THE REVELATION OF COMPLETENESS AND THE COMPLETION OF REVELATION: JUAN BAUTISTA AGUILAR'S *ROMANCE* "A LA VIRGEN SANTISSIMA"

Because of the multiplicity and diversity of its manifestations in Spanish Golden Age literature, the ancient topos of the person as book, especially as it appears in writings of a religious or moral-philosophical nature, merits the attention not only of specialists in this period of Spanish literature and culture but also of comparatists interested in national transformations of literary motifs. While sometimes linked explicitly to the topos of the book of nature, the metaphor of the person as book took on a life of its own, giving birth to a galaxy of motifs related to technological, sociological, psychological, theological, aesthetic, and other aspects of the creation, production, and use of books.

These motifs form what might be called minor or major constellations or shifting configurations in their application to a number of popular referents. It seems to be only in the seventeenth century that one finds extended development of the person-as-book metaphor such that it no longer serves simply as rhetorical ornament but becomes the explicit structural framework for an entire poem or sermon devoted to a particular referent. My own investigations indicate that besides Christ, the most frequent referent of the metaphor in religious writing is the Virgin Mary.

In this article I propose one way of reading a single poem to Mary, written by the Trinitarian friar Juan Bautista Aguilar (1655-1714?), the **romance** "A la Virgen Santissima, creyéndola cabal perfectissimo Libro", which appeared in *Varias hermosas flores del Parnaso*, published in Valencia in 1680. According to Francisco Martí Grajales, Aguilar was "uno de los poetas más fecundos que florecieron en la segunda mitad del siglo XVII" (Martí Grajales 28). I have chosen to focus on this poem because while on the one hand it synthesizes numerous motifs that are representative of the person-as-book topos in religious writing of the period, on the other hand it is quite original in its structuring of these motifs and therefore in its final statement. This **romance** reflects on the microcosmic level, what I see as an evolution of the baroque sensibility. José Antonio Maravall describes the baroque as marked by a taste for the incomplete, an incompletion that in artistic works serves as the means for leading to the public's active intervention (Maravall 218). I believe Aguilar's **romance** plays with the antithesis completion-incompletion in such a way as to make it impossible to say that either pole definitively subsumes the other.

Close analysis shows that the poem is composed of two main parts that are

slightly off-center and that are, rather than mirror images of each other, virtually independent entities that are nevertheless closely interrelated in a complex way. José Simón Díaz reproduces the text as follows:

Celestial, sabia Maria,
Libro, en que estudioso leo,
a la enseñança, cuydados,
a la perfeccion, desvelos.
Libro docto, libro raro;
que en vos solamente es cierto,
Libro soys en tiempo escrito,
y enquadernado ab eterno.
Dios es vuestro Autor, y puso
tan cuydado al componeros,
que en gloria vuestra, ni un nombre
os sobra, ni os falta un Verbo.
El Titulo os dio de Madre,
y esto Madre Reyna, a tiempo
que vos el titulo os diste
de esclava, pero sin yerros.
Tres Personas os apruevan,
en docto aplauso escriviendo
azia vuestra Gracia glorias,
al lograros Privilegios.
A un Rey estais dedicado,
Alto honor logrando en ello;
pues luego que impresso fuistes
a raras glorias impresso.
En vuestra Concepcion pura,
blancas hojas miro, y veo
en abismos de candores,
sin Letras, muchos conceptos.
Negras lineas, que me dizen
sacros discursos diversos,
son del Espiritu Santo
luzes, que sombra os hizieron.
Admiraciones no os faltan,
que en vos no pocas adverto
pusieron Angeles, quando
toda esplendor os leyeron.
Puntos, los que en vuestra vida
señaló veloz en tiempo
serán, más ¡ó con que gracia
teneys el punto primero!
Solo Tassa no os señalan,
porque el que llega a quereros,
no pone en precio cuydados,
ponelos si en el aprecio.
Erratas, no las teneis
y es que el Sabio Impressor vuestro

del Original os saca,
sin Erratas, todo aciertos.
Siendo Libro, será en vos
Tabla, ser del bien Compendio;
Fin, vuestra Coronacion
y Principio el Nacimiento.
Libro pues, leeros quiso
Moyses viendo en monte excelso,
Zarza que devió verdores
como otra al agua, ella al fuego.
Zarza soys, tambien soy Zarza,
mas con bien contrario efeto,
que para mi lo que humo,
fue para vos lucimiento.
Noe os leyó, que de Dios
executando preceptos,
en una Arca deva alivios
a Diluvios de los vientos.
Arca soys, y el Mundo en males,
es diluvio en que me anego,
en tormentas del Diluvio,
hallo en vos, Arca, consuelos.
Adan os leyó gozoso,
en aquel que admiro Huerto,
con siglos de Primavera
y sin instantes de Invierno.
Esse soys, que soys Senora,
florido Iardin ameno,
jamás abierto a la culpa,
y a la gracia siempre abierto.
Sabio os leyó Salomón,
en el que dispuso Templo,
no segundo en la riqueza,
si en el primor el primero.
Templo soys: y aun Sacrificio
que Ara consagrada, es Pecho;
Coraçon, Victima, y llamas
de otro amor los incendios.
Iacob os leyó, al mirar
en bien dormidos desvelos,
fijas glorias, que no siempre
han de ser las dichas, sueño.
Esa Escala que vió, soys,
que en el Cielo, y Tierra, estremos
firmes tiene, porque yo
suba de la Tierra al Cielo.
El Evangelista, Libro
os leyó; y es claro esto
que con siete Sellos, Iuan,
de que soys Libro, echo el sello.

Libro soys, tambien soy Libro,
hazer borrando imperfetos
Capitulos: Libro ocupe
la Librería del Cielo. (Simón Díaz 169-72)

Two elements in the epigraph are central to my reading of the poem. The first is the verb "creyendo," which suggests a confession of faith that is ongoing and occurring now. The second is the adjective pair "cabal perfectissimo," with its denotation of completeness and integrity. I hope to show how Aguilar's unique structuring of a number of typical book-related motifs proclaims Mary as the fully perfect human medium for God's message of salvation, and at the same time strongly implies that the divine revelation embodied in her is in constant process of being realized.

In the first stanza the poet addresses Mary in terms that highlight her role as source of heavenly wisdom and indirectly compare her to the Wisdom Books of Sacred Scripture. The use of the present imperfect form of the verb in verse 2 leaves the perspective ambiguous. Is the poet reading at this moment, or is he rather reflecting on a habitual action? In either case his attitude is that of the devoted disciple. This book is a study in Christian perfection; its teachings demand both an intellectual effort and a moral response of the reader.

Verse 5 conjoins the qualities of learnedness and rarity, "docto" being a synonym of "sabia," "raro" implying preciousness or great value as well as denoting uniqueness. Verses 7-8 explain this uniqueness in paradoxical terms. On the level of concrete experience, how can a book be bound before it is written, let alone from all eternity; how can the whole exist before the parts? And on the spiritual level, would it not have been more appropriate to say that Mary as book was "escrito ab eterno" (in God's mind) and "enquadernado (enfleshed) en tiempo?" Further reflection produces two complementary interpretations. Whereas the bound book is a global image, writing is a temporal activity that implies discreetness. "Enquadernado" suggests the idea of parts being bound together, the book being made whole and integral, a possible allusion to Mary's sinlessness or complete integrity, in accord with God's eternal plan for her. If sin involves division within the self, Mary always "had it all together." "Enquadernado" might also refer to the fact that God's eternal plan for Mary encompassed his foreknowing that her life and person would be wholly bound or dedicated to him. "Escrito," then, would signify her physical existence, her living out the eternal script freely in time. The use of the present tense "soys" in connection with the passive participle "escrito," but separated from it by a prepositional phrase, suggests an elliptical reference to past time ("Libro soys [que fuisteis] en tiempo escrito") and simultaneously allows the reader to perceive the book as being written now.

Line 9 makes explicit what has already been clearly implied in the previous verse. Although God is the author of all human books, he is so in a very special way in Mary's regard. The verb "componer" in line 10 almost certainly refers, on the

literal level, to the creative act of writing; lines 11-12, to the author's style, in which the proportion between nouns and verbs is perfect. The wordplay on "Verbo," underscored by the antithesis "nombre .... Verbo," is readily comprehensible: written into the script to be realized by Mary is the divine Word's becoming flesh in her. The metaphorical significance of "nombre" becomes more explicit in verses 13-14. God gave to the book Mary a title or name that makes any other superfluous, when he named her Mother of the Word. By that very fact he simultaneously bestowed on her the title of Queen of heaven and earth. The antithesis of these lines that is contained in verses 15-16 emphasizes the notion that Mary's exaltation was in inverse relation to her profound humility. The title of "esclava" echoes Luke 1.38, wherein Mary, in response to Gabriel's message, calls herself "ancilla Domini."[1] The pun on "yerros," a common one in religious verse of the period, is here trivalent, involving the usual play on the idea of sin and the image of the irons worn by a slave, but also evoking that of the chains which sometimes secured a book to its lectern.

Verse 17 introduces the motif of the book's examiners or censors, who in Aguilar's time were designated by the Royal Council (Amezúa y Mayo 335) and in this case are the Trinity itself of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The poet seems to be following an order based on the physical disposition of a book's components, beginning with the cover or binding, proceeding to the title page, which would include the author's name, and then to the **Aprobación**.[2] Lines 18-19 describe the enthusiastic encomium emanating from these infinitely wise and knowledgeable censors. Although a censor was supposed to refrain from eulogies, limiting himself to a discreet observation of the work's merits, in fact this rule was not always adhered to. If, indeed, "a veces la personalidad del autor transformaba por si sola la Aprobación en Elogio" (Simón Díaz 101), this would surely be the supreme occasion.

The "glorias" of line 19 probably allude, on one level, to the censors' praise itself and to their predictions of the book's future renown due to its excellences or "Gracia"; on another level, to the glory that would be Mary's, both eternally in heaven and for all time in the minds of Christians, because of the special grace bestowed on her by God. The word play on **privilegio** in line 20, a term that often referred to "la Licencia Real para una sola impresión" (Simón Díaz 89), intimates that one specific meaning of this "Gracia" is the privilege to which there has been more veiled allusion in earlier verses, one granted to no other human creature, that is, Mary's complete freedom from sin, including the original sin inherited from Adam, or in terms traditional to Roman Catholicism, her fullness of sanctifying

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1 Biblical quotations are taken from the *Biblia Sacra*. The *Diccionario de autoridades* defines "ancila" as "Lo mismo que Esclava, o sierva" (Real Academia).

2 The arrangement of the parts of a printed book in Golden Age Spain could vary quite a bit. However, the **Dedicatoria**, **Privilegio**, and **Aprobación** or **aprobaciones** would be found together (Simón Díaz 33, 88).

grace from the first instant of her conception.[3] The "al" that introduces line 20 denotes simultaneity, thereby clarifying the "azia" of verse 19. In seventeenth-century Spain the king conceded the **Privilegio**, which might be solicited by the author, through his Council, of whom the censors were often members (Moll 55). In the present context God is author, king, and censor the verb "lograr" encompassing all three roles. Thus the divine censors who secure the **Privilegio** for the book Mary are the source of the very "Gracia" and "glorias" which are its justification and of which they write with such enthusiastic approval. In fact, their writing itself is creating the reason for their praise, they are writing or creating the grace and glory that they see in Mary. God's act of writing and his act of reading and approval are one and the same.

God is not only the binder, author, censor, and bestowed of the **Privilegio** for this book but also, as line 21 indicates, the royal dedicatee. The metaphorical meaning of the dedication motif is obvious enough. Lines 22-25 allude to the typically "hiperbólicos ditirambos" on the personal merits and illustrious ancestry of the dedicatee (Simón Díaz 97). The implication in the **Aprobación** and **Privilegio** motifs that this is a printed book is confirmed in lines 23-24. On the metaphorical level, "impresso" in the first instance probably signifies Mary's conception. In the second instance context suggests, on the literal level, the coat of arms or heraldic device of a noble family, often found at the beginning of a book's Dedication; on the metaphorical level, Mary's joining the lineage of God himself when she became the mother of Christ, a relationship that was her destiny from the beginning and that was the reason for the privilege of her immaculate conception. The phrase "raras glorias" also suggests the aesthetic qualities of the book and echoes motifs from verses 5 and 19, recapitulating as it were the five preceding stanzas and reaffirming the idea of the unique graces, privileges, and honors that were God's gift to Mary.

Line 25 names the mystery that until now has been alluded to only indirectly in the poem. In verse 26 the poet refers again, as in verse 2, to his own act of reading or attending to the book. The term "abismos" in verse 27 reinforces the idea of attentiveness conveyed by the dyad "miro, y veo", emphasizing that the poet is not simply looking superficially at these pages but reading in depth. Verses 27-28 play on a common motif in which the would-be reader was admonished not to be so entranced by the beauty of the book's letters, its external "raras glorias," as to

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[3] The dogma of the Immaculate Conception, not to be confused with the Virgin Birth and not promulgated until December 1854 in the papal bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, proclaims:

> quae tenet beatissimam Virginem Mariam in primo instanti suae conceptionis fuisse singulari omnipotentis Dei gratia et **privilegio**, intuitu meritorum Christi Jesu Salvatoris humani generis, ab omni originalis culpae labe praeservatam immunem, esse a Deo revelatam, atque idcirco ab omnibus fidelibus firmiter constanterque **credendam** [emphasis added]. *Dictionnaire* 7:845)

However, the doctrine had been generally accepted by Spaniards since the Council of Basil (1439), and support for it had grown throughout the following centuries (Matos-Schultz n.p.).

neglect the inner meaning.[4] This reader not only takes such instruction for granted but goes far beyond it, seeing the meaning even in the absence of letters. It is this inner meaning whose beauty and splendor draw him. The paradox of the "blancas hojas" without letters from which the poet-reader derives profound meaning is interwoven with the wordplay on "Concepcion" and "conceptos." Just as a **concepto** illuminates an unexpected relationship between two realities, so the poet reads in Mary's immaculate conception, even before the eternal plan for her conceived by her author has begun to be written in time, God's profound and mysterious designs. "Letras" may also be an allusion to those used by logicians to denote the terms of a syllogism; the mystery embodied in Mary is beyond logic.

As if to confirm this last point, verse 29 seems to contradict what has just gone before; how can there be black lines without letters? The explanation may be an ellipsis between the preceding line and this one; the script of Mary's life has now begun to be written, and it serves the poet, as he indicates in verse 30, as a series of lessons in holiness. The reference in the next verse to the Holy Spirit as writer of the "Negras lineas," together with the "sacros discursos" of verse 30, establish an analogy between the book Mary and the Sacred Scriptures, which were believed to have been written under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Line 32 takes the paradox one step further. The verse is strongly reminiscent of Luke 1.35: "Spiritus Sanctus superveniet in te et virtus Altissimi obumbrabit tibi ideoque et quod nascetur sanctum vocabitur Filius Dei." Mary conceives, and is conceived, by the Holy Spirit; God writes his divine Word in her.

After exploiting the motifs of page and lines of print, the poet moves in verse 33 to that of punctuation, in the wordplay on **admiraciones** which by their frequency attract his attention. The understatement employed in verses 33-34 provides a counterbalance to the idea expressed. It would seem from verses 35-36 that the angels were assistants to the divine compositor, probably in the proofing or comparison of the printed sheet with the manuscript copy.[5]

The next stanza introduces another punctuation mark, the **punto**. In the context of verses 37-38, another meaning of the word on the literal level derives from the Latin **punctum** in the sense of a moment or small portion of time (**Cassell's**). The interpretation of the wordplay in this stanza is rendered difficult by the seemingly inadmissible syntax of verses 37-39. If we replace "en tiempo" with "el tiempo," assuming the preposition to be a typographical error, the lines make linguistic sense. One possible metaphorical significance of the **punto**, deriving from the Latin verb for "to puncture" or "to stab," are the sufferings alluded to in Luke 2.35:

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[4] Alejo Venegas admonishes, "No hagamos como los niños o como los locos: que viendo en el libro las letras muy galanas y muy luminadas deleytanse en la pintura sin curar de lo que interiormente en la tal escriptura se representa" (Venegas 34).

[5] The compositor might be assisted by a corrector, who would examine the proof while a reading boy read aloud from the copy, checking among other things for accidentals such as punctuation, which tended to be scanty in manuscript copy (Cruickshank 58-59).

"et tuam ipsius animam pertransiet gladius." In line 40 the word seems to have yet another meaning, perhaps that of a point in meditation, that is, "la materia que se señala para que sobre ella se tenga la oración" (Real Academia), or again, the first of the "puntos ... en que se divide algún sermón u oración rhetórica". The **admiraciones** in verses 39-40, the only ones in the poem, link this stanza with the preceding one.

Verse 41 highlights another reason for the uniqueness of this book, the absence of the usually indispensable **tasa**, which set the book's maximum price. This seems a natural enough motif for a book one spontaneously thinks of as beyond price. The referent of "señalan" in verse 31 is probably the "Tres Personas" of line 17, since the **tasa** was determined by "los señores del Consejo [Real] por su solo y prudente arbitrio" (Amezúa y Mayo 358). The clause "el que llega a quereros" of line 42, an allusion to the poet himself among the readers of the book, implies a response that comes with time. It suggests a poring over or meditating upon the book and a concomitant growing realization of the treasure it contains, a way of reading reflected in the poem through the emphasis on stylistic devices that "agudizan la tendencia ... a la demora y a la continua matización del pensamiento" (Checa Cremades 54). But the stanza contains a paradox, because the context seems to present the reader in the capacity of buyer of the book, and a buyer does not have the option of living with the book before paying for it. One possible resolution would be the identification of the reader in this stanza with the members of the Council who set the **tasa** but it is more likely that we have here a collapsing of time frames, as those responsible for the **tasa**, and the future reader himself, anticipate the value that he will place upon the book and his consequent disregard for the cost. The antithetical construction "no pone .... ponelos si" in verses 43-44 and the **paranomasia** embedded in it underscore the nature of the reader's response.

The focus shifts in the next stanza from the reader to the book once again and to its printer. This is indeed a unique book, since a complete lack of printing errors is, in any period, a virtual miracle. Whereas the "sin yerros" of verse 16 connotes the absence of more serious, substantial errors, that is, sin, the "sin Erratas" of verse 48 signifies the complete lack of accidental errors, or faults that are not really sinful but simply a result of human imperfection. God is not only the printer or efficient cause of Mary's perfection but also the model or exemplary cause. She is taken directly from the "Original," the divine Logos. Whereas other persons are copies of the flawed first proof, Adam, in Mary's case the author intervened in a special way to prevent the slightest deviation from his original manuscript. Or perhaps the qualification "Sabio" refers to the divine printer's accomplishment of the technologically impossible feat of producing the printed book directly from the manuscript. According to Amezúa y Mayo, "Las pruebas ... raras veces ... pasan por los ojos del autor, a menos de acuerdo expreso en la escritura editorial" (355-56). In the present case, author and printer are one and the same, and both are identical with the "Corrector general," whose responsibility it was to

> asegurarse primero de la identidad del manuscrito censurado con su edición impresa, labor que certificaba luego en los preliminares de ésta con la usual y consabida formulilla: 'Este libro corresponde con su original, y para testimonio de ello doy fe'. (Amezúa y Mayo 355-56)

In verses 49-50 the poet applies the motif of the **tabla**, a kind of index or table of contents, to the concept of Mary's being a compendium or synthesis of all that is good. Since "bien" is not capitalized, it may refer to the whole of creation; Mary is, as it were, a microcosm of the divine book of Nature in its redeemed state.[6] The image recapitulates the diverse manifestations of the book's wholeness and perfection distributed throughout the preceding stanzas and corroborates its characterization in the epigraph as "cabal perfectissimo Libro." Not only does Mary synthesize all the perfections of creation; she does so precisely because she perfectly reflects the "Original" or divine Exemplar of creation. The triple use of **ser** underscores the idea that Mary actualizes what Adam was meant to be.

This image of completeness occurs in verse 50, the middle of the poem. Lines 51-52 mark a transition between the two major sections. On the one hand, they belong to the concluding stanza of the first section in that they are part of the series of motifs that refer to the book as physical entity and in that they are framing images. On the other hand, the motif of the book's "Fin" in verse 51 draws the first section to a close, while that of its "Principio" in verse 52 leads into the second major section.

Immediately evident in the next stanza is a radical shift in perspective, such that one almost has the impression of beginning a new poem. The first indication of the shift is the use of the third person preterite verb form in line 53, although the poet continues to address the book, or Mary, directly. The sense of volition conveyed by "quiso" and its position at the very beginning of part two create a parallel with the "creyendola" of the epigraph and concomitantly, one between the poet-reader and the Old Testament patriarch Moses, both of whom affirm God's revelation in faith. The paradoxical image of the bush which burned and remained unconsumed, derived from Exodus 3.2, is one of the types for Mary in the Roman Church's tradition and incorporated in its devotion. It is, specifically, a figure of Mary's perpetual virginity.[7] By his syntax the poet seems to attribute to Moses himself the reading of the burning bush as a sign of Mary. In other words, he appears to project

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[6] Pedro de Padilla praises Mary in similar fashion:

> Libro precioso; donde fue sacado
> Lo mas fino de todos los primores,
> Repartidos en todo lo criado
> Como en menos perfetos borradores.
> (*Grandezas y Excelencias* 35)

[7] *A Dictionary* 36. The various Old Testament figures for Mary found in this section of the poem had been used by the early Church Fathers and later incorporated into Marian litanies, the most famous of which is the Litany of Loreto, a widespread Marian devotion from the early seventeenth century on (ibid. 157).

onto the Old Testament figure of Moses the Christian tradition of reading the Old Testament as prefiguring the New. Thus these verses collapse time in a manner similar to that in the first section (vv. 7-8, 41-44). Or maybe Aguilar is simply suggesting that Moses read the burning bush as a sign of the holy, the transcendent, and upon this idea the poet superimposes his own interpretation of the Old Testament passage, which is informed by Church tradition. In any case, "Zarza" is reminiscent of the **nombres** alluded to in verse 11. In verse 57 the poet draws an analogy between Mary and himself but immediately follows this identification with a distinction. Whereas in his case the fire of his passions clouds his reason or spiritual faculties, in Mary there was no earthly passion, no dross to be consumed. The fire in her soul was that of pure love, producing only light.

A pattern begins to emerge with the reference in verse 61 to another Old Testament reader, the patriarch Noah. Obviously the poet is not following chronological order, since Noah precedes Moses in the Old Testament. The image of the "Arca" in verse 63 is another traditional type of Mary in Church tradition; the Litany of Loreto calls her "Ark of the covenant" (*A Dictionary* 157), a fusion of the ark associated with Noah and the covenant God made with him after the Flood, and the ark of the Holy of Holies, which guarded the tablets of the Law given by God to Moses. The subjunctive "deva" indicates that Noah was reading in faith a future result of his obeying God's command; the verb is analogous in this respect to the "leeros quiso" of verse 53. The wordplay on "alivios" and "Diluvios" emphasizes the ark's function as vehicle of salvation. Besides the double signification of the ark, the association of Moses and Noah with images of fire and water, respectively, may be a reason for the poet's juxtaposition of these two patriarchs. To these elements he adds that of air in the "vientos" of verse 64.

Line 65 reveals a second pattern in this section of the poem, the alternation between the past (Old Testament types) and the present (an explication of the types). This temporal alternation reinforces the sense of Mary's immediacy to the poet, in effect making her seem his contemporary. The relationship established by the poet between Mary and himself is both similar and different in the two preceding contexts. In both he uses inherited images to emphasize his own sinfulness in contrast to Mary's holiness, but whereas in the first case he duplicates the original image and adds his own to establish a contrast between the individual referents, in the second case he draws on the two units of the original binary image to affirm a dyadic relationship between the referents, one already well established in Catholic tradition. In the first instance he focusses on Mary's holiness in terms of her integrity; in the second, in terms of her role as redemptrix, vehicle of salvation for others.

The reference to Adam in line 70 takes us still further back in time, to the first Old Testament patriarch. The earth image of the "Huerto" described in this stanza completes the system of the four elements. As expected, it is also one of the traditional Old Testament figures of Mary, a fusion of the garden of Eden before

the Fall and the enclosed garden of the Canticle of Canticles. The antithesis in verses 71-72 incorporates a motif associated with the classical **locus amoenus** topos, frequently applied to Mary in Golden Age as well as earlier literature.

Verse 73, in which he omits any self-reference, breaks the pattern Aguilar seemed to have established, in which he applied the biblical image or image construct to both Mary and himself, and makes one wonder if the apparent interruption is part of a different pattern. By naming the **locus amoenus** "Huerto" and "florido Iardin," Aguilar suggests both the fruitfulness of Mary's divine maternity and abundant virtues, and her perpetual virginity. Verses 75-76, which contain an allusion to Canticles 4.12, 16, summarize the essence of the Marian mystery of the immaculate conception in its two facets. This book is simultaneously open and closed.

The reference to Solomon as reader of Mary in the next verse is perhaps due in part to the fact that he was considered the author of the Canticle of Canticles, just alluded to. The poet employs the adjective **sabio** for the third time, here as an epithet for the biblical figure most famous for his wisdom. Line 78 repeats the pattern of hyperbaton found in line 70 and thereby highlights the contrast between the nature image of the "Huerto" and the culture image of the "Templo," another of the Old Testament types of Mary. The hyperbaton, as well as the syntactic formula "no ... si ..." in verses 79-80 and the **paranomasia** of "primor ... primero," all characteristically gongoristic or **culterano** devices, seem especially apt in the context of an image emphatically linked to culture.

Although all the baptized are considered temples of the Holy Spirit in Christian tradition, Mary is temple in a special way because of her absolute dedication to God and the fullness of grace by which she was sanctified, and because God took up his dwelling in her uniquely. Aguilar expands this traditional image of Mary in order to draw an analogy with the temple sacrifices mentioned in numerous Old Testament passages. The terms "Sacrificio," "Coraçon," and "Victima," with their connotations of suffering, recall the "Puntos" of verse 37 and Simeon's prophecy of the sword of sorrows that would pierce Mary's heart. The "llamas," reminiscent of the burning bush of earlier verses, are not simply **de amor**, since this phrase is too closely linked to earthly passion, but rather "de otro amor." "Otro," even more than **divino** or some equivalent expression, conveys a sense of transcendence or otherworldliness. As in the garden analogy, so here, the poet makes no reference to himself.

The patriarch Jacob, who in the Bible precedes Solomon, is the next reader of the book Mary. The paradoxical "bien dormidos desvelos" suggests the mystical or visionary nature of Jacob's dream. If the "glorias" of verse 87 refer to the angels whom Jacob saw ascending and descending, the use of "fijas" is puzzling at first glance. However, the angels were on a ladder which reached to heaven and was firmly planted on the earth. The poet may well be contrasting this image with the unstable wheel of Fortune and the dream or illusion of worldly glory of those who

ride it, as well as with the elusive dreams of Calderón's famous protagonist Segismundo, alluded to in verses 87-88.[8]

In the next stanza Aguilar resumes the pattern of self-inclusion in his application of the image. Unlike those who commend themselves to the fickle goddess Fortuna, those who mount to heaven through Mary's mediation have a secure footing and will not be cast down. Mary is firmly anchored equally on earth and in heaven because she is truly human like all of us, yet unlike us, completely sinless, "celestial," as the poet describes her in the first verse of the poem.

The reference to St. John the Evangelist as reader in the following stanza explains the poet's placement of the preceding type. Jacob's "bien dormidos desvelos" are a prelude to John's great mystic vision as related in the Apocalypse. Moreover, Jacob's ladder becomes a figure of Mary in yet another way, precisely by serving a transitional function within the poem. Just as Mary, even in her temporal existence, bridges or links the two Testaments, so the ladder, by its placement in the poem, leads the reader from the preceding images of the Old Testament, which the poet associates with the sublunar elements, to a New Testament image, set in heaven or the Empyrean. And just as this New Testament image grows out of a series of Old Testament book metaphors, so the Old Testament, though transcended or superseded, is still the firm basis for the Christian's understanding of the New Testament. Likewise Mary's profound understanding of and unswerving obedience to the Old Law, in spirit as well as in letter, were the ground of her transcending or growing beyond it, of her openness to the grace of the New Dispensation. It is somewhat surprising to find the motif of the Apocalyptic book with its seven seals used in reference to Mary, since it is so strongly associated with Christ, but the Marian application corroborates the idea of her being a perfect copy of the divine "Original."

Verse 97 repeats the structure of verse 57; the two lines thus serve as an approximate frame for the poem's second major division. Up to this point the poet has been, explicitly at least, simply a reader of the book, in a long tradition of readers. Now, in what seems a kind of mental leap, he identifies himself with Mary as book and in so doing, implies that all the other readers he has named are as many books. But just as he and Mary, while both **zarzas**, were strikingly different from each other, so as books the distinction between them is taken for granted. Whereas the book Mary had not a single error or flaw to be censored or corrected, the poet has many. The roles of the poem's first part are now reversed; the reader becomes the text which is read, and vice versa. Just as it is said that ultimately it is the reader who is judged by the book, i.e., by his or her reading of the book, so here the poet-reader ends by submitting himself to the judgment of the book Mary, who becomes his censor.

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[8] In his final speech Segismundo declares, "pues así llegué a saber/ que toda la dicha humana,/ en fin, pasa como un sueño" (Calderón de la Barca 283).

The effect of this censorship is salvific; the poet will thus be able to take his place in the library of heaven. The picture that first comes to mind is of gleaming rows of books, their gilt edges, which bear the titles, turned outward, like the saints in their shining ranks (Díez-Borque 57-58). The poem concludes, then, with a vision of wholeness and perfection. To the poet salvation implies incorporation in the communion of saints, the whole **corpus** of the elect. Just as he has placed himself temporally within a long tradition of believing readers, reaching back to Adam and forward to encompass the whole of human history, so now he envisions himself spatially within the vast and unified assembly of books that constitute heaven's library. Fittingly, this image occurs in verse 100, number symbolizing fullness and completion.

The conclusion of this second part of the poem thus parallels that of the first. In both instances the poet presents us with an image of totality or completeness, first in terms of the individual book Mary, then in terms of the whole library that is the Church triumphant. This parallel corresponds to the intimate and essential relationship between the alternating images in the second section, those which emphasize Mary's intactness or integrity and those which stress her role as coredemptrix or vehicle of salvation. According to Catholic tradition, Mary realizes already in her own person what will be fulfilled in the Church as a whole at the end of time. Thus as certain Old Testament entities prefigured her, she is a microcosmic prefiguration of the whole body of Christ in its glorified state.

An examination of the poem as a whole reveals that the poet's emphasis on the completeness and perfection of this book is complemented and counterbalanced by an emphasis on the book's needing-to-be-completed. The many manifestations of this perspective can perhaps be summed up in the notion of binary structures or complementarity. On the most basic level, the poet's use of the **romance** form itself brings out both perspectives. While the consistency of the e-o assonant rhyme helps unify the poem, the pattern of assonance, two vowel sounds occurring in alternate lines, constitutes a kind of pairing inherent to the **romance**.

Still on the level of verse, we find various types of syntactic and semantic complementarity. One is the straightforwardly parallel structure, found within verse 5, between verses 3 and 4, 70 and 78, and, slightly modified, 28 and 48, 41 and 45, as well as between the initial clauses of verses 61, 69, and 85 and verses 57, 65, 73, 81, and 97. (The parallelism is slightly altered in verses 93-94 and broken in verses 53 and 77.) Another type is the parallel structure that contains an antithesis, found within verse 56 and between verses 13 and 15-16, 71 and 72, and, more or less modified, between verses 51 and 52, 59 and 60, 90 and 92. A third type of complementarity involving parallel structure is the chiasmus, found in verses 7-8, 11-12, 75-76, and 79-80.

Other complementarities within or among verses, on the level of the individual word, are the duplication of images (vv. 57, 97); the juxtaposition of two adjectives (v.1), nouns (v. 14), or verbs (v. 26); and wordplay, exemplified in the **paranomasia**

of "Concepcion .... conceptos" (vv. 25, 28), "precio .... aprecio" (vv. 43-44), "alivios .... Diluvios" (vv. 63-64), and "primor ... primero" (v. 80), in the double or triple meaning of numerous words, most obviously, perhaps, "Verbo" (v. 12) and "yerros" (v. 16), and in repetition that adds a new dimension of meaning to a word (vv. 23 and 24, 37 and 40, 95 and 96). Very often two syntactic or semantic kinds of pairing are combined.

On a more encompassing structural level, the poem falls into two major sections, each more or less complete in itself but both subsumed in a higher unity that is constituted by their very complementarity, evidenced in diverse ways. The first section consists of thirteen stanzas or fifty-two lines, the second, of twelve stanzas or forty-eight lines, with the thirteenth stanza (lines 49-52) serving as a hinge between the two sections. This construction approximates that of the codex format of a book.

In both sections every four lines comprise a unit in the form of complete thought or period, printed here as a stanza, and in both sections stanzas are paired, though in a different way in each. The poet pairs the stanzas of the first section via his choice of motifs related to the physical book: in stanzas 1 and 2, a comprehensive characterization; in 3 and 4, author and title; in 5 and 6, preliminary components; in 7 and 8, pages and lines of print; in 9 and 10, punctuation; in 11 and 12, items purposely missing because irrelevant to this book. The linking provided by these motifs is reinforced by repeated syntactic or morphological elements within pairs of stanzas: doublings in the first verse of stanzas 1 and 2, which respectively address Mary by name and via metaphor; a preterite verb form in the first verse of stanzas 3 and 4, in reference to the divine author's action vis-a-vis the book; a present-tense reference in the first verse of stanzas 5 and 6 to a specific relationship between God and the book; another present-tense reference in stanzas 7 and 8, to the poet's reading of the book; the initiation of stanzas 9 and 10 with a noun denoting a punctuation mark; syntactically parallel negative clauses in the first verse of stanzas 11 and 12, followed by an explicative conjunction in the second verse.

The double function of stanza 13, which synthesizes the first section of the poem and also serves as a bridge to the next, is reflected in its structure. The first two verses, containing a single global image complete in itself, are in turn completed by two verses that present a pair of complementary images.

In the second section stanzas are paired by the introduction of a biblical type in the first stanza of each pair and its application in the second. The series of applications, in turn, involves a secondary pairing, in that with every two the poet alternates between referring the type to Mary alone and referring it to both Mary and himself.

When we look at both sections as wholes, we find that another aspect of their complementarity is the double tradition that informs the metaphor, in itself a binary structure. In section one the analogy between Mary and the printed book is a

contemporization of a metaphor that derives from the secular or classical Graeco-Roman tradition. In section two the only direct articulation of the book metaphor before the penultimate stanza is the repeated motif of the patriarchs' reading of Mary. The sign system has changed to one inherited from the sacred or Judaeo-Christian tradition.

The two sections are also complementary in the way they embody the space-time dimension of the book. In the first section it is primarily a spatial image, which is lovingly described and praised in its individual parts. In the second section the book is primarily a temporal reality, a being-read in faith by a succession of readers from the beginning of human time. Nevertheless, the temporal dimension, while subordinate, is reflected throughout the first section in the reader's implied turning of the book's pages and culminates in the concluding motifs of verses 51-52, when, having arrived at the book's "Fin", the reader refers back to its "Principio". Similarly, the subordinate spatial dimension of the second section, reflected throughout in the specific images associated with the various readers and the ascending movement from the sphere of the four elements to the Empyrean, culminates in the final image of the library. The complementarity or pairing of the sections could be viewed from this perspective as a kind of chiasmus.

On the level of metaphorical meaning, the first section of the poem, which could stand on its own and in which Mary is the book physically present in its wholeness, can be seen as an analogy with the whole text of Sacred Scripture, whereas the second section, Mary as the book interpreted throughout time by a succession of inspired readers, is an analogy with Christian tradition. According to Catholic teaching, Scripture and tradition are inseparably linked.[9] The Bible, while complete and perfect in itself as the inspired word of God, needs tradition, the interpretation provided within the community of believers, in order to be fully realized in each age of human history. In that sense Scripture will not be complete until the end of time and its fulfillment in the parousia. Similarly, Mary, who in her own person lived out perfectly God's eternal reading of her, will be fully realized in her role as prefiguration of the Church when the full number of her human readers, texts in their turn, have incorporated the message of grace and glory communicated through her. Then, to paraphrase Umberto Eco, the destiny of the book will become the destiny of those who have read it well.

One might say, then, that the all-encompassing complementarity in this poem is the paradox that is reflected on every level and that can be expressed as the book's simultaneous completeness and being in the process of completion. Any tension created by the bipolarities is subsumed in the unity of the **concepto** of Mary as book. But as the term **concepto** itself indicates, the complexity or tension is not dissolved or even resolved. One comes away from a first reading and from subsequent rereadings of the poem with a strong sense that what matters is the

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9 "The Church .... holds no truth on the basis of Scripture alone, independently of tradition, nor on the basis of tradition alone, independently of Scripture" (*New Catholic* 14:227).

constant interplay of the components.

Perhaps we should not after all, or at least not exclusively, envision the celestial library as a place where the books are closed and shelved, but rather, as John Donne would have it, as one "where every book shall lie open to one another."[10] Aguilar's poem suggests that if we will never be done with discovering the glorious riches of the original absolutely true and perfect text, which we shall then read face to face, it will be, among other things, because we are reading intertextually.

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