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THE FEMALE BODY OF SOR JUANA'S SUBJECT AND THE LANGUAGE OF GONGORISM *IN EPINICIO AL VIRREY CONDE DE GALVE* (1691)[1]

EL CUERPO FEMENINO DEL SUJETO DE SOR JUANA Y EL LENGUAJE DEL GONGORISMO EN EL *EPINICIO AL VIRREY CONDE DE GALVE* (1691)

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Abstract:
In the *Epinicio al virrey conde de Galve* (1691), Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz presents an overtly female speaker. Most of the composition, in a departure from the norms of the epinikion, builds the myth of this female speaker instead of praising the hero to whom the poem is dedicated. The *Epinicio* sings on the effects of masculine colonial power, of which the Viceroy is a synecdoche, on the female poetic persona through three figures of comparison: Semele, a raincloud, and the Sibyl. All three female figures are subjected by masculine power, and their bodies are destroyed by bearing that power's offspring. Through an analysis of the *Epinicio*, this essay explores Sor Juana's understanding of the subjection of her female poetic persona in the context of epideictic poetry, and what the *Epinicio* has to say about Gongorism as a language for the poetic subject.

Keywords: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz; *Epinicio al virrey conde de Galve*; Colonial Latin American poetry; Colonial Gongorism; Early modern literary subject; Early modern women writers

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1 Antonio Arraiza Rivera (Wellesley College), Nicole Legnani (Princeton University), and Juan Vitulli (University of Notre Dame) made comments to an earlier draft of this article that helped me improve it. This essay is dedicated to Erica Holberg, in light of whose mind ablaze it was written.

Resumen:
En el *Epinicio al virrey conde de Galve* (1691), Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz presenta a un hablante poético claramente femenino. La mayor parte de la composición, al contrario que el epinicio tradicional, elabora el mito de ese hablante femenino en vez de elogiar al héroe a quien está dedicado el poema. El *Epinicio* canta los efectos del poder masculino colonial, del cual el virrey es una sinécdoque, en la persona poética femenina a través de tres figuras de comparación: Sémele, una nube cargada de lluvia, y la Sibila. Las tres figuras femeninas están sometidas por el poder masculino, y sus cuerpos son destruidos al dar a luz la progenie de tal poder. Mediante el análisis del *Epinicio*, este ensayo explora la concepción que Sor Juana tenía de la sujeción de su persona poética femenina en el contexto de la poesía de circunstancias, y qué dice el *Epinicio* sobre el gongorismo como lenguaje del sujeto poético.

Palabras clave: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz; *Epinicio al virrey conde de Galve*; Poesía latinoamericana colonial; Gongorismo colonial; Sujeto literario en el Siglo de Oro; Escritoras del Siglo de Oro

The *Epinicio al virrey conde de Galve* (poem 215)[2] by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648-1695), stands among that small group of poems by the Mexican author where the poetic speaker is overtly female. As Rosa Perelmuter notices, "Sor Juana […] rutinariamente evitaba emplear marcadores genéricos en sus poemas, prefiriendo hablantes de género ambiguo o indefinido" (78). The *Epinicio* was published in the *Epinicios gratulatorios con que algunos de los cultissimos Ingenios Mexicanos […] celebraron al Ex.mo Señor Don Gaspar de Sandoval*, a collection of poems by various authors that was appended to the *Trofeo de la justicia española en el castigo de la alevosía francesa* (Mexico, 1691) by Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, an account of the victory, in January of 1691, of the Spanish Windward Fleet over the French at Santiago de los Caballeros. By presenting a female poetic speaker, the *Epinicio* joined the company of major poems by Sor Juana that had been printed in *Inundación castálida* (Madrid, 1689), such as the *romances* "Lo atrevido de un pincel" (poem 19) and "Grande duquesa de Aveiro" (poem 37), or her masterpiece, *Primero Sueño* (poem 216), which would appear in *Segundo volumen de las obras* (Seville, 1692). With this latter poem, the *Epinicio* shares two other prominent features: the *silva* meter, an alternation of heptasyllabic and hendecasyllabic lines pat-

2 All poetry by Sor Juana is cited from the edition by Antonio Alatorre; parenthetical references are to line numbers. Each poem is designated by its first line, except the *Epinicio*; its ordinal number, set by Alfonso Méndez Plancarte and maintained by Alatorre, is provided as well.

terned at the poet's discretion; and Sor Juana's version of the high poetic idiom that Luis de Góngora (1561-1627) first unveiled in *Canción de la toma de Larache* (1610) and fully developed in the *Fábula de Polifemo y Galatea* (1612) and the *Soledades* (1613-1617). Since then, and for the rest of the seventeenth century on both sides of the Atlantic, it became an object of admiration and imitation for many, and of scandal and scathing criticism for as many others. Even though Sor Juana's *Epinicio* contains no possessive first-person pronouns in the feminine, or participles referred to a woman speaker, "female corporeal imagery" (Merrim 182) in connection to the speaker occupies 54 of the *silva*'s 142 lines; that is, about 38% of the piece's total.

There, precisely, lies another peculiarity of Sor Juana's *Epinicio*: its lopsided structure, which sets it apart from the usual epinikion and privileges the speaker over the hero whom she celebrates. The epinikion, "an ode commemorating a victory" of Greek origin, typically contained "an account of the victory of the hero, a myth (the most important part of the poem, relating the victor's deed to the glorious past of his family), and the conclusion, which returned to the praise of the victor and ended with reflective admonitions or even a prayer" (Brogan and Costas 450). Sor Juana's *Epinicio*, however, is divided into three sections: an *exordium* (1-96) where the speaker salutes the Viceroy of New Spain, announces that she shall provide "No cabal relación, indicio breve / sí, de tus glorias, Silva esclarecido" (1-2), and proceeds to seek his benevolence by explaining the effect of his deeds on her mind and female body; a *narratio* (97-123) of his heroic deed; and a *peroratio* (124-42), where the speaker urges Fame and the Muses to sing the Viceroy's praise as well. In other terms, the *Epinicio* presents what José Pascual Buxó called a "desproporción" (267) between the *exordium*, which occupies 67% of the poem, against the *narratio*'s 19%.

Even though the speaker praises the Viceroy throughout the poem, the myth section of her epinikion tells not of him, his lineage, and his exploits, but of her own self and her subjection, in the double sense of subjugation, of being subjected to power, and of becoming an individual in language—a poetic subject. In the late Baroque period, as George Anthony Thomas posits, occasional poetry provided Sor Juana and other colonial women writers unique opportunities "to create promotional propaganda to legitimize their literary endeavors" and to access a larger reading public through print (7; see also 37-38). To borrow what Thomas says of Horace, the model of imitation in Sor Juana's occasional poetry, in the *Epinicio* she "prioritizes the creation of a poetic persona" (51). Indeed, the *Epinicio* is uttered by a persona, in the sense of a "speaker (or more generally, the source) of any poem that is imagined to be spoken in a distinctive voice or narrated from a determinate vantage" (Izenberg 1024); in this case, a creole, virgin nun subject to the Viceroy's power, like the actual Sor Juana.

The *Epinicio* by Sor Juana explores the subjection of her poetic persona and what the high Gongorine idiom reveals about that process and its consequences. The study of this poem illuminates key questions about Sor Juana's poetry, Gongorism in colonial Latin American literature, and the literary subject of the late Hispanic Baroque. Throughout this essay I understand subject in the double sense recognized by Louis Althusser: "1) une subjectivité libre: un centre d'initiatives, auteur et responsable de ses actes; 2) un être assujetti, soumis à une autorité superiéure, donc dénué de toute liberté, sauf d'accepter librement sa soumission" (36). The prominence of the female gender of the poetic persona drives us to ask, what are the implications of the female gender for Sor Juana's poetic subject and her subjection? Why figure her speaker as embodied as a female, and why do so within a piece of public, epideictic poetry? Moreover, if it is language that brings the individual into subjectivity, as Althusser theorizes (31-32), and the subject is "a linguistic category, a placeholder, a structure in formation" that the individual comes to occupy because there, and only there, it can "enjoy intelligibility", as Judith Butler elaborates (10-11), what does the language of the *Epinicio* reveal about the subjugation and subjectivity of its poetic subject? Given the prominence of her gender in the poem, what are the verbal consequences of being a female subject, according to the *Epinicio*? And what qualities of the obscure idiom of Góngora's *Soledades* render it, in Sor Juana's *Epinicio*, the language of her persona's subjection? And finally, what does Sor Juana's *Epinicio* reveal the literary subject in the late Hispanic Baroque? In order to shed light on these questions, I will begin by examining the female figures in the poem's *exordium*, figures with whom Sor Juana's persona assimilates herself, and through which she explores her subjection. From that analysis, I will elaborate on the four salient features of their subjection. To conclude, I will return to the questions that frame this reading.

The *Epinicio al virrey conde de Galve* by Sor Juana launches, as we saw earlier, with an address to the dedicatee:

> No cabal relación, indicio breve
> sí, de tus glorias, Silva esclarecido,
> será el débil sonido
> de rauca voz, que a tus acciones debe
> cuantos sonoros bebe
> de Hipocrene en la fuente numerosa
> alientos soberanos,
> que el influjo reciben de tus manos. (1-8)

Sor Juana's poetic persona announces that what she shall convey is a mere "indicio breve" of the Viceroy's great deeds, and she attributes to his "acciones" the inspiration that moves her "rauca voz", whose sound she decries as "débil". In the next 55 lines, she explains that the weakness and hoarseness that mar her poetic utterance is due to the effect that the Viceroy, as a poetic matter, has on her "entendimiento" (24). To convey this, she compares herself to or assimilates with three female figures dominated by male power, overwhelmed by its magnificence, and burst from within by it. The first figure is Semele (9-24), in Gongorine fashion alluded to but not named, whose myth is found in the *Metamorphosis* (book 3, lines 253-315) by Ovid. When Juno learns that Semele, a mortal woman, is pregnant with the child of her husband Jupiter, she disguises herself as Semele's nurse and convinces her to ask Jupiter to prove that he is the god he claims to be by manifesting himself in his full glory. The god, having promised to grant her whatever boon she wished, shows himself as Juno sees him, and of course Semele's "corpus mortale tumultus / non tulit aetherios donisque iugalibus arsit" (13.308-09)[3]. While she perishes, Jupiter pulls out his son Bacchus "inperfectus adhuc infans genetricis ab alvo" (13.310)[4].

In Sor Juana's *Epinicio*, the Viceroy is identified with Jupiter and the poem he inspires in the poet, with Bacchus:

> los conceptos aborta mal formados,
> informes embrïones,
> no partos sazonados,
> si bien de lumbres claras concebidos:
> cuando hijos no lucidos
> o partos no perfetos,
> lucientes serán fetos
> del divino ardimiento
> que tu luz engendró en mi entendimiento. (16-24)

The vision of the Viceroy, a "divino ardimiento" similar to Jupiter's "tumultus / […] aetherios", begets in the poetic persona's "entendimiento"—the highest faculty of her rational soul—a series of "conceptos", which designate by synecdoche the entire poem. But, as Semele before the unimpeded vision of the godhead, the "pecho […] escaso, / que a copia tanta limitado es vaso" (13-14) of Sor Juana's poetic persona aborts or gives premature birth to the "conceptos", just as Bacchus was aborted or borne prematurely by Semele's body

3 "Her mortal body bore not the onrush of heavenly power, and by that gift of wedlock she was consumed" (1: 147). Translations are those cited in the bibliography.

4 "The babe still not wholly fashioned is snatched from the mother's womb" (1: 147).

ablaze. The "conceptos", synecdochic for the entire poem, are characterized as "mal formados, / informes embrïones, / no partos sazonados". Their shortcomings are not blamed on the Viceroy's deeds, the matter to which they refer and that inspired them ("de lumbres claras concebidos"), but rather to a woman's foolish desire for the highest knowledge—a woman whom the Ovidian narrator deems *ignara* or ignorant (3.287). Thus, in this section, the gendering of the poetic persona as female is linked to the pain and the punishment that she deserves for wishing to know what is beyond her reach, and to maternity as the core of female identity.

Figuring the "conceptos" that integrate the poem as "partos" harks to a metaphorical linkage in early modern culture between biological and artistic reproduction (see Bass 64), which was dominated by a gendered division of labor: the man is imagined as formal cause and artist, while the woman as material cause and matter (70). Thus, Sor Juana's persona modestly gives credit to the Viceroy as the formal cause of the poem and emphasizes her female subjugation to him. She is also discreetly affirming, as Antonio Arraiza Rivera observes, the "ascendencia lírica" of the *Epinicio* (175), given that the metaphor of the poetic work as a son finds illustrious examples in the ancient and early modern lyric tradition (e.g., Ovid, *Tristes* 3.14.13-14, 1.7.35, and 3.1.65; and Vega, *Rimas*, sonnet 1.3-4; see Curtius 1: 196-98; and Arraiza Rivera 175); more specifically, Sor Juana takes from Petronius the metaphor of "partum mens" for poetic work (*Satyricon* 294; ch. 118).

The subjection of Sor Juana's poetic persona as female deepens in the next section (25-37), in which she assimilates her "entendimiento" with a raincloud whence the lightning strikes: "Así preñada nube, congojada / de la carga pesada / de térreas condensada exhalaciones" (25-27). Unable, like in the previous simile, to contain her son, the female subject's womb is ripped open by him:

> el pavoroso seno
> que concibió máquina fogosa
> (que ya imitó después la tiranía
> en ardiente fatal artillería),
> rasga, y el hijo aborta luminoso,
> que en su vientre aun no cupo vaporoso. (32-37)[5]

The emphasis here shifts from the punishment that befalls the foolish and daring woman to the inevitable destruction of the mother by the male power she bears but cannot contain in

5 Along with Martha Lilia Tenorio (569), I concur with Alatorre's emendation of line 32: "el pavoroso seno" instead of the original *lectio*, "el pavoroso zeño." Arraiza Rivera argues in favor of keeping the original *lectio*, and interprets "zeño" as an allusion to the birth of Pallas Athena from Jupiter's forehead, or "pavoroso zeño" (176-77). But that would mean that Sor Juana breaks the deliberate pattern of assimilation of her persona with women overwhelmed by male power and assimilates her, for a single line, with the king of gods no less.

her "vientre" or womb. In the *Metereologica* by Aristotle, from which Sor Juana derives her understanding about rainclouds, thunder, and lightning (Galicia Lechuga 10; see Aristotle 231-39; 2.9.370a22-3.1.371b17), the latter is clearly understood as a fire—which evokes the fire that consumed Semele.

The first two female figures are synthetized in the next section (38-62), in which the poetic persona compares herself to the Sibyl:

> O como de alto numen agitada
> la, aunque virgen, preñada
> de conceptos divinos,
> Pitonisa doncella
> de Delfos, encendida,
> inflamada la mente,
> entre rotas dicciones,
> en cláusulas pronuncia desatadas,
> de voces salpicadas
> de estilo inconsecuente,
> los que el pecho sella
> misterios… (38-43)

Sor Juana fittingly identifies the Gongorine idiom she deploys in this poem with the enigmatic utterances of the Sibylline oracles (Buxó 257); indeed, to the uninitiated plebs, the *Epinicio*'s convoluted and Latinate syntax, irregular alternation of heptasyllabic and hendecasyllabic lines, mythological allusions, and obscure vocabulary certainly seemed "rotas dicciones, / […] cláusulas […] desatadas, / de voces salpicadas / de estilo inconsecuente"; and so "regulan desatinos / humanas atenciones" (49-50).

Despite the "como" that stresses analogy over identity, the Sibyl turns the *Epinicio*'s poetic speaker into Sor Juana's poetic persona by highlighting attributes that recall her profession as a nun: virginity and dedication to a deity. Tellingly, the Sibyl quickly emerged as one of Sor Juana's self-fashioning devices. Later in the same year, Jacinto de Laedesa Verástegui affirmed that the Mexican nun emulated the seven Sibyls in his dedication of her *Villancicos […] de Santa Catarina de Alejandría* (Puebla, 1691; see Buxó 271-74). In the context of 1691, it was a most welcome compliment for Sor Juana. By embracing the Sibyl as model of imitation, she rejected Pallas Athena, which Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz, bishop of Puebla, had foisted upon her the previous year. He had printed, without her consent, her confutation of a famous sermon by António de Vieira, gave it the title *Carta atenagórica* ("Letter worthy of Athena"), and prefaced it with an insulting letter to Sor Juana penned by a certain

"Sor Filotea". Sor Juana finished the famous *Respuesta a Sor Filotea* in early 1691. Embracing the Sibyl also allowed her to reject the monikers of Mexican Phoenix or Tenth Muse, which were used to pigeonhole her, as Stephanie Merrim explains regarding the latter, "as an *exception* to her sex, as prodigious, as a rara avis, as a freak" (30), and confine her to a "third space" where she could be accepted but also contained (31). The Sibyl may be interpreted by Fernández de Santa Cruz and other powerful men made uncomfortable by Sor Juana's learning and work as a figure of submission, as Buxó does (266), but also as a key intermediary with the divine who is in the possession of knowledge of great import for the body politic.

But in the *Epinicio*, the foregrounded trait shared by Sor Juana's persona and the Sibyl is the pain experienced by their female bodies as they attain a superior knowledge, the narrowness of their bodies to contain the masculine potency that flows through them, and in short, their subordination to a man's might:

> que así el humano pecho
> —aunque gustoso sea, aunque süave—
> a ardor divino estrecho
> viene; y el que no cabe,
> no sólo en voces sale atropelladas
> del angosto arcaduz de la garganta,
> pero, buscando de explicarse modos,
> lenguas los miembros todos
> quiere hacer, con acciones desmandadas,
> que a copia sirvan tanta. (53-56)

Once again, the "humano pecho" of Sor Juana's poetic persona is too small to contain the "ardor divino" sired in her by the Viceroy, and the narrowness of her windpipe, figured as a brimming "arcaduz", evokes a cervix about to be split open by the male potency going through it. Like the Cumaean Sibyl seized by Apollo when consulted by Aeneas in Virgil's *Aeneid* (book 6, lines 1-102), Sor Juana's poetic persona is overwhelmed by the Viceroy, to the point that she hopes that the frenzied heaving and quaking of the Sibyl, evidence of the god's lordship over her (*Aeneid* 6.77-80), may constitute a kind of materiality that supplements meaning, like writing does in other poems by Sor Juana (see Valencia 304). As in the case of Semele, the subjection to a power she bears forth but cannot contain, which causes her pain and to lose her own body, befalls the Sibyl because she gains access to a superior knowledge.

The three-part construction of the *Epinicio*'s poetic persona as a female subject that we have examined so far presents salient features that reveal Sor Juana's understanding of

the process whereby her poetic persona is subjected by masculine political power and in turn gains the poetic power of subjectivity. These features are, namely, the connection between physical pain and the acquisition of knowledge in women; the violent sexual nature of the interpellation issued by masculine political authority; the vocal, instead of written, manifestation of female subjectivity; and the causal relation posited between female subjection and the Gongorine poetic idiom used throughout the poem. Regarding the first feature, as Stephanie Kirk has shown in her analysis of the sonnet "¡Oh famosa Lucrecia, gentil dama" (poem 153) and the *Villancicos […] de la gloriosa mártir Santa Catarina de Alejandría* (poems 312-22), "Sor Juana often employs a vocabulary redolent of pain and suffering to evoke her search of knowledge—the famous examples of the *Primero sueño* and the *Respuesta a Sor Filotea* come to mind" (2008, 38). Sor Juana did so as part of her larger effort to challenge "what seemed to be the inextricable link forged between masculinity and erudition" (2016, 9). Although pain and knowledge had deep links in medieval and early modern culture, on Biblical (e.g., Eccles. 1.13) and classical (e.g., Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, line 177) authority, Sor Juana subverted "a multi-layered paradigm that posited women's relationship with pain and knowledge as different, and inferior, to that of men" (Kirk, 2008, 44). In the *Epinicio*, by placing the Sibyl as the concluding figure in a gradation, Sor Juana connected the pain incurred by her female persona in acquiring knowledge with the virginity and religious profession of the ancient Sibyls, who communicated not banal knowledge, but revelations handed down by Apollo himself about "the nature of the gods and […] future events", revelations that "were not concerned with individual circumstances, but rather the forces that influenced the advancement and destruction of nations" (Malay 4). Moreover, the pain suffered by Sor Juana's persona occurs in the act of giving birth or pronouncing "conceptos" with which she is "preñada" (39-40); that is, as a necessary and inevitable consequence of being embodied as female and as woman whose gender identity is centered on maternity—both physical and symbolic. Thus, she displays the pain of childbirth as a mark of legitimacy for the female speaker, and turns into an asset the identification between femininity and the material cause in the Aristotelian tradition.

As to the second feature, Sor Juana identifies the Viceroy's mighty exploits, the object of celebration in Sigüenza y Góngora's *Trofeo de la justicia española* and the other poems in the *Epinicios gratulatorios*, as what interpellates her persona as individual into becoming a subject who expresses itself through poetry. Interpellation, as we know, is what Althusser termed the operation, in his example a call from a policeman, that "'recrute' des sujets parmi les individus […], ou 'transforme' les individus en sujets" when the individual recognizes "que l'interpellation s'adressait 'bien' à lui, et que 'c'était *bien lui* qui était interpellé'" (31). As a woman, Sor Juana's persona recognizes her subjugation and female subjectivity when

her "entendimiento" is impregnated by the Viceroy's "luz" (24) or "ardor divino" (55), and her womb or throat are filled with a male potency that she cannot contain and that inflicts pain and even death. In other words, the pain of the female body in the *Epinicio* is the Althusserian turn by which the individual embodied as a female—Semele, the "preñada nube" (25), the "Pitonisa doncella / de Delfos" (41-42)—becomes a female subject.

The reproductive terms in which the Viceroy's inspiring presence is figured, the insistence on female pain, and the repeated allusions to overwhelmed cavities of the female body, like "pecho […] escaso, / que a copia tanta limitado es vaso" (13-14), "en su vientre aun no cupo" (37) "humano pecho / […] / a ardor divino estrecho" (53-55), and "el angosto arcaduz de la garganta" (58), remind us of a metonymic relation, rooted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and early modern political theory, between men's power and sexual violence against women. For instance, early modern princes commissioned rape scenes, taken frequently from the *Metamorphoses*, to decorate their palaces because they "came to appreciate the particular luster rape scenes could give to their own claims to absolute sovereignty" (Carroll 5)[6].

The myths of Semele and the Sibyl, however, stand out in the *Metamorphoses* precisely because neither is a victim of forcible sexual penetration. In the *Epinicio*, Sor Juana's poetic persona rejects the assimilation or comparison with female mythical figures who were victims of rape, yet does not omit the sexualized victimization of the woman that results from the encounter with the masculine god. Apollo engages the Sibyl in "a prolonged sexual negotiation" (Reed 493, note 342 [14.121]), whereas he had raped Chione (11.309-17) and had attempted to rape Daphne (1.525-56); and Jupiter seems to have settled into a love affair with Semele, instead of his usually violent seizure of mortals whom he desires (Barchiesi and Rosati 164). Yet in her miserable longevity, the Sibyl is a victim of the god's sexual desires: spurned by her, he grants her an exceedingly long life, but no perpetual youth (14.141-51). And in the case of Semele, sex with Jupiter results in her annihilation. The masculine offspring begat in the *Epinicio*'s three female figures—the "conceptos" borne by Semele (16), the "hijo […] luminoso" or lightning bolt by the raincloud (36), and the "misterios" (49) by the "aunque virgen, preñada / de conceptos divinos, / Pitonisa doncella" (39-41)—destroy their mothers in highly sexualized ways. Lynn Enterline says of Ovid's epic that "in the *Metamorphoses*, the call from the law that hails or 'interpellates' the female subject *is* rape" (32). In Sor Juana's *Epinicio,* even when there is no forcible penetration from outside, masculine authority will ravish from within, literally or figuratively, the bodies of the women it interpellates into subjection when it demands of them that they reproduce the means of symbolic production of its power.

6 Merrim contends that the comparison of the *Epinicio*'s poetic persona "to a cloud pregnant with rain—a cloud, moreover, forced into giving birth" (184) contains "the expression of a rape" (183).

In recognition of interpellation and as manifestation of subjection, the female subjects of the *Epinicio* sing, not write, the third feature that distinguishes their subjugation and subjectivity. In the case of Semele, "los conceptos aborta mal formados" (16); the raincloud, as she enters labor, becomes a "víbora de vapores espantosa, / cuyo silbo es el trueno / que al cielo descompone la armonía" (29-31); and the Sibyl, as we saw, speaks her oracles: "entre rotas dicciones / en cláusulas pronuncia desatadas…" (44-45). As Arraiza Rivera has noticed, the *Epinicio* draws a sharp contrast between the femininity of voice and vocalization, on the one hand, and the masculinity of writing and *letrado* culture, on the other (179-80). In closing her excessive *exordium*, Sor Juana's persona insists that her way of praising the Viceroy is through song, not writing:

> No de otra suerte, pues, la balbuciente
> lengua, en mal pronunciadas
> cláusulas, de tus glorias solicita
> ponderar solamente
> la, para mí, más rara circunstancia;
> pues ya más bien cortadas
> plumas… (63-69)

That is, the rest of the poets in the *Epinicios gratulatorios*, all men, designated by the metonym "más bien cortadas / plumas", praise the Viceroy in writing. Vocality becomes the hallmark of Sor Juana's poetic persona like it was the hallmark of the Sibyl in Roman poetry. In Ovid's version, she knows that as her body keeps on aging, "usque adeo mutate ferar nullique videnda, / voce tamen noscar; vocem mihi fata relinquent" (14.152-53)[7]; and in Virgil's, Aeneas affirms that leaves, a scriptural technology, are a more precarious medium for the Sibyl's "carmina" than her song: "foliis tantum ne carmina manda, / ne turbata volent rapidis ludibria ventis; / ipsa canas oro" (6.74-76)[8].

A fourth and decisive feature of the construction of Sor Juana's female subject in the *Epinicio* is that it takes place through the high Gongorine idiom. There were, of course, external reasons for Sor Juana's use of it for the *elocutio* of the *Epinicio*. Sor Juana's choice of the Viceroy's "atenta providencia" (108) in sending the Windward Fleet even before he knew of the French attack on Santiago de los Caballeros as the "rara circunstancia" (67) on which to center the poem matches the Gongorine celebration of the bloodless seize of Larache in *Canción de la toma de Larache*, where Góngora unveiled his new style. What

7 "Though shrunk past recognition of the eye, still by my voice shall I be known, for the fates will leave me my voice" (2: 311).

8 "Only trust not your verses to leaves, lest they fly in disorder, the sport of rushing winds; chant them yourself, I pray" (537).

Góngora's speaker celebrates in the *Canción*, as Mercedes Blanco observes, is not military force but Machiavellian *virtù* (40); in terms of a dichotomy dear to early modern poetics and political thought, Góngora's *Canción* exalts Ulysses's "contendere verbis" over Ajax's "pugnare mani" (see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 13.9-10). This, moreover, befits the poet of *Pax Hispanica* that Góngora strives to become in his major poems, culminating in the *Soledades* (see Blanco). The other poems contained in *Epinicios gratulatorios*, by contrast to Sor Juana's *Epinicio*, do not pay much attention to the happy coincidence of the Viceroy's order (Buxó 254). That makes the subject that utters such an epinikion a crafty and eloquent poet of peace, much like Góngora.

Furthermore, by singing an epinikion in a style that imitates Góngora's signature idiom of the *Canción de la toma de Larache* and *Panegírico al Duque de Lerma* (1617), not to mention the dedicatory sections of the *Polifemo* and the *Soledades,* Sor Juana competes with the epinikia of Pindar, the father of the genre; the heroic *canciones* by Fernando de Herrera; and especially Góngora, known as "Píndaro andaluz". Indeed, he had been so declared first in a 1613 letter by Pedro de Valencia concerning his new poetic idiom, and definitively in 1630 in the title of the *Lecciones solemnes a las obras de don Lvis de Gongora y Argote, Pindaro Andaluz, Principe de los Poetas Liricos de España* (Madrid, 1630) by José Pellicer (Béhar 188).

But the choice of the Gongorine idiom for the *elocutio* of the *Epinicio* is presented by Sor Juana's persona as a matter of necessity: it is the language that the female subject speaks as a consequence of the particular way she has been subjugated by masculine power. When Sor Juana's persona tells that the Sibyl reveals mysteries "en cláusulas […] desatadas, / de voces salpicadas / de estilo inconsecuente" (45-47), or that she herself sings with "la balbuciente / lengua, en mal pronunciadas cláusulas" (63-65), she not only describes the Gongorine idiom as perceived by the *vulgus* outside of the creole lettered city: "que regulan desatinos / humanas atenciones" (49-50). Nor does she simply provide an accurate characterization of the Sibylline oracles, which in Virgil's *Aeneid* not only are difficult to interpret: "Talibus ex adyto dictis Cumaea Sibylla / horrenda canit ambages antroque remugit, / obscuris vera involvens" (6.99-100)[9]. These oracles, in the Virgilian telling, come out from the depths of the earth broken up into many voices: "Excisum Euboicae latus ingens rupis in antrum, / quo lati ducunt aditus centum, ostia centum, / unde runt totidem voces, responsae Sibyllae" (6.42-44)[10]. In Sor Juana's *Epinicio*, the Gongorine idiom is the tongue of the female subject who has been impregnated, probably forcibly, by a

9 "In these words the Cumaean Sibyl chants from the shrine her dread enigmas and booms from the cavern, wrapping truth in darkness" (539).

10 "The huge side of the Euboean rock is hewn into a cavern, into which lead a hundred wide mouths, a hundred gateways, from which rush as many voices, the answers of the Sibyl" (535).

divine male power, and whose breast or womb or throat has been overwhelmed and torn from within by the masculine and divine offspring sired in her by that masculine power, and whose body will be consumed, be it by the fire of theophany, the burning strain of childbirth, or the curse of the scorned god. Understandably, it is a voice in fragments, consisting in "partos no perfectos, / lucientes […] fetos" (21-22).

In the *Epinicio*, in other words, Sor Juana posits the obscure Gongorine idiom as the language of her colonial and feminine subjection, in the double sense of subjugation and acquisition of subjectivity. The poem tells of how her poetic persona is brought into language as a subject when interpellated by the state and asked to sing its praises. Such interpellation is figured as a violent and gendered impregnation by the Viceroy, who stands as a synecdoche of male imperial power. But this call into subjection also functions as the divine inspiration of the poem, which allows Sor Juana to claim *furor* as the source of her poetry and thus win legitimacy for her poetic subjectivity. The Sibyl, indeed, is gripped by "furor" when she speaks, in Virgil's version (*Aeneid* 6.102); in Ovid's, she is "deo furibunda recepto" (*Metamorphoses* 14.107)[11]. In the context of 1691, fresh off the bruising fight with a significant portion of the male-dominated establishment of the Mexican lettered city, Sor Juana boasts of *furor* and therefore powerlessness in order to defend her legitimacy as a literary subject. As Pedro Sánchez de Viana had explained a century earlier in his commentary on the *Metamorphoses*, *furor* is conferred to poets "por mostrar la diuina prouidencia, que las obras preclaras de poesia no son inuenciones de philosophos, sino mercedes de Dios" (fol. ¶¶2v). Claiming to be ravished by the colonial state's "luz" (24) or "ardor divino" (54) is a way of preserving subjectivity; as Butler explains, "a subject is not only formed in subordination, but […] this subordination provides the subject's continuing condition of possibility" (8).

But what does this poem say of the early modern Hispanic literary subject more broadly? The *Epinicio al virrey conde de Galve* by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz is a poem propelled but also bound by its metaphors. Therefore, it only speaks of the literary subject embodied as a woman. Such female embodiment grants the poetic persona the legitimacy of *furor*, the primacy of voice over letter, and in compensation for her pain and subordination, an honor akin to that reserved to Semele as the mother of a new god, and a knowledge comparable to that revealed to the Sibyl. But female embodiment also condemns Sor Juana's persona to take seriously the metaphor of poetic works as "partum mens", to assume the "agonía" (28) and even destruction of bearing the symbolic children of colonial power, and to be subjected to the violence through which powerful men, even in the act of being born, perform their power. It also restricts her to speak of the subjection of the woman writer in

11 "full of mad inspiration from her god" (2: 309).

the Mexican lettered city, not of the men writers, those "cisnes que cana espuma / al mar occidental surcan nevados" (77-78). The *Epinicio* closes with an apostrophe to Fame and the Muses, who

> los hechos inmortales, los famosos
> de varones gloriosos
> triunfos cantáis! Si acaso, a copia tanta,
> la voz en la garganta
> no enronquece, la cuerda no se roza
> en la sonora lira,
> la trompa vocinglera
> —que ya el vacío ocupa de la esfera
> no revienta al aliento que la inspira—,
> ¡cantad, de su Excelencia,
> valor togado y militar prudencia! (132-42)

It shall be Fame and the Muses, female figures of poetic might, who shall withstand vocal hoarseness, strained lyre strings, and cracked clarions, and celebrate "los hechos inmortales, los famosos / de varones gloriosos / triunfos". And they shall do so in song, not in the male-dominated technology of writing. But, at least in the public context of the *Epinicio*, this lyric song shall center on "varones gloriosos". The hope of Sor Juana's poetic persona is that, as in the case of the Sibyl, a female voice will remain long after the female body has wasted away, long after the pain inflicted on her by a lustful god has passed; that, while the wind scatters the *folia* on which "ya más bien cortadas / plumas" (68-69), the men poets, "de tu nombre publican alta gloria" (83), female voices will remain. They shall be the ones brought into language by power's subjugation, and thus the ones that shall construct the subjectivity that only lyric song can provide.

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