SOR JUANA, GÓNGORA AND IDEOLOGIES OF PERCEPTION

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Concepts of perspective have particular significance in critical approaches to Spanish literature of the seventeenth century. They are central not only to the affinities and rivalries between the visual and the literary in early modern culture, but also to the problematic relationship between the ethical and the aesthetic. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz was not merely referring to a geometrical phenomenon when, in her *Respuesta a Sor Filotea*, she illustrated her passion for scientific speculation with an anecdote about her observation of the way that the walls and ceiling of a room appear to converge, "de donde infería que las líneas visuales corren rectas, pero no paralelas, sino que van a formar una figura piramidal" (4: 458, lines 764-65). From this and other experiments, she concluded that visual perception is deceptive. For seventeenth-century European culture, the arrangement of shapes that conform to converging lines on a two-dimensional painted surface, a technology that began as the solution to a problem of composition, had become a problem in itself. Questions of knowledge and moral judgment were configured by the optical pyramid that Renaissance painters used to create the illusion of spatial depth. The geometrical configuration of the field of vision and its distortion through aesthetic strategies of deception were thematized in poetic reflections on intellectual and aesthetic aspects of visual perception.[1] As Sor Juana noted in the *Respuesta,* "la vista fingía" (4:458, 762). The artistic use of perspective exposed the unreliability of vision, the sense farthest removed from the materiality of the body and the natural world, and thus regarded as the most intellectual and spiritual.

The "moral disenchantment" at the recognition of this distortion is exemplified in Sor Juana's poetry, not only in her *Sueño*, but in her philosophical sonnets as well. In "Emblems, Optics, and Sor Juana's Verse," Frederick Luciani finds that the images of eyeglasses and the

eye in the hand in "Verde embeleso de la vida humana" invert the hierarchy of the senses through a "neat paradox: the 'visual' knowledge rejected in the poem applies to tangible things of the world, the 'tactile' knowledge applies to the intangible things of the spirit." Moreover, throughout her work, Sor Juana emphasizes "the illusoriness of that which is apprehended through the arts of optical deception—colored glasses, colored canvasses" (Luciani, "Emblems" 163).[2]

Giancarlo Maiorino perceived an atmosphere of "intellectualism, abstraction, and self-confidence" surrounding the development of linear perspective in the context of fifteenth-century Italian humanism (479). "With the advent of perspective, it became much easier to stage, as it were, elaborate group scenes organized in a spatially complex fashion" (Kubovy and Tyler, "The Arrow in the Eye" 1).[3] However, by the seventeenth century, this exploitation of the cognitive processes of perception "came to reflect a more complex and ambiguous relationship between the knower and the knowable" in art treatises and literary reflections on the visual arts (Gilman 14). Because the powerful aesthetic effects of perspective were derived from the observer's process of "correctly" perceiving and interpreting a work of art designed to deceive the eye, it brought with it significant moral and epistemological implications. Maiorino points out that linear perspective restricted the observer to a single position:"In order to avoid problems of marginal aberrations and peripheral distortions, the surface of the eye was assumed to be flat, whereas it is, in fact, curved. As a result, the conception of linear perspective ignored the complexities of perceptual vision resulting in the reduction of them to one vanishing point and to focal uniformity" (Maiorino 480).[4] The geometric configuration of optical perspective in Renaissance painting presupposes not only a single observer, but an observer with a single eye: "This fixed, monocular convention contradicts ordinary experience more than any other" in the "mimetic fiction" of linear perspective in painting (Guillén 291-92). In addition to the flattening of the imagined visual field noted by Maiorino, this diagrammatic conceptualization simplifies the model by eliding the cognitive processes involved in combining the two distinct though similar images perceived in binocular vision.

In his study of changing models of visual perception and modernity, Jonathan Crary considers what is lost through this simplification. Arguing that "the problem of the observer is the field on which vision

in history can be said to materialize, to become itself visible" (5), Crary posits that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the geometrical model of the *camera obscura* "subsisted as a philosophical metaphor, a model in the science of physical optics" (29).[5] The *camera obscura* is better known than the *instrumentum mesopticum* illustrated in Luciani's 1998 article, but both can be found in Athanasius Kircher's *Ars magna lucis et umbrae* (1646), an important scientific source for Sor Juana's *Primero sueño*. Both instruments project the light reflected from an object through a small aperture and onto a flat surface and thus involve a monocular, flattened model of perception. The *camera obscura*'s projection of an image onto a flat surface in a darkened chamber has particular relevance to specific passages in Luis de Góngora's *Fábula de Polifemo y Galatea* and the *Soledades,* and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's *Primero sueño.* This essay explores some correlations of these passages with models of visual perception, including geometrical perspective, and the epistemological role of the observer in the descriptions of nature and the cosmos in these quintessentially Baroque poems.

The interconnections of linear perspective, visual art, and literature have been revisited and re-evaluated by literary scholars contending with Erwin Panofsky's study of the theory and practice of perspective in early modern painting, "Perspective as Symbolic Form," first published in German in 1924-5.[6] A decade after Ernest B. Gilman's study of the ideological significance of perspective in Elizabethan literature (1978), the historian Martin Jay published his critical re-examination of Baroque ocularcentrism—the privileging of vision over the other senses—and Cartesian optics (1988). In the early modern Hispanic field, the "visual turn" has been inflected by the transformation of the boundary between the Spanish Baroque and "Barroco de Indias" into a space for reevaluating these terms. Thus, Humberto Huergo and Ricardo Padrón read the *mappamundi* passage of *Soledades* as a critique of the imperial gaze, while Catherine Bryan argues that the subject position of the implied observer in two of Sor Juana's sonnets challenges the scientific model of Cartesian optics (107).[7] She bases her approach on anthropologist Donna Haraway's concept of situated knowledge and her proposal of an objectivity grounded in "particular and specific embodiment" as opposed to the illusion of "infinite vision" produced by optical technologies, "the god-trick of seeing everything

from nowhere" (Haraway 188-89). Bryan's approach can be extended to illuminate the role of vision in *Primero sueño.*

In the ideological context of the early modern, theories of visual perception were integrated into a powerful, totalizing cosmology that lent its authority to religious and political institutions. In the field of optics, "linear perspective came to symbolize a harmony between the mathematical regularities in optics and God's will" (Jay, "Scopic Regimes" 5-6). While the hierarchical social and political order derived its authority from the concept of a divinely ordained natural order, this correspondence was threatened not only by astronomical discoveries made possible through new optical technologies, but also by the science of optics itself, which showed how the human eye could be deceived. In his 2009 article, "Fortunes of the *Occhiali Politici* in Early Modern Spain," Enrique García Santo-Tomás examines the figurative use of mirrors, magnifying lenses, and telescopes in seventeenth-century Spanish satirical narratives as "an indicator of the tensions in Spain between artistic experimentation and religious constraints" (60).[8] In the Hispanic context, Jay's reference to the "overloading of the visual apparatus with a surplus of images in a plurality of spatial planes" (*Downcast Eyes* 48) provides an approach to seventeenth-century critiques of Baroque "spectacle, fantasy, and a continuous collapse of the traditional frame ... In this new scopic regime, the perspectival arrangement is as fluid as it is spatially limitless" (García Santo-Tomás 68). Pertinent to the metaphors of optics in *Primero sueño* is his discussion of "the increasing tensions between astronomy and religion stemming from the use of lenses as stargazing tools" (60).

Primero sueño exemplifies both the ocularcentrism of early modern epistemology and the doubts and anxieties that arose from the study of optics. Thus, "Alma," or mind, in Sor Juana's poem attempts to scale the mountain of knowledge without the aid or interference of optical instruments: "la vista perspicaz, libre de anteojos, / de sus intelectuales bellos ojos" (1: lines 440-41). *Primero sueño* figures cognitive processes connecting external objects and mental concepts in terms of the concave mirror in the lighthouse at Alexandria that collected distant images (1: 258-91) and the projection of images within the eye as a "magic lantern" (1: 873-86). Notwithstanding the comparisons with ancient and modern technologies, the failure of the epistemological quest is

attributed to the inadequacies of the human sense of sight and human cognition.

There is no need to consult research on optics or cognition to understand why the monocular giant Polyphemus is the antithesis of the ideal observer in a model of optics that informs early modern theories of love embodied by Acis and Galatea. The Cyclops of Góngora's long mythological poem is far more perversely voyeuristic than the nameless, nearly silent *peregrino* of the *Soledades*, whom Juan de Jáuregui called a *mirón* with no justification for his presence in the poem (Arancón 156). Polyphemus is a tyrannical figure who stages the worst excesses of the colonizing gaze: he not only disrupts the harmonious scene of Galatea's and Acis' lovemaking; he uses his superhuman strength to hurl a boulder that crushes his rival. Love is engendered in a visual exchange that disrupts the gender hierarchy between Acis and Galatea, as both in turn play the part of passive object and predatory observer.[9] In contrast, Polyphemus's prodigious visual acuity, which allows him to see across the Mediterranean to Libya (61.483-84), is monocular and his *canto* is monologic. The role of the observer is foregrounded in the *Soledades* and *Primero sueño* as both poems engage affective and dynamic aspects of visual perception as the primary vehicle of knowledge.[10]

Addressing the "multiple signs of space and history around the contemplative present of the pilgrim," John Beverley observes: "Góngora punches holes in the visual surface of reality and its perspectival context in order to supercharge the signifying elements, to give them a conceptual density which they lack as objects of immediate perception" (76). Taking up the question of space in his essay "Of Baroque Holes and Baroque Folds," William Egginton proposes a philosophical approach to the Baroque "as a problem concerning the separation between the space of representation and the space of spectatorship" (55) developing from his study of structural changes in "spectacle."[11] Although he does not draw upon Crary's work, Egginton also employs the *camera obscura* as the "image of thought" onto which he "maps" Baroque artifacts (62). In his spatialized figure of Baroque thought, derived from Gilles Deleuze's study of Leibniz, what appear to be holes in a surface "are in fact folds … a case of invagination in a plane that for some point of view may appear to be a hole … There is no absolute distinction between interior and exterior space, but only one relative to point of view" (63). In the enigmatic image of

the owl penetrating the interstices of the temple to steal sacred oil in the passage describing nightfall in *Primero sueño* 25-38, the spatial metaphors of "interior" and "exterior" are ideological. In Egginton's theoretical framework, these interstices may not be "holes" but "folds" in a continuous plane.

In the gendered, hierarchical Novohispanic context, however, the act of intrusion must also be read in terms of power: the imposition of Spanish colonial authority on indigenous American communities and systems of knowledge, and the knowledge appropriated by the unauthorized female transgressor. The owl breaches the boundaries of sacred space to drink the consecrated oil: "la avergonzada Nictimene acecha / de las sagradas puertas los resquicios,... y sacrílega llega a los lucientes / faroles sacros de perenne llama / que extingue, si no infama, / en licor claro la materia crasa / consumiendo" (1: 27-36). In an ingenious inversion of space, Sor Juana, who managed to find indirect ways to acquire knowledge, turns the *camera obscura* inside out. Instead of light penetrating an enclosed space, it escapes from a lamplit interior and attracts the "shameful" owl to the oil lamps of the temple whose imperfectly sealed windows and doors allow her to enter without permission. This spatial transformation reveals the ways in which the binaries of interior and exterior, sacred and profane, are interchangeable.[12] Sor Juana's inversion of the *camera obscura* appropriates and transforms the natural *camera obscura* of the cyclops's horrifying cavern in *Polifemo*, lines 33-40, formed by the dense vegetation that hardly allows any light to penetrate. Within its anthropomorphosed mouth, nightbirds circle ominously.[13] The perceptive model for the female intellectual is not the *camera obscura* inhabited by a monocular monster but a luminous temple filled with light that attracts an ambivalently transgressive nightbird. In her appropriation and transformation of Góngora's rustic *camera obscura,* Sor Juana engages gendered questions of knowledge and power in terms of light and enclosed space.

The opening lines of *Soledad primera* and *Primero sueño* describe the mutable positions of heavenly bodies, from an unspecified vantage point. The lyric speaker of Góngora's *Dedicatoria* addresses the Duque de Béjar, locating him on the banks of the River Tormes where he has been hunting. Following the *Dedicatoria,* the opening lines of *Soledad primera* shift the scene in both place and time: an unidentified island,

under the astrological sign of Taurus: "Era del año la estación florida / en que el mentido robador de Europa / (media luna las armas de su frente, / y el Sol todos los rayos de su pelo)…" (1.1-4), a reference to Jupiter's rape of Europa in the guise of a bull. Sor Juana describes a recurring astronomical phenomenon in the first lines of *Primero sueño*; the extension of earth's pyramidal shadow into space can occur in any season.[14] What is most relevant to the comparison of the place of optics and the observer in the *Soledades* and *Primero sueño*, however, is the latter's representation of the relationships among earth, stars, and moon in terms of abstract geometrical space.

Although the epigraph of Sor Juana's poem describes it as "imitando a Góngora," she does not limit herself to emulating the verse form of the *silva* and the stylistic excesses of the *Soledades* for which he was so fiercely criticized.[15] Reading beyond the dialogue between these two poems, Pascual Buxó compares ekphrastic elements and poetic portraiture in Góngora and Sor Juana, and argues against Octavio Paz's claim that

> "[p]or genio natural, sor Juana tiende más al concepto agudo que a la metáfora brillante; Góngora, poeta sensual, sobresale en la descripción …. El mundo de Góngora es un espacio henchido de colores, formas, individuos y objetos particulares …. En Góngora triunfa la luz: todo, hasta la tiniebla, resplandece; en sor Juana hay penumbra: prevalecen el blanco y el negro" (Paz 470).

In the "Aprobación" of the *Fama y obras póstumas* (1700), Padre Diego Calleja noted the differences between the two long poems: "las materias escogidas por Sor Juana 'son por naturaleza tan áridas, que haberlas hecho florecer tanto, arguye maravillosa fecundidad en el cultivo'" (cited in Pascual Buxó 344). Building on Calleja's metaphor of the "flowers" of rhetoric, Pascual Buxó points out that Paz's judgment was based on the initial description of nightfall in *Primero sueño*: "Cambiando la frase de Paz, podría decirse que las imágenes de Sor Juana no son bosquejos oscuros, en blanco y negro, sino que están iluminadas por una luz peculiar, la de la fantasía" (385-86). I would add that Sor Juana's imitation of Góngora is not limited to the *Soledades;* many of the most striking phonetic resonances and reminiscences of visual imagery in the initial descriptive passage are with the *Polifemo*.

While the presence of the observer in the *Soledades* is inferred from the "poetic proximity" of "feet" (or "footprints") and lyric voice (Gaylord, "Góngora" 232), Elias L. Rivers finds that both the *Soledades* and *Primero sueño* are "strongly marked by a rhetoric of absence" (108). Sor Juana transforms the *peregrino*'s embodied journey into an epistemological quest embarked upon by "Alma," more mind than soul, explicitly liberated from the body. As Rivers points out, "Alma" does not appear until line 192 and, in the 975 lines of *Primero sueño*, there are a scant eight intrusions of a first-person speaker before the gendered first-person "y yo despierta" of line 975.[16] If the "pasos" of Góngora's *Dedicatoria* link voice to a figure moving through a landscape, the pyramidal form of earth's shadow in the first line of *Primero sueño* presents an abstract geometrical figure of thought. While both time and space are planetary in the initial passage of *Primero sueño*, they will be miniaturized within the body in lines 192-292, leading to "Alma's" escape on her quest. Rosa Perelmuter notes the use of deictics, exemplified by the use of "éste" and "aquél" in the initial descriptive passages, to indicate the "ubicuidad" of the speaker, approaching and moving away from the objects she contemplates: "no narra desde un punto fijo o lugar de preferencia, sino que se mantiene en constante movimiento" ("Situación" 189).

"Alma's" aspiration and failure give a pyramidal shape to *Primero sueño*, in Paul B. Dixon's view, in addition to the multiple references to pyramids, chiasmus, and other geometrical arrangements (564). Verónica Grossi observes:

> Los elementos plásticos del *Sueño* (la palabra en sí como cuerpo visual y auditivo) son a su vez símbolos o conceptos que se remiten unos a otros para configurar un organismo mental y visual. Las imágenes de la pirámide, de la montaña, de la torre de Babel, de la linterna mágica, son así retratos de la arquitectura total del poema …. El lenguaje se retrata a sí mismo como constructor de verdades relativas en una *mise-en-abîme* que paralelamente construye el territorio interior e imaginario del poema (42).

Sor Juana's erudite sources on the topics of architecture and astronomy imbued geometrical forms, and the pyramid in particular, with metaphysical significance. Patricia Saldarriaga cites mid-

seventeenth century "gabinetes de anamorfosis piramidales y cónicas" (40) in which these geometrical solids signified visual deception and "la geometría en sí perdió su asociación con la verdad teológica… El sujeto debía decidir cuál era el punto desde el cual podría ver el mundo en forma no distorsionada" (42).[17] In addition to the pyramidal form described by the opening lines of *Primero sueño*, the syllables form a phonetic pattern in two groups of four syllables flanking a three-syllable central word: "Piramidal, funesta, de la tierra." Each term in the sequence of three elements makes a distinct visual and spatial reference: first shape, then darkness, and finally a link between the "sombra" of line 2 and its cause.[18] The first line produces a semantic and phonetic counterpart to the conceptual figure, apparently drawn from Athanasius Kircher's *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (1653), of two intersecting pyramids that form the central figure in the "Intermezzo" beginning in line 340. One is the "cuerpo opaco" with its base on the earth, aspiring toward spiritual perfection; the other, luminous, corresponding to the soul, with a celestial base and a single point of contact with the earth.[19]

Sor Juana referred to her philosophically ambitious *Primero sueño* as the most personal of her writings, in contrast to the *Carta Atenagórica* that occasioned such public controversy. Defending her scholarly pursuits in the *Respuesta a Sor Filotea*, she claimed: "yo nunca he escrito cosa alguna por mi voluntad, sino por ruegos y preceptos ajenos; de tal manera, que no me acuerdo haber escrito por mi gusto sino es un papelillo que llaman *El Sueño*" (4: 1264-67). The poem appeared in the second volume of her works in 1692 as *Primero sueño… imitando a Góngora*," but Paz speculates that "por lo que ella dice ya desde antes era conocido y comentado" (469). Evidence of pre-twentieth-century commentary on the poem is limited to a mere two pages in Calleja's *Aprobación,* which is also the main source for biographical material, in the third volume of her works, *Fama y obras póstumas* (1700).

In contrast to the sparseness of information about the Mexican nun's most ambitious poem, scholars have access to voluminous documentation of polemical responses to Góngora's long poems, much of it written and published within Góngora's lifetime. Contemporaneous evaluations of his poetic innovations include significant references to the pictorial qualities of the *Soledades*. Prominent among them are the *Parecer* (early 1614) and *Examen del "Antidoto"* (late 1615) of Francisco Fernández de Córdoba, Abad de Rute. The second document

responded to Juan de Jáuregui's *Antídoto contra la pestilente poesía de las Soledades* (1614), notorious for its *ad hominem* virulence. Humberto Huergo focuses on the *Parecer* and *Examen*, and Francisco Cascales's *Cartas filológicas* (ca. 1621-26) to reveal the ways in which Góngora's contemporaries read the *Soledades* in the context of Flemish and Italian painting. He deciphers Fernández de Córdoba's comparison of the diversity of human occupations, animals, and landscape features to "un lienço de Flandes*"* (Artigas 406, cited in Huergo 194). That the poet was well acquainted with Spanish, Flemish, and Italian painting is clear to Huergo (215), as well as to Maria Vitagliano, but each of these scholars offers a different interpretation of this comparison. Vitagliano reads the descriptive language of the *Polifemo* as following Flemish pictorial depictions of color, the behavior of light on surfaces, and figures in landscape (vi). She supports Jammes's identification of Fernández de Córdoba's term "lienço de Flandes" as referring to a kind of painting made popular in the fifteenth century in the work of Pieter Brueghel the Elder and Joachim Patinir, against Huergo's argument that this kind of painting had lost its prestige by the seventeenth century. Drawing upon Walter S. Gibson's study of the popularity of panoramic Flemish landscapes up to the time of Jan Brueghel and Peter Paul Rubens, "Mirror of the Earth," Vitagliano argues that the Abad de Rute's comparison is more accurately linked to this Flemish genre of "vast, panoramic landscapes that dwarf the human action taking place within [them] and encompass a view that extends beyond the normative, range of vision. Presenting a swathe of the earth's surface in meticulous detail from multiple viewpoints and showing even the most remote regions with relative clarity, these paintings are examples of Flemish 'world' landscapes" (*Weltlandschaften*)," a genre conveying the illusion of great diversity and geographic range (99-100).[20] Huergo and Vitagliano locate readings of the *Soledades* and *Polifemo* by Góngora's contemporaries within a politically significant language of art criticism and theory.

In her discussion of Góngora's verbal strategies in the context of courtly cultural practices—games and dances as well as painting—Marsha Collins discusses the reference to Europa and the bull as an allusion to Titian's *Rape of Europa* (1562), one of six mythological *poesie* painted for Philip II (87). The subject of Titian's repeatedly-copied painting, however, is of central importance in Crystal Chemris's

approach to sexual violence in the *Soledades.* She reads this and other passages in the poem in light of Diane Wolfthal's study of the imagery of the "heroic rapes" of classical mythology in Renaissance and Baroque painting and sculpture (53-54). Specifically, Chemris finds that "the graphic depiction of pain" undermines the idealization of both sexual and imperial violence in the *Dedicatoria's* hunting scene; the reference to Europa and Jupiter and the *Epitalamio* "Ven, Himeneo, ven" in *Soledad primera*; and the harpooning of a monstrous sea creature in *Soledad segunda* (58-60). Chemris's study of the sexualization of violence in the *Soledades* illuminates the differences between *Primero sueño* and its alleged emulation of its metropolitan model. *Primero sueño* casts off the frame of conventional dedication to a powerful patron. Instead of a figure in a terrestrial landscape, Sor Juana's dreamscape opens onto a cosmic view of the pyramidal shadow of earth projected toward the stars and the untouchable moon, personified as a triple goddess.

By situating the mind's activity in darkness and in its fabrications of virtual time and space, Sor Juana removes "Alma" from recognizable geographical locations. It is not only the ultimate failure of her quest for all-encompassing knowledge that challenges the imperious view, but the discursive framing of perception itself. Ricardo Padrón ends his article, "Against Apollo," on the poetic repudiation of the imperial gesture of mapping in *Soledad primera*'s diatribe against navigation, with a suggestive paragraph linking this aspect of the *Soledades* to *Primero sueño* through a brief reference to the latter's rejection of the Apollonian optic: "The soul is forced to abandon 'la Apolínea ciencia' (Apollonian science) (537) and find new paths to knowledge. There are no references to cartography, no toponymy, phantasmagoric or otherwise, just the skeptical treatment of the possibility of totalizing knowledge figured as a commanding vision" (392).

In *The Spacious Word,* Padrón analyzed the imperial project encoded in the descriptive process of "mapping" in Camões's and Ercilla's epics of exploration and conquest. His article "Against Apollo," argues that, by the sixteenth century, "representations of space, particularly those mediated by mathematical abstraction, have achieved a previously unknown prominence. With the newfound hegemony of visual representations of space comes a new conjunction of vision, knowledge, and power" (365). To distinguish the geographic perspective of the *Soledades* from the *mappaemundi* passages of Camões and Ercilla, Padrón cites Denis

Cosgrove's term, "Apollo's eye," for the "commanding point of view" in Renaissance epic: "a 'synoptic and omniscient, intellectually detached" gaze that looks down on the earth" (372-3).[21] Padrón contrasts the use of nomenclature in classical *descriptio* and in the *mappaemundi* passages of *Os Lusíadas* and *La Araucana* with the diatribe against navigation in *Soledades* I.366-502: "Places are not named or described so as to make them 'present to the mind's eye.' Instead, they are at once figured and displaced" by mythological allusion. He argues that the substitution of geographic nomenclature of the islands of the Southern Pacific with an ominous reference to "Actaeon's fateful discovery of Diana and her nymphs bathing in the Eurota" in lines 481-91 implies a "claim about their moral significance as the source of that seductive but dangerous commodity that will destroy those who make it the object of their quest" (371).[22] While Vitagliano compares the *Soledades* to the Flemish genre of "World" paintings, the epic perspective of "Apollo's eye" implied in these works of art is challenged by Padrón's argument that the poem is structured by an implicit critique of that perspective.

In *Soledad primera,* lines 182-211, a stony promontory reveals a vista with the vast dimensions of the Flemish *Weltlandschaft* discussed by Vitagliano. A goatherd leads the *peregrino* to a place where

> … levantado
> distante pocos pasos del camino,
> imperïoso mira la campaña
> un escollo apacible, galería
> que festivo teatro fue algún día
> de cuantos pisan Faunos la montaña.
> Llegó y, a vista tanta
> obedeciendo la dudosa planta,
> inmóvil se quedó sobre un lentisco,
> verde balcón del agradable risco.
> Si mucho poco mapa les despliega,
> mucho es más lo que (nieblas desatando)
> confunde el Sol y la distancia niega. (184-96)[23]

The action of perception is displaced onto the "escollo," the topographical feature that elevates the *peregrino*, together with his goatherd guide, and provides an unimpeded view. A natural stone outcrop, it is assimilated into the theatrical architecture of the Baroque

city as it is transformed into a "galería" and "verde balcón" (187, 193).[24] Finally, the three-dimensional architectural metaphor and the terrain visible from it is flattened into a two-dimensional Baroque surface that can be folded or unfolded, magnified or reduced in the puzzling, apparently self-consuming hieroglyph of "mucho" that is also "poco." While the personifying adjective "imperïoso" (187) suggests a dominating gaze, Huergo and Padrón point out that it is undermined by the blurring of sunlight and distance from this vantage point. Huergo comments: "Los dos emblemas por excelencia de la visión—el mapa y el sol—están tachados … A pesar de la perspectiva caballera, el peregrino no domina el paisaje, sino que es dominado por éste" (228). Padrón concurs, and elaborates upon the implications of this passage's epic gesture and its frustration of the Apollonian "cartographic observer":

> The glare of the sun in the dissolving mists, however, denies the pilgrim the optical clarity typical of cartography's claims for itself. … Furthermore, it is the highlander who must draw his attention to the ruins of fortifications that dot the landscape spread out beneath him. Half obscured by vegetation, these ruins hint of epics all but forgotten (212-21). What is visible, then, can be only half seen, and that, in turn, can be only dimly understood … In this way the passage marks Góngora's purpose, not to reproduce the visible clarity of Brueghel (or of his friend Ortelius) but to bring into question the conjunction of cartographic vision, geographic knowledge, and imperial power. (379)

The landscape described in lines 182-211 evolves into a map that unfolds, revealing not only the flexible dimensions of space but the passage of time and the illusory recuperative power of memory. The limited space of the promontory opens onto the view of a much larger one, and the world moves around the stationary *peregrino*'s embodied viewpoint. He and his guide face a panorama of nature and ruins that reminds the *cabrero* of past glories. The present view is transformed by memory, and the result is a meditation on the effect of time and nature on human ambition and artifice.

Lines 267-352 present a contrast to the suggestion of the imperious gaze suspended in air as the *peregrino* first ventures out. As a group of youths rest beside a stream, he conceals himself in the hollow of a tree to watch, unseen, the spectacle of young peasant women tentatively

identified as "bacantes," "ninfas" serving Diana, or "amazonas," and earlier as "Hamadríadas," wood-nymphs. These possibilities are discarded: the women are unarmed and they serve no authority. Robert Jammes explains the *peregrino*'s retreat to the tree as deference to the village maidens: "hubiera sido indecoroso ... que un noble de la corte, con todo lo que implica de poder de seducción con su rango social, su juventud y su hermosura, abordara a unas jóvenes solas en el campo," referring to the multitude of *romances* that narrate the abuse of power by aristocratic seducers who encounter village maidens in idyllic natural settings (252). The *peregrino* emerges to exchange courteous greetings with them in line 356 after the *serranas* have danced and made music and a group of youths have arrived, weary from the burden of carrying various animals for the wedding feast, and made themselves comfortable in their beloveds' laps. The reference to the absence of "Sileno" in this passage suggests, while also denying, the potential Bacchanalian nature of the gathering.

In contrast to the viewpoint of the conquering figure of epic, Góngora's passive *peregrino*, a mere observer, provoked the vituperation of Juan de Jáuregui in his *Antídoto.* Jáuregui regarded him as a "mirón," a voyeur, an accusation that seems most apt in this passage: "De una encina embebido / en lo cóncavo, el joven mantenía / la vista de hermosura, y el oído / de métrica armonía" (267-70). As a result of the merging of space, observer, and object of observation, the *peregrino*'s observation post, the hollow of a tree, bears only a very limited analogy to the technology of the *camera obscura* so central to theorizing the visual in the seventeenth century. "Embebido," the *peregrino* is absorbed by the living tree. By referring to his visual experience of beauty in the Ciceronian and Virgilian terms of nourishment—"mantenía / la vista de hermosura"—the lyric speaker dissolves this passive figure into the landscape (Jammes 252). The porosity of his subjectivity in this passage is illuminated by Chemris's observation of "the imagery of assimilation and disintegration" in a series of passages that divide reality into multiple perspectives: "the estrangement the subject experiences in a world no longer safely delimited is exteriorized as a vision of disintegration" (Chemris 80).

Key to the Baroque conceptualization of the visual is its ambivalence: capable of revealing truths, it can also deceive through false appearances or distortion of perception. If vision is the most intellectual of the

senses, it has the closest relationship to mental processes of memory and imagining, while philosophical concepts are most often explained in terms of space relations. The space relations in Sor Juana's *Primero sueño* are, initially, cosmic. Not merely disembodied, they are extra-terrestrial: she projects the geometric figure of a pyramid (in this case conic) into space and this "lugubrious" monument of a past civilization, as well as of human ambition, fails to reach its lunar goal. The visual figure of the relationships between the two heavenly bodies, and the references to the stars are markedly abstract. Both Góngora's *Soledad primera* and Sor Juana's *Primero sueño* open with, respectively, astrological and astronomical references. In the earlier poem, the celestial is fleshed out, as Jupiter in the rape of Europa. The Zodiac as space is shaped into time in the opening lines of Góngora's poem; and in Sor Juana's, it is presented as cosmic geometry, a pyramid whose ritual association with death is evident in the adjective "funesta." The lines "de vanos obeliscos punta altiva, / escalar pretendiendo las Estrellas" (1: 3-4) foreshadow the failure of "Alma's" vain attempts to scale the heavens. Throughout the poem, metaphorical relationships stage the Baroque drama of ambition and failure, creating a series of condensed versions of the searching mind pitting itself against unattainable knowledge.

The imagery of the visual in Sor Juana's long passage regarding the body is located not in the eye but in the mind. In lines 267-79 "fantasía" is compared to the polished surface of the mirror in the lighthouse at Alexandria, with the difference that it can reveal not only what is near and far away, but also what does not have visible form. In waking life the imagination, the faculty that processes the information of the senses and the mind, is the link between interior and exterior, microcosm and macrocosm. In the epistemological *Sueño*, vision is freed from the body, yet even in dream the limits of human knowledge cannot be transcended. The free flight into space cannot carry the mind to the peak of knowledge, which is obscured by a belt of clouds. As the body awakens in the last hundred lines of the poem, the eye is figured as a "linterna mágica" that projects images onto "fantasía," forming a bridge between body and mind, and between mind and the world surrounding the body. However, the poem does not end with the abstract intellect; it ends with a female, colonial subject, geographically situated in "nuestro Hemisferio ... a luz más cierta / el Mundo iluminado, y yo despierta."

(1: 974-75). *Primero sueño* frames the triumph of this subject, as well as its failure, in terms of the cognitive process of perception.

Paz, Rivers, and Buxó have contrasted the microcosmic and macrocosmic imagery in Sor Juana's dreamscape to the sensory richness of plants, animals, and landscape in Góngora's *Polifemo* and *Soledades*. This difference casts into sharp relief the philosophical nature of the Mexican poet's emulation of Góngora. More significant than the separation of time, geography, gender, and position with regard to political and ecclesiastical power is the attention to metaphors of visual perception and to the role of the observer in the play of presence and absence in both poets' work. In poetry throughout the seventeenth century, the most obvious impact of Góngora's model was stylistic. Sor Juana, however, closer to the philosophy of the Enlightenment than to that of the Renaissance, perceived in the *Soledades* more than the hyperbolic excess of the Baroque; she found an optic for the mind's exploration. *Primero sueño* resonates with the *Soledades*' rejection of the imperial gaze, a stance that disturbed Gongora's contemporaries. Taking up this skepticism toward ideologies of empire and the cosmologies that supported it, Sor Juana set out to map the territory of the mind, anticipating the epistemologies of modernity.

Notes

[1] On the "foregrounding" of illusion in art through systematic distortion, including anamorphosis, see Luciani ("Anamorphosis"), who draws upon Ernest Gilman's *The Curious Perspective* and Claudio Guillén's "On the Concept and Metaphor of Perspective in Painting." Luciani attributes Sor Juana's knowledge of visual theory to Athanasius Kircher's *Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae* (1646) ("Anamorphosis" 425).
[2] Luciani reproduces a diagram of another optical device called the *instrumentum mesopticum* that projected a figure onto a translucent piece of vellum, allowing a painter to trace its outline; he posits a connection between this device and the "sombra" and "forma fantástica" of "Detente, sombra de mi bien esquiva," and to the "pincel invisible" of the "fantasía" in *Primero sueño* ("Emblems" 169). In linking these sonnets to "optical" emblems he draws upon Dario Puccini's 1986 article on emblematic images in Sor Juana's verse. Luciani brings these images into dialogue with the history of the sonnet "Verde embeleso" as a painted inscription on the 1713 portrait by Juan de Miranda ("Emblems" 162).
[3] In addition to the purposes traditionally associated with the invention and painterly uses of perspective, Kubovy and Tyler propose "a *deliberate* discrepancy between the viewer's actual point of view and a virtual point of view experienced by the viewer on the basis of cues contained in the perspectival organization of the painting" ("The Arrow in the Eye" 1).
[4] Kubovy and Tyler analyze painters' experimentation with the "robustness" of perspective, which "shows that the visual system does not assume that the center of projection coincides with the viewer's vantage point" and "suggests that the visual system infers the correct location of the center of projection. For if it did not, the perceived scene would not contain right angles where familiar objects do. We do not know how the visual system does this" (Kubovy and Tyler 1).
[5] While Crary is concerned with the effects of technological innovation since the beginning of the nineteenth century, he posits the *camera obscura* as a model for the "geometrical optics" that preceded modern "physiological optics," based on the body's processes of perception rather than on the behavior of light (16).
[6] The introduction to Panofsky's *Early Netherlandish Painting* (1953) appears to be a synopsis of the earlier essay, but Keith Moxey explains how "in the earlier article, he stressed the artificial and projective quality of perspective" while "the geometric perspective of the Renaissance—viewed from the vantage point of 1953—is not just a device for obtaining illusionistic effects of space, but according to Panofsky, it actually coincides with the way in which the world is structured" (777). Moxey contrasts "Panofsky's 'perspectivalism,' his conviction that the interpreter's point of view creates and fashions knowledge that is backed by an epistemological guarantee, with Nietzsche's 'perspectivism,' in which the metaphor of perspective relativized all claims to knowledge"; Jay's historical view of "the denigration of vision as a basis for knowledge" in twentieth-century French philosophy; and

Haraway's argument in favor of "situated knowledge" with limited rather than universalizing claims (782-83).

[7] Bryan addresses Sor Juana's treatment of color in two sonnets, "Este que ves, engaño colorido"(1.277) and "Verde embeleso de la vida humana" (1.280-81).

[8] García Santo-Tomás analyzes Luis Vélez de Guevara's use of "mirrors, lenses, telescopes, spectacles, and even the eye's retina" in *El diablo cojuelo* [1641] as "doubly fascinating, for it revels in the eternal follies of spectacles while cautiously inquiring about the new mysteries of the skies above" (67).

[9] Smith finds "not so much a simple reversal of the paradigm, as the collapse of the economy of meaning" in the feminization of Acis and the "marks of castration and death" in the passage in which he offers his gifts to Galatea (67). Barnard discusses the alternation and mirroring of male and female gaze in *Polifemo* in psychoanalytic terms, and argues that despite the reversal, Acis "is the true predator" (74).

[10] See Pascual Buxó, "Sor Juana y Góngora: Teoría y práctica de la imitación poética" for a detailed account of the context in which Sor Juana responded to Góngora's *Soledades*.

[11] Crary explains his preference for the term "observer" as opposed to "spectator" for the same reason that Egginton preferred the latter: for its theatrical connotations.

[12] Scholarly opinion varies regarding the possible identities of the transgressive creatures: the owl Nictimene, punished for incest; the bats who were once Minyas's daughters, who refused to participate in devotion to Bacchus; and Ascalaphus, also turned into an owl. Jean Franco interprets their sacrilege as a crime not only against the divine but against "true art, a crime with which Sor Juana might well have accused some of her ecclesiastical superiors (34-35).

[13] Cancelliere comments on the play of exterior and interior in this passage, viewing the cavern as tomb, monstrous mouth, and entrance to Hell, but also as a Baroque theatrical space (107-8).

[14] Although the failure of Earth's shadow to reach the moon is described in these initial lines of *Primero sueño*, Pérez Amador Adam cites Américo Larralde's interpretation that the poem refers to a lunar eclipse between 2 and 6 a.m. on December 22, 1684, together with a discussion of the seventeenth-century scholarly sources of Sor Juana's knowledge of astronomy (Pérez Amador Adam 112-13).

[15] Most scholars regard the reference to imitation of Góngora in *Primero sueño* as having been added by an editor (Pascual Buxó 344; Grossi 38). Perelmuter (*Noche intelectual*) points out the importance of other intertexts, in particular, Herrera's *cultismos*.

[16] The single word "digo" appears in lines 47, 226, 328, 399, 460, 690, 795, and 947. Perelmuter includes them in her discussion of deictics, identifying them as devices to "retomar el hilo de la narración o para identificar algo que había sido descrito perifrásticamente." She suggests that they serve as correctives to the poem's "estilo culto y digresivo" ("Situación" 186-87). In addition, the flow of

the third-person lyric voice is interrupted by numerous interjections set off by parentheses and dashes, creating an interwoven layering of voices.

[17] Saldarriaga suggests a reading of *Primero sueño* as architectural treatise in dialogue not only with Athanasius Kircher's *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* but also with Juan Caramuel y Lobkowitz's *Arquitectura civil recta y oblicua* (1678), which incorporated ellipses and oblique angles, and Juan Bautista Villalpando's influential early seventeenth-century attempts to reconcile Vitruvius with an imaginative reconstruction of Solomon's temple (28-48).

[18] In "Embodying the Visual, Visualizing Sound in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's *Primero sueño*," I explain how this opening line creates virtual spatial forms in its phonetic and semantic sequence.

[19] In his note to lines 400-407, Méndez Plancarte cites Vossler's interpretation based on the explication of an engraving of intersecting triangles in Kircher's treatise (1: 594, citing Vossler 110 ff).

[20] Enrica Cancelliere's reading of the *Polifemo* as a series of tableaux emphasizes the painterly uses of color and space in the poem's "pulsión escópica" (55) and compares each visual image in the poem with a wealth of Renaissance and Baroque painting and sculpture.

[21] Cosgrove's term, derived from literary practice in a specific genre and literary period, bears some obvious similarities with "the god-trick of seeing everything from nowhere" critiqued by Haraway.

[22] Beverley's historical approach to the poem's tension between epic and pastoral (59-69) frames his analysis of the passage's condemnation of the "tragic hubris of the Conquest" and the pilgrim's recognition of "his own destiny in archetypes of disaster brought on by an excess of desire" (67). Ammann, Bultman, and Sasaki address the anti-imperialist critique implicit in the diatribe against navigation; Gaylord perceives the violence of conquest as rape, as "Codicia plays the role of Concupiscencia" ("Metaphor and Fable" 104).

[23] Jammes's punctuation of line 187 differs from most other twentieth-century editions; he justifies it in terms of reliable early manuscript and printed versions and the "ritmo de la versión primitiva" (236, 238).

[24] See Beverley 76-79 on this passage. The ruins visible from the "galería" represent "human architecture transformed into an aesthetics of the diffuse and accidental" (78).

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