumbra en vano,
 Mientras con menosprecio en medio el llano
 Mira tu blanca frente el lilio bello,
 Mientras a cada labio por cogerlo
 Siguen mas ojos que al clavel temprano,
 I mientras triumpho con desden loçano
 De el luciente crystal tu gentil cuello,
 Goça cuello, cabello, labio, i frente,
 Antes que lo que fue en tu edad dorada
 Oro, lilio, clavel, crystal luciente,
 No solo en plata o viola troncada
 Se vuelva, mas tu y ello juntamente
 En tierra, en humo, en poluo, en sombra, en nada.

(ed. Cipliauskaité; p. 439).

feigned representation, not the truth. Hence it is also counterfeited, that is, it is smeared over with a fabricated color and possesses nothing of credibility or truth."²² Fortunately it seems clear, three hundred years after Sor Juana's death, that the sonnet "Este, que ves" was not her last word on the art of painting.

DE LUIS ALFONSO ARANGO

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Quetzonahuatlán, "el árbol de savia blanca", de donde viene
Quetzonahuatlán, es una palabra indígena, como lo son
los elementos simbólicos que definen la identidad cultural del
mexicano. Y es que "A Quetzonahuatlán la corona dice con las
lindes en las llanuras y en los bosques, en las montañas, y la
voz en los campos".¹
Por muchos siglos se nos olvidó que Quetzonahuatlán es un
país de origen. Se nos olvidó que en el mundo precolombino
ya existía esta palabra. vivió y se desarrolló en su propia
cultura y sociedad. Los siglos de la conquista y de la
vida de sus habitantes, manifestada por la "Historia de
—donde Rigoberta Alcázar— se funda en una
cultura, es una concepción de vida, un
mundo que nada —ni siquiera los eventos
de interrupción, ignorar el valioso legado
del pueblo y sus expresiones culturales. Ya el
mundo que "el indio ha sobrevivido a todos
los siglos de la destrucción ahora que la
historia lo devuelve al punto en que,
para pararse a Norman O. Brown, es
una posibilidad factible".² Y, al igual que
el futuro está en la tolerancia y el
respeto a las culturas, y no en el rechazo o la

Aunque todavía no se ha estudiado de manera profunda y sistemática, se
ve una fuerte influencia indígena en el arte prehispánico en general, y en
la escultura, arquitectura y literatura. Puesto que la literatura prehispánica
se caracteriza por una profunda relación con la realidad histórica y social del

¹ "Historia del Arte del Quetzonahuatlán", por Efraim Carrasco, *Historia del Arte del Quetzonahuatlán*, Universidad de Guadalajara, Jalisco, Editorial José de Jesús Mota, 1980, p. 10.

² "La Cultura y Arte del Quetzonahuatlán", por Efraim Carrasco, *Historia del Arte del Quetzonahuatlán*, Universidad de Guadalajara, Jalisco, Editorial José de Jesús Mota, 1980, p. 10.

³ "Historia del Arte del Quetzonahuatlán", por Efraim Carrasco, *Historia del Arte del Quetzonahuatlán*, Universidad de Guadalajara, Jalisco, Editorial José de Jesús Mota, 1980, p. 10.

²² As quoted by Hagstrum; p. 38.