The Language of Contradiction: Aspects of Gongora's SOLEDADES

John Beverley
University of Pittsburgh

En dos edades vivimos
los propios y los ajenos...
a mis soledades voy,
de mis soledades vengo.

Lope de Vega

The portrait of Gongora by Velázquez is meant as an allegory of dialectical intelligence: «arte de agudeza e ingenio.» It presents the poet's head in three quarters profile. The right and larger section of the face is bathed in a flood of golden light which models the high dome of the forehead and extends in a curving line down the long bridge of the nose; the left quarter face is barely visible in deep shadow. Like the Polyphemus, the portrait stares fixedly at the spectator from the right eye. But by looking closely one can make out the form of a second eye on the left, looking out of (or at) darkness. The zones of light and shadow are mediated in the furrows of the brow between the eyes and along the curve of the thin mouth, which seems at once cruel and amused. Like Don Quijote, the figure is someone who lives at once in an age of iron and an age of gold.

1. GONGORA AND SPAIN

On peut dire que la carrière de Gongora est exemplaire, car elle suit la même courbe descendante que l'ensemble de la monarchie espagnole durant la même période.

Robert Jammes

It was no accident that Dámaso Alonso found it necessary to incorporate in his dissertation of Gongora's poetic language the concepts elaborated in Saussure's structural linguistics. The nature of language, Saussure had suggested, involved a reciprocation between two relata:

signifier and signified, speaker and hearer, intention and understanding, language rule and language use. The attack on the Soledades in the early seventeenth century was directed against Gongora's deviation from what were regarded as the permissible norms of poetic signification. It maintained, in effect, that language had ceased to signify in the Soledades, that Gongora had fallen into the sin of Babel. Recently, Maurice Molho has remarked: «Il convient donc de lire les Solitudes comme un essai de reconstruction du langage —d’un langage— a partir du langage, et des rapports sur lesquels il se fond.»

But the problem of a possible language in the Soledades is not something peculiar to language itself. True, the «action» of the Soledades is the action of words and grammar. Formalist criticism can tell us a great deal about the precise mechanisms of this. But it cannot (and does not) answer the questions Why this particular mechanism of language? Why the enormous effort of construction that it involves? Why the risk of inviting charges of heresy and nonsense in the effort to make language say things it has not said before? Gongora's language, like any language, is an act of communication which involves the social urgency of a message that must be communicated. To borrow Saussure's metaphor, the Soledades compose not only a langue, as if their purpose was to be an autonomous and self-sufficient formal system, but also a parole, a way of being and acting through language in the social and ideological world Gongora is bound up in. One should find it strange that a work which is supposed to be an absolute poetry —a «territory» of language— displays such a detailed and reiterated interest in the ways people go about making their living. Let me note only two of many possible examples in the Soledades. The goatherd who shelter the pilgrim from the storm on the first night of his wandering offer him a cup of milk:

y en boi, aunque rebelde, a quien el torno
forma elegante dio sin culto adorn,
leche que exprimir vio la alta aquel día
—mientras perdían con ella
los blancos lilios de su frente bella—,
gruesa le dan y firí,
impenetrable casi a la cuchera,
del sabio Alcimédon invención rara. (I, 145-52.)

Some days later the pilgrim greets at dawn a party of fishermen who invite him to join them as they prepare their nets:

Dando el bucésped licencia para ello,
recurren no a las redes que, mayores,
muchas oceánas y pocas aguas prenden,
sino a las que ambiciosas menos prenden,
laberinto nudoso de marino
Dédalo, sí de leño no, de lino,
fábrica escurulosa, y aunque incierta,
siempre murada, pero siempre abierta. (II, 73-80)
Robert Jammes has shown how the economic crisis affecting the petty aristocracy in the late sixteenth century molds Góngora's vocation and poetic vision. Like so many of the writers of the period of the decadence, like Cervantes, Góngora is a déclassé. He writes for and to the great Andalusian landowners like the Medina Sidonia in a tone of equality; yet in his own life economic security, a position of influence (for Góngora takes seriously the idea of the poet as a «legislator» of consciousness) elude him. The «Homen español y císne de Andalucía» begins his career with a meager prebend in the lower rungs of the provincial Church bureaucracy. In time, his friends, who include some important figures in the Hapsburg ministries, allow him to try his hand, at intervals, as one of the hundreds of talented petty aristocrats jockeying for influence and recognition in a court which; after Philip II's death in 1598 is less and less able to oblige them in a satisfactory way.

In 1609 he is briefly jailed in Madrid, the victim, apparently, of his own indiscretions at the court and the growing animosity of his rivals (which now include Quevedo and Lope). Between 1609 and 1617 he lives in a sort of semi-exile from the web of intrigue of the court in a small country estate near Córdoba, the Huerta de Marcos. Here he dedicates himself to the creation of the Polifemo and the two cantos of the Soledades. The countryside shapes the form and theme of these poems; they reflect a disenchantment with the court and the political destiny of Spain, a desire to construct something that can be posed against a political reality that has become oppressive.

But the temptation of the court is always with him and the poems of his rural soledad are shaped also by its tensions and contradictions. In 1617, he returns to Madrid, seduced by the offer of a position as chaplain to the royal family. He seems at the height of his fortune and artistic powers, only to be caught up unexpectedly along with his friends and protectors in the precipitous collapse of the Duke of Lerma's ministry which follows an obscure but important power struggle with the emerging favorite, Olivares. Góngora retires again to Córdoba, spending the last decade of his life struggling against debt and failing health and sanity. In 1627 he dies; the same year the Inquisition prohibits the sale of the first public edition of his poetry.

Góngora’s Spain is a country living a fantasy of power and empire which has rotted from the inside. González de Celorrio suggested the Cervantine image of «a society of the bewitched, living outside the natural order of things.» Góngora in one of his poems pictures the American empire, so recently and confidently achieved, as a corpse bledd dry by green and violence to the advantage not of Spain or of America itself, but of foreign «interés»:

...Aquella
ara del Sol edades ciento, ahora
templo de quien el Sol aun no es estrella,
la grande América es, oro sus venas,
The image is just; it encompasses the past and present of an age of imperial expansion, composing a trajectory of grandeur and disillusion which defines the Spanish «golden century» as much as the inner form of Góngora's own poetry. The gold and silver extracted at enormous human expense from the American mines pass through Spain leaving only the opulent luxury and power of the church and court consolidated in new cities like Madrid whose function is to house and maintain the new state and ecclesiastical bureaucracy and the limited interests that it serves. The wealth goes out to the banks of Amsterdam and Genoa (as Góngora notes above), the ports of England, France, the Hanseatic League; there it stimulates the newly emerging capitalist franchise. In Spain itself, the empire leaves a heritage of inflation, excess taxation, increasing national debt—a depression which spreads, destroying domestic industry and agriculture, as the flow of precious metals declines in value and quantity and the country finds it has no enterprise to put in its place. Spain's naval and military hegemony fades in the decades following the defeat of the Armada as newer European powers step forward to compete for colonies, trade monopolies, subject populations. The Netherlands continue to press their war of national liberation against the Hapsburgs, a war that Spain cannot win but cannot seem to lose decisively either. Spain remains a power but only at the cost of subjecting its own people and resources to enormous strains and sacrifices. In particular, the social classes which will form the backbone of the Puritan revolution in England—the manufacturing bourgeoisie, the peasants and small landowners of the municipios, the artisans and members of the professions—are the sections of the population most retarded by the emerging economic crisis.

In this setting (I am not unaware of the possible coincidence with our own today), schizohrenia seems a prerequisite of enlightenment: Cervantes' knight and El licenciado Vidriera, Quevedo's Suenos. The ambitious humanism of the early sixteenth century has yielded to a national culture characterized by an atmosphere of conformism, chauvinism, religious and intellectual pedantry. The court, dominated by the conflicting figures and parties of the great nobility and a spirit of petty machiavellianism, is incapable of staking the country to a policy that might begin to reserve the decline and restore the freedom and well-being of the people. To deflect popular discontent, it contrives in an act of ill considered opportunism to expel the moriscos of Valencia and An-

Elia piscatoria.)

dalusia from their homes and lands. (Góngora passes over the deed in silence.) The capacity to think through the problems of the country has not been lost as the reform projects of the arbitristas show. But the capacity to act on the problems seem paralyzed by the dominant class relations. (What the projects portend is the abolition of the property forms of the Church and the great landowners, the substitution of a service economy based in the peasantry, the artisans, the small manufacturers of the municipios.)

The Soledades, I want to argue, are as much a way of posing the problems of Spain's national crisis as any other piece of writing in the period of the Decadence. To pose these problems correctly, to show there may be alternatives, to re-educate himself and his readers, the poet has to withdraw from their immediate pressure to «another world.» The retreat into art is meant as a search for the image and quality of a utopia that can be placed against the experience of history as disaster. Góngora's manner, the design of the Soledades, represent the transfer to the province of aesthetics of questions of social ethics and political economy that cannot be «thought» in the language and categories which are proper to them.

The English bourgeois poets address a class which is beginning in the seventeenth century to exercise its ideas and institutions with increasing authority. Their poetry reflects and in turn helps to form the values and aspirations of the class, its image of community and history, its morality and personal style, its sense of revolutionary legitimacy. Behind their withdrawal and their attacks on the vanity of the court, they are able to intuit the shape of a coming «new Jerusalem» and they bend their art and their lives to serve its birth. Góngora has neither this confidence nor this possibility. He is someone trying to understand and humanize the force of history in a country that history has turned against. He must direct his poetry to a diminishing elite of connoisseurs capable of understanding its tensions and intimations. But his readers are themselves isolated and marginal figures; they are aristocratic radicals, dependent on the very class whose forms of domination they sometimes idealize, sometimes challenge. Góngora's poetry is «para los pocos» and its ultimate consequence is a private ideology of stoic tacitism in the face of the country's problems.

The Soledades are both a reflection and a symptom of the period of the Spanish Decadence. In this sense they are a failure, something that falls short of its promise, that has to be abandoned to a disillusion Góngora no doubt understood more intimately than we can. What is lasting in them, however, and what allows them to be recommenced is Góngora's willingness to embrace and express the deepest contradictions in himself and the moment of history he inhabits as an artist. Góngora forces his art against time, and the limitations of his environment, knowing that his chosen loneliness conceals a communion which extends over and beyond himself and his country.
2. TWO MODES OF CONTRADICTION IN THE ‘SOLEDADES’

A) Epic and Pastoral

What is displayed on the tragic-comic stage is a sort of marriage of the myths of heroic and pastoral, a thing felt as fundamental to both and necessary to the health of society.

William Empson

Juan de Jáuregui’s Antidoto contra la pestilente poesía de las ‘Soledades’ is one of the more interesting attacks occasioned by circulation of the Soledad primera among the literary circles of Madridcourt around 1614. Jáuregui’s intention is clearly to irritate Góngora’s defenders around their claim that those who found fault with the poem simply lacked the erudition to understand the use of a ‘heroic’ style. The heroic style indeed admits ‘arrobasímos’, Jáuregui grants; these in turn must co-respond to the grandeur of the subject of imitation, that is, epic or tragic actions. But the themes and scenes of the Soledades arc to all appearances bucolic, in Jáuregui’s words ‘concurso de pastores, bodas, epitafialamios, fuegos’. So Góngora’s experiment fails because it works towards an idealization of ‘cosas humildes’.

This sense of a disjunction of form and content resulting in an affective dissonance, what Jáuregui called a ‘desigualdad perniciosa’, was to become a major premise of the anti-Soledades current in Spanish literary criticism. Francisco Cascales, for example, noted that Góngora’s language ‘no es buena para poema heroico, ni lírico, ni trágico, ni cómico; luego es inútil.’ The formalist defense of the Soledades, ranging from Espronceda’s ‘invento de rapaz’ to the seventeenth century to the Generation of 27 in our own, has tended to accept this premise but make of it precisely the basis of a defense of Góngora as someone concerned with inventing a ‘hedonistic’ poetry distanced from the ‘utilitarian’ canons for proper genre and decorum advanced in the didactic poetics of the Counter-Reformation. Hence Dámaso’s point about a ‘puro placer de formas’ and Andrés Collard’s observation that the Soledades represent a new literary genre ‘en que la utilidad desaparece frente al arte descriptivo’.

Now it is obvious in one sense that Góngora wanted to gather into the Soledades the whole tradition of Greco-Roman and European pastoral. The Abad de Rute, one of Góngora’s early defenders, spoke of a ‘pintura que habla’ in which ‘como en un lienzo de Flanes’ Góngora had depicted a vast variety of rural scenes, landscapes, exercises and types. Noël Salomon thinks of an ‘idyle champêtre’ conceived as ‘un grand poème capable d’égaler par les dimensions les Georgiques de Virgile.’ But, if Góngora had already in Virgil the model of a long descriptive poem on bucolic themes, why then his recourse to the particular device of the pilgrimage to sustain the lyric tension? The pilgrim’s ‘Bienaventurado albergue’ encomium, the repeated references to the middle-state as a bucolic ideal and to the convention of a concordia discord, the health and vigor of his shepherds and peasants, their natural generosity and warmth, the wisdom of their elder—the social and erotic ritual of the wedding—all these define the Soledad primera as a pastoral comedy. But this is precisely a genre (and a human possibility) left behind as the pilgrim continues past the wedding village into the shoreline locales and the violent acrobatics of the hawkwing scenes of the Soledad segunda.

We are meant to see the countryside the pilgrim passes through as an episode in a larger trajectory of disaster and recovery. So it is presented as a ‘movable’ landscape which embraces dissonant and contradictory elements and evolves perpetually into new vistas and sensations—no longer the static and vaguely platonic background of the pastoral locus amoenus but a realistic landscape, full of change, energy, turbulence, human struggle and labor. The nature of the pilgrim forces him to move as in the epic convention beyond the temptation to remain in the periphrastic idyll. He is like the young Aeneas who must reject Dido in the name of a destiny he does not yet understand, like the separated lovers of Byzanine romance who must move out of the disorder and ‘pleasant confusion’ of the wilderness towards reunion in an urban apothecary. The city is the monument of achieved history, domination; the world of nature belongs to childhood and adolescence.

What I am saying is that Jáuregui’s charge of inconsistent decorum in the Soledades is strictly correct but also that this dissonance is intended by Góngora. Neither pastoral nor epic by themselves are sufficient, so Góngora creates a fiction, the Soledades, which is textured by the friction between and within these modes.

Spitzer once remarked ‘¿Pero no es cosa sabida que Góngora se pone siempre en escena como peregrino abandonado de todo el mundo?’ The pilgrim in the Soledades is not meant to represent the Pauline typology of the Christian soul. He is a secular hero, a product of Góngora’s own situation as a déclassé intellectual and internal exile. The pastoral is Góngora’s Andalusian soledad—the dream of a refuge from history, of peace, equality, simplicity, coexistence with the world of nature. The epic is the court and the landscape of empire—both in its grandeur and decadence—the shaping of forms of political and social domination. The character of the pilgrim is defined by the oscillation between these two possibilities. He moves through the scenes of the poem in a condition of perpetual homelessness. His action is determined by an initial loss and his desire to recover (or find) something that he does not have. His presence combines at once in the Soledades a sense of aristocratic hauteur and the marginal status of what Lukács called the ‘roofless’ individualities of the bourgeois novel: Lazarrillo, Vidriera, Quijote. He is a man at dis-ease with the world, the meditative figure in Durer’s allegory of Melancholy, the onlooker. He belongs neither to the centers of power of the dominant aristocracy nor to the simpler communities of the working masses of his country.

The pilgrim is deliberately unmarked as a character. He appears ‘náufrago y desdóñado, sobre ausente.’ In the course of the Soledades he
is named variously as «el peregrino», «el joven», «misero extranjero», «el caminante», «el mancheño», «el forastero», «el huésped», «extranjero errante», «inconsiderado peregrino». The reader will never learn who or what exactly he is in exile from, except for the elliptical allusions to the Petrarchan «enemiga amada». Jáuregui commented ironically in the Antidoto:

Vamos luego a la taza de esta fábula o cuento, que no puede ser cosa más sin artificio i sin concierto, porque allí sale un mancibicio, la principal figura que Van. introduce;

i no le da nombre, Este fue al mar y vino de mar, sin que sepáis cómo ni para qué; él no sirve sino de mirón, i no dice cosa buena ni malo, ni despega su boca. . . .

Molho speaks of the pilgrim as a «protagoniste mystérieux, spectateur neutre dont l'intérieurité échappe, il est l'œil et l'intelligence du poète, qui, par mythe interposé, explore l'univers, avance pas à pas dans son œuvre et en conduit la gent se errant.» 3 Góngora defines him by allusion as, variously: Adonis, Icarus, Cadmus, Narcissus, Arion, Ganymede, Odysseus, Acteon. These doubts which hover around his presence in the poem share with him the common characteristic of being forms of the hero as searcher, «errant» exile.

The hero of epic and the nature of his quest have a metonymic function as representing in particular individual the values and destiny of a social collectivity. But the pilgrim is a sentimental hero, a general form of the psychology of solitude and narcissism whose proper dimension of action is the idyll, the pastoral landscape of the mind. His doubles are also the naïve «strangers» of the nineteenth century: Byron’s Childe Harold, Tennyson’s Maud. His enigma is his solitude, his inability to incorporate himself into any of the variety of human situations he passes through.

The achievement of epic is only a nostalgia in the Soledades, something that has to be abandoned reluctantly. Its paradigm in Spanish and Portuguese letters of the sixteenth century, the epic of naval and military colonization, is miniaturized in the story the Arcadian serrano recounts to the pilgrim in the Soledad primera (376-506). This captures something of the temptation of the distant and dangerous — the Odyssean journey—but what is rendered finally is the tragic hubris of the Conquest, its illegitimacy, its power to make men the captives of false and cruel values in their very domination of other peoples. The story breaks off as the narrator recalls his personal disaster in the enterprise: the loss of his son and his fortune. He is an epic hero withdrawn from the historical world of the epic, «fallen» through his failure and disillusions into pastoral medioeviscas. He appears, like the cabero of the ruins and the old fisherman of the island (like Góngora himself?), metamorphosed into the bucolic type of the wise Elder. The pilgrim, on the other hand, is distinguished by his immaturity and absence of prudence. A part of that incompleteness is his apparent lack of access to action, the passive condition of his exile which makes him an observer. He is a hero who aspires to the proportions of epic, whose action consists in becoming something other than he is. Like Narcissus he is in love with his own image; he cannot escape this love but it is a love that brings with it the danger of suicide or annihilation:

«Naufragio ya segundo
o filos pongan de homicida hierro
un duro a mi desierro;
tan generosa fe, no fácil onda,
no poca tierra esconda:**

He must pass through the pastoral to learn what it has to teach him about himself, about what is possible and what illegitimate. He will learn, among other things, that he is only a part of creation, one element in a dance of matter—an element that doubts and thinks—, one man wandering in the solitude of his own mind through a world which offers at every turn the possibility of free and fraternal community with men and women.

The pastoral is a fiction of psychic wholeness; but the pilgrim is an «unnatural» personality. He moves in and out of sympathy with the fertile cornucopia which surrounds him. Nature is something «left behind». Each sentence of the poem brings a new birth and a new death. He experiences moments of joy and wonder and fullness but these yield again and again to an inner sense of incompleteness and restlessness. He goes forward. He arrives with the old serrano on the outskirts of the village where the wedding is to take place. The two men watch above the buildings a display of fireworks (1, 646-58). The pilgrim praises the spectacle; his host condemns it as an artificial dilation of the normal passage from day to night, an act of dangerous vanity because it risks, like Phaeton, bringing disaster to the villagers: «campo amanecía estéril de cenzúa / la que anocheció aldea.» The elder is a man who has passed through epic, while Phaeton belongs with the archetype of the ambitious, self-destructive young man which defines the pilgrim. And yet this same pilgrim assumes the pose of a Horatian disillusion with the court and politics in the encomium he recites to the shepherds. At one moment he appears as the spokesman for rustic simplicity and a «prudent» integration with nature; and his fellows; at the next as a courtier with hints of the revolutionary who sees nature only as a conceit which masquerades the artifice of the «enemiga amada»—or of his own narcissism.

The nature of this ambivalence brings us back to Jáuregui’s claim that the Soledades were themselves a literary vanity which disintegrated by force of its contradictions. But we have seen that the contention of genre and mode which Góngora establishes is placed within the character of the pilgrim; it defines the alternating terms of a sentimental education in which the partial communion with nature—the «tregua» or «return to the source»—is the necessary condition for developing a new political-aesthetic sensibility. The patriotic epic and the epic hero per se
are no longer a genuine possibility for Góngora as an artist who writes in the midst of a growing sense of crisis and decadence in Spain and from a personal stance which is antagonistic to the ideology of Christian and national expansionism which sustains the imperial epic of the sixteenth century. The traditional value of the pastoral as a fiction outside of the contingencies of history has also become problematic in the Soledades. It can no longer distinguish itself absolutely from the tensions of the reality it escapes nor, what amounts to the same thing, maintain itself as a unified literary mode. Macrú speaks of a «gusto y falso gongorino para revelar, en fin, su crisis interna de existencia y de naturaleza, a la manara invertida con la que Cervantes caracterizó el idealismo y la sublimeza de la acción humana.» For Góngora as for his contemporary Cervantes in the Quijote the exercise of literature has taken the place of a political and military practice which is no longer available to them. Like Cervantes’ hero, the pilgrim represents a strategy of invention, the vehicles for the creation of a possible discourse in a moment of history in which all models and canons have suddenly become obsolete, no longer serve to represent the writer’s own contingencies and contradictions, much less the shape and meaning of his culture and society. The Soledades anthologize the whole range of Classical and Renaissance poetry but at the necessary cost of rendering this synthesis as conflictive, as shot through with unexpected antagonisms and transformations: a «soledad confusa».

B) City and Countryside

And the land he will come to is unknown —as is, once he disembarks, the land from which he comes. He has his truth and his homeland only in that fruitless expanse between two countries that cannot belong to him.

Michel Foucault

The language of the pilgrim’s «Bienaventurado albergue» encomium has caused us to take the Soledades as a sublimation of Antonio de Guevara’s «menosprecio de corte, alabanza de aldea» —the humanist and aesthetic critique of urbanism, bureaucracy and mercantilism, everything Góngora intuits in the phrase «moderno artificio.» We expect to be shown a landscape which has been endowed, like the wooden cup, the goatherders offer to their guest, with a «forma elegante... sin culto adorno.» But here we come against the contradiction noted by Jáuregui; the dissonance between Góngora’s complication of language and image and the rustic simplicity it is supposed to represent and celebrate. More concretely, we become aware of a curious and reiterated ambiguity in the nominal posture of rejection of the city. Góngora’s characteristic strategy is to present his images as a «soledad» or «wilderness» of signs, then to bring them into a logical order as if a raw material transformed by labor and technique: «limados.» Inversely, he is given to representing nature as if it mimicked («fabricar», «fingir») the architectonics of the city:

Contrario espacioso a más caminos que una estrella rayía, hacía, bien de pobló, bien de aliso. (I, 573-75.)

Mozuladas hacen todas bellas de dulces —no de escena muda— el apacible sitio. (I, 523-5.)

Letros árboles, pues, ve la mañana montar fioradas, y emular viallos aunts: murio de liquidos criollos, agricultura urbana. (I, 701-4.)

Los árboles que el bosque habíase fingido umbrosos callan ya formado, despejan el ejido. (I, 958-60.)

There are ways of saying, on the one hand, that nature holds in herself the secrets of all man’s efforts at invention and construction. But then nature would be sufficient knowledge for the pilgrim and we know that it is the city, «cuía que la arquitectura / a la geometría se rebela,» that holds the presence of the «enorma amada.» Apparently evaded in the pilgrim’s exile, the city reappears within its bucolic negation, the soledad, as a social and aesthetic principle. Lewis Mumford summarizes the sense of the city I have in mind here:

It was one of the great triumphs of the baroque mind to organize space, make it continuous, reduce it to measure and order, to extend the limits of its magnitude, embracing the extremely distant and the extremely minute; finally to associate space with motion... The consolidation of power in the political capital was accompanied by a loss of power and initiative in the local centers... Law, order, uniformity—all these are special products of the baroque capital; but the law exists to confirm the status and secure the position of the privileged classes, the order is a mechanical order... The external means of enforcing this pattern of life lies in the army; its economic arm is mercantile capitalist policy; and its most typical institutions are the standing army, the house, the bureaucracy, and the Court. There is an underlying harmony that pervades all these institutions: between them they create a new form for social life —the baroque city.10

The Soledades are not, as we have become accustomed to hear, nature poetry. They depend rather on the convention of the countryside, that is, something which is mediated between a pure state of nature (genesis) and the epitome of civilization, the city as apotheosis. This is why the land-
scape of the poem constantly changes, why the idyllic world of the Soledad primera seems to wither away in the turbulent and increasingly artificial landscapes of the Soledad segunda. The model Góngora is elaborating is not, as in R. O. Jones’ idea of a neoplatonic gnosis, the order of nature posed against the corruption of history; nor is it the static harmony of bucolic mediocritas, as in James’ reading of the poet’s Andalusan aristocratisme. Both are certainly present, but they serve as terms of a dynamic model, the poem itself, which invites the city to be more like the countryside, the countryside more like the city. To put this another way, the Soledades are an irradiation of the bucolic by an urban (and historical) intelligence. Góngora is like Prospero in The Tempest who withdraws from the corruption of the court to his island study, only to find that the power of his magic demanded that corruption.

The reconciliation of this contradiction can only be tragic. It may be found, I suggest, in those ruins which appear so unexpectedly in the mountain wilderness of the albergue:

«Aquellas que los árboles apenas
dean de ser torres hoy – dijo el cabrero
con muestras de dolor extraordinarias—
estrellas nocturnas luminarias
eran de sus almenas,
cuando el que ves sayal fue limpio acero.
Yacen ahora, y sus desnudas piedras
visten piadosas yedras:
que a ruinas y a estragos
sabe el tiempo hacer verdes halagros.» (I, 2:12-21.)

The ruins co-exist with nature as a monument which has lost its epic stature and human significance. They present the destructive force of history, a power of coercion now dead. The stand now as a product of labor and technique and the interests these have been bent to serve reduced to the state of nature —abandonment and wilderness. They are simultaneously the emblem of Melancholy, of a fall from the plenitude and confidence of epic, and of pastoral Consolation («sabe el tiempo hacer verdes halagros»). In terms of the central motif of «walling» in the Soledades, which L. J. Woodward has elegantly analyzed, the ruins centralize the antithesis between the albergue of the Soledad primera, a dwelling woven into nature itself, and the marble castle of the Soledad segunda as a sign of the «absent» city. To the extent that we have seen Góngora anthropomorphizing nature as a builder, the ruins represent inversely human architecture transformed into an aesthetics of the diffuse and accidental.

We are touching here on a problem that I intend to take up in the third part of this study: to what extent does the pressure of history on the form and theme of the Soledades also oblige them to become a representation of history itself? For the moment it is enough to remark that they portray at once the nostalgia for and commitment to a landscape «left behind» by the passage of history and the attempt to discover the form of a «new world» which would escape the contingencies of Spain’s national crisis. In a sonnet directed against the critics of his poem, Góngora allegorizes it as a singing bird trapped in the cage of envy and conspiracy woven around it at the court, seeking its freedom:

Rstituye a tu mundo horror divino,
amiga Soledad, el pie sagrado,
que captiva lisonja es del poblado
en hiebros breve pájaro ladino.

Prudente consulo, de las selvas dino,
de impedimentos busca desatado
tu claustro verde, en valle profanado
de fieras menos que de peregrino.

¿Cuán dulcemente de la encina vieja
tórtola viuda al mismo bosque incierto
apacibles desvios aconsaja?

Endecho el siempre amado esposa muerto
con voz doliente, que tan sorda queja
tiene la soledad como el desierto.

(Millé, 341.)

The Sonnet may serve us as the poet’s own meditation on the terms of his creation. It yields, certainly, the formalist reading of the poem as a process of aesthetic evasion, a retreat from reality into a nature imagined as consolation and pure possibility, into the «apacibles desvios» of art itself. Góngora asks that the Soledades be allowed to leave the court to return to the landscape —«al mismo bosque incierto»— which is both its inspiration and its proper homeland: Andalusia, or rather the poet’s landscape of the mind. But soledad, like the lamentations of the desert prophets, is also a complaint directed against and to the city, a voice which seeks a reformation. Like the Virgilian bucolic it is something that must be brought back from exile to inspire, seduce and instruct authority: «si canimus silvas, silvae sint consolatione dignae.»

The city is the necessary «absent» term of the pilgrimage because the poem is a movement from region to nation, from the archaic utopia of the past to the present crisis of empire, from wilderness to the marriage of nature and technique—the aesthetic humanization of people in their relations with themselves and their world. But the restoration to the city must also involve a transposition of its initial status as an alienating and alienated home for the poet-pilgrim; his return implies the constitution of a redemptive epic, the triumph of a new form of political and moral imagination discovered in and through the «imperfect» exercise of pastoral exile.
3. SOCIOLOGY OF THE 'SOLEDADES'

When the symbol as it fades shows the face of Nature in the light of salvation, in allegory it is the fasces hippocrates of history that lies like a frozen landscape before the eyes of the beholder.

Walter Benjamin

We have seen that the action of the Soledades seems to unfold in an idyllic parenthesis of time created by the shipwreck which interrupts the hero’s voyage at sea. Within this parenthesis, Góngora borrows from the Renaissance pastoral the possibility of posing a reconciliatory landscape against the inexorable pressures of a history whose inner structure is not understood and which presents itself therefore to the pilgrim as a fate. The «casi un lustro» of the pilgrim’s—and Góngora’s own—exile marks the necessary retirement of a modern but alienated sensibility to the nostalgic utopia of cultural childhood. The world the pilgrim will discover is a space that (initially) history has not colonized. But we have also seen that this space, the soledad, is represented as something unstable, which is moving to find a point of reconciliation with the present, which reproduces the inner form of the history it seems to evade. The Soledades take us «out» of time into an «ocio perdido». The escape is from the immediacy of the present which distorts the capacity for understanding and change. But the ambivalent terms of the pilgrim’s search drive him back into time. In the Spain of J. L. and the arbitristas, Góngora lives on an edge of time which separates empire and decadence, feudaldism and mercantilism, peace and war. city and countryside. The spatial frontier of exile, the wilderness which envelops the pilgrim, is also the boundary between a utopia of language and a Babel, the descent of discourse into pure narcissism, madness.

After the diffusion of manuscript copies of the Soledad primera in 1613, the Abad de Rute, partly to refute Jáuregui’s charge that the story lacked much substance, indicated that Góngora planned three more cantos in which, following the Byzantine convention of the in medias res beginning, the details of the pilgrim’s exile would be gradually unfolded. Díaz de Rivas and the other defenders subsequently took this to mean that the Soledades were to be an allegorical progress through four symbolic landscape stages: a «soledad de los campos» or the Soledad primera that had initially appeared, a «soledad de las riberas,» the Soledad segundas of 1618, a «soledad de las selvas» (hence the selvática convention of León y Mansilla’s Tercera soledad and Alberti’s fragment of a third canto), culminating a «soledad del yermo» which would end the pilgrim’s wanderings. Pellécer some years later conflated this four part landscape scheme with the conventional Baroque allegory representing the four ages of man through the cycle of the four seasons:

But how can this ambitious design of representing the full span of life be compassed by an action which in the two extent cantos takes only several days of the hero’s life? In the Soledad segunda, neither his age nor the seasonal mode can have changed in the form Pellécer suggested. The «working backwards as we move forward» of the Byzantine plot never actually materializes, at least in the form the Abad thought it would. The terms of the story remain ambiguous and we have the sense that Góngora simply abandons it to move on to other things.

I have noted earlier that there are four clearly distinct scenographic stages in the two cantos which correspond loosely to the poem’s time structure of four complete periods of a day: 1) the quasi-Arcadia of the goatherd’s albergue and the mountain scenes of the next day; 2) the farm, lands and wedding village in the river valley below these mountains; 3) the piscatory, shoreline world of the fishermen and the breve islet; and 4) the castle on the hill over the shore —“que deja de ser monte/ por ser culta floresta” — which is the site of the hawking. In Jannic’s model of an idealized Andalusian Georgics, these stages represent nothing more than explorations of different portions of the estates near Huelva of the Ayamontes and Medina Sidonia. Pellécer’s hypothesis argued for changes of time and locale that are simply not possible in the framework of the first two cantos, perhaps confusing the Soledades with the larger biographical trajectory possible in the novel. But I want to argue that Góngora does, in effect, compose within these four stages a representative design essentially similar to that anticipated in the four canto hypothesis.

The estate, its variety of scenes and activities, the four full days of the action are a microcosm (historia conficta) in which we see different strata of history present «all at once» but also in the process of unfolding in time as we move forward through this world with the pilgrim. Each of these stages emphasizes a particular mode of production and the relationships built up around it: nomadic pastoralism (primitive communism), fixed agriculture with forms of property beginning to emerge, a society based on fishing and manufacture, the feudal world of the castle.

Their elaboration follows in skeletal form Ovid’s historical myth of the four ages of metal in the first book of Metamorphoses which has its own antecedent in Lucretius’ sociology in Book V of De rerum natura. In Ovid’s rendering, the age of gold is a time when there was «nothing forbidden in a book of laws»: «springtime was the single season of the year»: «no cities climbed behind high walls and bridges»; «country and town had never heard of war»; «the innocent earth gave her riches as
a fruit hangs from the tree.”  

The age of silver «splits up the year in shifty Autumn, wild Winter, short Spring, Summer that glared with heat.» «Then men built walls against both sun and wind.» «Now grain was planted and the plough pierced earth. The driven ox whimpered beneath the yoke.» The age of bronze introduces metal technologies and war: «men were quick with sword and spear.» The age of iron «poured the very blood of evil: Piety, Love, Faith and Truth changed to Deceit, Violence, the Tricks of Trade, Usury, Profit.» It is the age of nautical imperialism, «the long beams swaying above the uncharted ocean.» «The land, once like the gift of sunlit air, was cut up into properties; men invaded entails of earth deeper than the river where Death's shades weave in darkness underground.» The gods send a flood to abolish the corruption: «all was a moving sea without a shore.» On the shoreline where the waters recede life begins to reappear (Góngora paraphrases this movement in the opening section of the Soledad primera where the pilgrim reaches shore after the shipwreck): «As heat and water become one body, so life begins; though fire and water are at war, life’s origins awake discordant harmonies that move the entire world...» The new age of Saturn is at hand; the cycle begins again.

By combining the pattern of Ovid’s cycle of creation and destruction of civilization with the features of the four-soledad model proposed by the Baroque commentators, it is possible to generate a tentative model of the conceptual form Góngora uses in the Soledades. It might look, in simplified form, something like this: 

The storm and shoreline scene which opens the poem and is reactivated at the start of the Soledad segunda has the place of Ovid’s and Lucretius’ cosmologies. It represents Origin—hence the «fortunato fall» of the shipwreck, the mutations of the elements, the pilgrim’s emergence from the sea covered with foam and feathers as if Virgil’s puér who brings with him the new reign of Spring and the age of Gold. It lies to one side of the four scenographic stages in the sense that it portrays the state of nature before the appearance of humankind. It is presented as a confusion («desodorados los sienten») which the pilgrim and the reader must begin to master and put into order.

The albergue is the antithesis of this genetic chaos: shelter, community, hospitality—the image of nature now bent to human purposes and desires. But it is also a primitive society, barely marked off from nature. (Hence «el valor in the encomium as a world of innocence in opposition to the corrupting «mamor moderno artificio» which the pilgrim is fleeing.) Like Arcadia the albergue belongs to a harst but somehow providential (in its austerity and simplicity) mountain landscape. Góngora follows point by point Ovid’s iconography and its harmonics in the pastoral convention of the age of Gold; but the albergue also describes a perfectly plausible rural scene in the Andalusan hills and countryside. Its inhabitants greet the pilgrim «con pecho igual de aquel candor primero.» This is to move from myth to history, to something which is still possible and which has the character, therefore, of a choice.

The albergue is a society defined economically by nomadic pastoralism, it is communal, it lacks fixed agriculture, the construction of dwellings and towns («tejumpas sobre robre / tu fabrux son pobre») and manufacture («limpio sayal en vez de blanco lino»). In Ovid’s golden age «tu brass-lipped trumpets called, nor clanging swords» in Góngora’s albergue:

«De trompa militar no, o destemplado
son de cajas, fue el sueno ·interumpidó.» (I, 171-175.)

But the goatherds are introduced also as «worshipping» Vulcan, the god of fire and the forge. Their community exists in harmony with nature, but this harmony derives from their marriage of technique and nature, not from nature alone. They are characterized by a «cortesia» which contradicts the «fireza» of the surrounding mountains. Signs of fabrication abound: «limpio sayal», «cuadrado pino», «...la cucura, / del viejo Alcmedón invención rara», «sobre corcho... pieles blancas.» The epitome of the albergue is perhaps the cup of wood from which the pilgrim is invited to drink goat milk: «y en boja, aunque rebelde, a quien el toro / forma elegante diu sin culto adorno.»

The continuation of the pilgrim’s anabasis on the following day represents a further exploration of the «Arcadia» sketched summarily in the albergue episode, but also a movement in space and time away from the wildness and primitive innocence of this mountain world towards the
fertile river valley the pilgrim glimpses with his hosts at dawn. The transition is, in effect, from the primitive communism of the albergue to an agrarian society, with its houses and fields, represented by the village in which the wedding is to take place. As in the opening of the Soledad primera this descent is a passage through nature, but a nature which is now domesticated, peopled by moving crowds of hunters and shepherds, boasting ruins, lookouts, pathways which broaden into roads, music and discourses. The introduction of the wedding party which the pilgrim joins sexualizes the landscape (the albergue, like the terminal landscape of the hawking, is a masculine society). The tension which had been created in the initial allusion to the «mentido robador» and the rape of Europa now reappears shorn of its violence in e play of erotic fragments: «lasciva el movimiento», «inundación hermosa», «juventud florida», «montaraz zagala», «el arcaduz bello de una mano», «escuadrón de amazonas, desarmado», «... deponiendo amante / en vestiduras rosas su cuidado.» These details infect the language of the tragic epic the old serrano, leader of the Arcadian bands, recounts to the pilgrim, as if to associate the adventure of discovery and empire with the sexual tussle of the crowd and setting:

los reinos de la Aurora al fin baste,
cuyos purpúreos senos perladas notas,
cuyas minas secretas
hoy te guardan su más precioso engaño. (I, 457-60.)

The epic, like the previous ruins, is a remembrance of the corruption of a previous age of iron that had once held sway over these mountains, a time when «el que ves sayal fue limpio acero.» Its heroic cadences are balanced by the songs of the mountain girls which seem to seduce the wilderness: «Sirenas de los montes su concvento.» (I, 550)

As the day progresses, the character of the landscape changes. The initial path through the mountains —el arco del camino puso torcido— becomes towards dusk as other paths feed into it a bucolic highway: «Centro apacible un círculo espacioso / a más caminos que una estrella raya.» (I, 573-4). The progressive technification of the wilderness culminates, as on the pilgrim's arrival in the albergue, in a display of fire. At the end of the spiralling, day-long anabasis, the pilgrim and the mountain folk witness fireworks —«artificialmente da exhala / luminosas do pólvora saetas»— which are meant to contrast with the rude fire of the goatherds.

On the next morning the pilgrim and the shepherds enter the village itself which appear «walled off» from the surrounding fields by its lines of trees and irrigation ditches; Góngora pointedly refers to an «agricultura urbaña» (I, 701-4). The village is «populoso lugarrillo», a society based on fixed agriculture rather than pastoral nomadism. The major theme of the wedding will be the conjunction of the civic and moral order thus introduced with the fertility of the fields and pastoral industries: «libera-

ladad». The wedding harmonizes the tensions within the world the pilgrim has been moving through. The procession of the mountain youth —«el yugo de ambos sexos sacudido»— attracted the erotic tussle and confusion of Pelllicer's adolescencia. The bridal couple stands instead for the domestication of instinct, adaptation to the economic and social order of a community. The adaptation itself involves a new tension: the necessity of labor, its product as property, the danger that the community will in its very prosperity dissolve into competition, repression and fratricide. The couple must seek the middle-state, the pastoral mediocritas:

Próspera, al fin, mas no espumosa tanto
vuestra fortuna sea,
que alimentan la envidia en nuestra aldea
ásperas más que en la región del llanto.
Entre opulencias y necesidades,
medianías vinculen competentes
a vuestros descendientes. (I, 926-32.)

The games of the guests follow as if by reflex of this tension to portray the discipline and rivalry inherent in the society of the aldea turned away from the fury and destruction of war; hence the concluding epitaph which unites the orders of the martial and the erotic: «bien provino la hija de la espuma / a batallas de amor campo de pluma.»

The piscatory Soledad segunda restores the pilgrim to the initial seascape, now transformed, however, into a world of fishing and hawking, of boats plying the shores, of groups working and traveling. In Ovid's cycle, the «fall» of the mountain pine into water —navigation and therefore international commerce— marks the descent into the ages of the lesser metals. The serrano's tragic epic in the Soledad primera anticipates the outcome of these new technologies. As we move into the world of the Soledad segunda the utopia of the first seems more and more distant. The island miniaturizes the state of mediocritas. But what is lost in this «limitation» is the sense of communal fraternity and celebration which informs the earlier societies. It is precisely a private «Arcadia» in which the social unit has become the nuclear family of the (apparently widowed) old fisherman and his children; the theme is less the ability to collaborate with nature as the need to transform it, to shape tools and nets, to construct bowers, gardens, shelters, hives, to hunt fish with metal weapons. The table on which the pilgrim is offered his dinner of fishes —«ratos todos y no comprados»— materializes the cork on which he slept in the albergue as «del árbol que ofreció a la edad primera / duro alimento, pero sueño blando» (II, 341-42). (In the albergue «Sobre chicos después, mas regalado / sueño le solicitan pieles blandas»). Where the albergue had offered «limpio sayal, en vez de blanco lino,» here

Nueve hilada, y por sus manos bellas
casadamente a telas reducida
manteles blancos fueron. (II, 343-45.)
We are meant to perceive by these coded transpositions that the island is a society which has developed out of the primitive innocence and simplicity of an Arcadia, which is situated just on the edge of the catastrophes of «moderno artificio.» Trade fleets passing to and from America nerby litter the shores of the island with «trágicas ruinas de alto roble.» The «viejo Nereo», like the earlier serrano who had been a protagonist of the Conquest, has retired «prudently» from this current of history. But his daughters, in contrast, venture out beyond the island to hunt fish in the bloodstained waters, each «sorda a mis voces.» The hunting is a liberation from their domestic chores, but it involves also an excess—an inversion of normal sexual roles—and a danger. James observes among the «dissonances» which he sees mar the Soledad segunda a «tendance au romanesque» in these scenes, noting the use of proper names which are nowhere evident in the Soledad primera. But these are there to signify that the collectivity of the wedding has been lost. The individual and not the group has become, for good or bad, the protagonist. The mood is set by the piscatory «queja» or love-complaint. The spontaneous fraternity of the albergue and the kinship relations which bind together the society of the village are partially in doubt. The pilgrim, because he carries within himself the sense of a division between self and other, past and future, desire and reality, now must become an actor in the poem, must intervene, for example, to have at the end of this section the father accept the two love-sick fishermen as sons-in-law (II, 635-44).

The norm of the middle-state is maintained only with difficulty in the world of the island. With the pilgrim’s departure past «...azotadas rosas / que mal las ondas lavan / del litoral aún purpúreo de las fósas» (II, 687-89), the landscape loses even this coherence and gives way to a climactic violence and disproportion. The marble castle which appears on the shore cliff represents, as we have previously noted, the opposite term of the initial albergue—a construction placed over and against nature, precisely the «moderno artificio» excluded in the encomium. The metallic dissonance of the hunting horn sets the appropriate mode. The social praxis which before had been «close to nature» in communal or patriarchal forms metamorphoses into an hieratic action. The figure who appears at the end of the hunting procession as the climactic typology of the poem manifests the singular authority of a ruler: «la alta mano / de cetro dína.» (Compare the retired navigator of the Soledad primera who tells the pilgrim that the «Arcadians» have appointed him their leader: I, 516). His command is signified, in the manner of the equestrian portrait of the prince, by the control he exercises over his Andalusian stallion.

The hunting scenes which follow counterpoint, by their parallel location and their virtuosic character, the games in celebration of the wedding. Those, despite the Pindaric figurations of the athletes’ abilities, were on the «heavy» element of Earth; the hunting invites the lightness and freedom of Air, attracting by analogy the tragic or potentially tragic spectacles of navigation described in the miniature epic and the fisher-

man’s tale. The dog who casually greeted the pilgrim in the albergue reappears as a pure-bred hound; the horses hawks and hunters of the procession seem like an army on the eve of battle, purposively inhibited and set into order: «tropa inquieta contra el aire armada.» (I, 716).

If before the principle of harmony and grace had seemed to be the ability to collaborate with nature, the theme of these scenes is rather that of the human capacity to master and exploit nature’s limits, to pervert nature against herself. The hawks are trained to hunt and kill not in the service of utility but to provide an amusement for the prince, a spectacle which is, however, like the artifice of the poem itself, reprehensible. The difference hawks, each carefully described, anthropomorphize the political geography of Europe and its colonial empire: «la generosa cetrería, / desde la Mauritania a la Noruega» «el genile... honor o busto de Géralda» «el bahari, a quien fue en España quien» «el borni, cuya ala / en los campos tal vez de Melónia» (I, Africa) «el azor britano, / jardo, mas generoso.» Their aerial battles are confused with the terms of military and naval tactics: «Rápidos al español alado mira / peinar el aire por cortar el vuelo» (I, 833-34) «Auxiliar taladera el aire luego / un duro sacre, en globos no de fuego, / en oblicuos siemferos» (I, 910-12).

The hawking, I think, is Góngora’s way of introducing into the Soledades an account of the devastating imperial wars which frame its pastoral «tregua». As it comes to an end the pilgrim passes an abandoned village along the shoreline:

Ruda en esto political, agregados
Tan mal ofrece como construidos
Bucales albergues, si no flacas
Piscatorias barracas,
Que pasean campos, que penetran senos,
De las ondas no menos
Aquéllos pecados
Que de la tierra estos admisimos. (II, 946-53)

The image of the rude albergue or aldea had always carried before in the poem the idea of the union of civility and nature. But the village here suggests rather desolation and uncertainty. The inhabitants have vanished; only a brood of chickens remains, protected by the mother hen—«voz que es trompeta, pluma que es murala?» against the depredations of the fighting hawks who swoop down on them. One is tempted to take this an epitaphic image of the Spanish and European towns and fields ruined by war, economic collapse, depopulation.

The end of the cycle in the Soledad segunda is not yet the landscape of court and empire: that will be the pilgrim’s tragic homeland on «the next day». The experience of history as usurpation and disaster models the form of the Soledades. As Salomon has shown, the achievement of political legitimacy in the comedía necessarily involves the immersion in the bucolic, which will serve to indoctrinate the prince in
the principles of prudence and virtue. To govern well, he must know
his people's own capacity for freedom, the nature and extent of their
suffering, the «other» possibilities of life and community which still
exist in the countryside. The geometric and social labyrinth of the
city hides this from him; he must leave it, leave his identity and his
class, become «one of them.» We have seen that in Góngora the pastoral
golden age is no longer a landscape outside of history, a dream of an
impossible wholeness and grace. It becomes instead a landscape alienat-
ed by history, a tableau to be read on the panels of the court where
its redemptive value as a social and moral prescription will have to be
deciphered. «Soledad» equals «edad de Sol.» The Flood which comes to
abolish the disorder of the present and prepare the return of the golden
age is the poem itself: something which «confuses» the normal terms
of experience, throws us back to our beginnings, atomizes and reforms.

4. THE PROBLEM OF ENDING IN THE SOLEDADES

Caso que fuera error, me holgará de haber dado
principio a algo; pues es mayor gloria en
empezar una acción que consumirla.

Góngora

The Soledades share with the Renaissance utopia the desire for find-
ing a new form of human equilibrium combined with the recognition
that the achievement of this state cannot be based simply on the re-
toration of feudalism, nor for that matter on the Arcadian idealism of
the pastoral. The dilution of the conventional «um rato» of pastoral
elegy represents, we have seen, the creation of a time of discourse
necessary for the re-formation of consciousness, a time in which the
spectacle of history — both its movement and the «alternatives» it aboli-
ishes — can be reviewed at leisure and evaluated. In his dedication
to the Duke of Béjar, Góngora addresses the ruling class of his country
asking: «templa en sus ondas tu fatiga ardiente.» The poem begins with
the inhibition of the spiralling violence of Béjar's hunting expedition:
it ends in the «fatal acero» of the hawking scenes. It poses a choice:
the communal fraternity of the Soledad primera or the quasi-epic land-
scape of war and power (but also exhaustion) at the end of the Soledad
segunda.

As every reader of the poem will have discovered, the ending of the
Soledad segunda comes rather abruptly. We expect, as before, the pil-
grim to find new shelter and new hosts as the evening approaches, per-
haps in the castle of the hawking party. But the poem simply breaks off,
leaving him stranded in a rowboat along the shoreline, his fate as much:
an enigma as ever.

Góngora's critics were quick to notice this anomaly. Farfa y Sosa,
for example, spoke of a «falta de fuerzas, que para concluir las obras
le atava e impedía.» His modern biographers have speculated that the
apparent abandonment of the Soledad segunda and the four-soledad
plan was due to the eclipse of the poet's influence at the court attendant
on the collapse of Lerma's ministry in 1617. Side by side with the
Soledad segunda Góngora had been working on a panegyrical biography
of Lerma. This too was left unfinished, breaking off its account of the
privado's career in 1610, the year in which Lerma signed the Spanish-
Dutch peace treaty. To have rounded off the Soledad segunda in some
more or less conclusive way, however, was certainly not beyond his re-
sources. Indeed, there is ample evidence to show that, far from simply
abandoning» his poem, Góngora reworked the final sections of the
Soledad segunda several times, seeking an ending which would on one
level conclude the cycle of history design he borrows from Ovid yet on
another make the poem appear as an unfinished artefact.

Lukacs observed that the problem of form in the novel cannot be
posed purely because it is always bound up with a solution of the ethical
problem the action of the novel has posed. The suspended ending, which
makes the poem appear as a «ruin» of the expected form, is not some-
thing peculiar to the Soledades. Góngora's experience of history is dis-
continuous and precarious; only the fragment is a genuine possibility
for him. This explains, for example, his affinity for the romance as a
poetic form broken away from the teleological design of epic. The beauti-
ful Angélica y Medoro, for example, is an erotic lyrical dilation of an
«interruption» in the ongoing process of sectarian war depicted in
Ariosto's epic: hence the recourse to the enigmatic or subjunctive ending
of the traditional romance lírico: «el cielo os guarde, si puede, / de las
locuras del Condé.» This is a form of strategic incompleteness; Góngora
knows the idyll will be destroyed, the epic process of conquest and do-
mination will resume. But he wants to leave in his reader's mind the
image of the idyll so that it can be posed against the experience of
world torn apart by class aggression and colonialism.

What kind of solution is required by the pilgrim in the Soledades
who is like Lazarillo or the lovers of Byzantine romance a form of home-
lessness? His situation may be defined by Lucien Goldmann's descrip-
tion of Phèdre as «the tragedy of the hope that man can live in the
world without concessions, hopes or compromises, and the tragedy of the
recognition that this hope is doomed to disillusion.» Góngora, who is at
all costs an essentially realistic writer, has to avoid in the Soledades
the subjectively imposed idyll — the «Insula Pastoril» — but also the
ethical compromise with reality, Lazarillo's moral degradation. He reali-
zizes that the question must continue to be posed but that he cannot
answer it within the poem, that the solution demands something created
outside» by his reader. The poem is a mirror in which we see not only
what is but what is possible. So he ends the Soledades without appear-
ing to end them, making the ending one more riddle to be solved in the
progress towards enlightenment.
We can appreciate this peculiar strategy of ending, which is not unlike Brecht's «alienation effect,» by contrasting the coda of 43 lines Góngora added to the Soledad segunda for the Chacón edition of c. 1624 with the famous opening section of the Soledad primera. The opening Genesis presents the spectacle of nature placed against the infinity of the universe: the hyperluminosity of sun and starts; the violent dance of the four elements; a sexual dynamism spreading through the landscape from the constellation which signifies Europa and her «mentido robador;» an atmosphere of joy and radiance but also of turmoil: the Springtime agony of birth, the convulsions of water, wind, and land; a drama of storm and shipwreck; the promise of sensual intoxication—Dámaso's «hálago de los sentidos»— and the enticement of romance, travel in unknown lands, mystery, desire, a limitless cornucopia of scenes and adventures: a beginning. In antithesis, the mise en scène of the Chacón coda: a weary hawking party moving along a shore stained with blood towards a desolate, empty village, images of war, plunder, disintegration:

A media rienda en tanto el anhelante caballo—que ardiente sudor niega
en cuantas le densó nibels su aliento—
a los indígenos de ser muros llega
cépedes, de las ovas mal atados.
Aunque ociosos, no menos fatigados,
quejándose venían sobre el guía
los raudos torbellinos de Noruega.
Con sordo luego estrépito desplegaba
—the injury of the luz, horror del viento—
sus alas el testigo que en prolija
desconfianza a la sinaca diosa
dejo sin dulce hija,
y a la estigia deidad con bella esposa.

The owl is Ascalaphus, the betrayer of Persephone. The initial allusion to the rape of Europa marked the sign of Spring; the abduction of Persephone by Pluto—«la estigia deidad»—announces the descent of the cycle of the year into Winter, the death of nature. Persephone's mother is Ceres, the goddess of agriculture celebrated in the Hymenai choruses of the Soledad primera. She is able to force Pluto to return her daughter, but only on the condition that Persephone has not touched anything in the underworld. Innocently, she has eaten a pomegranate; Ascalaphus sees her and to gain the favor of his master betrays her. She will be permitted to join her mother for only a part of the year, after which she must return to the darkness and to her marriage with death; her ascent will be Spring, her descent Winter. Ceres, enraged, metamorphoses Ascalaphus into an owl—the omen of evil—and devasted the agriculture of Sicily, transforming in into a desert.

The Soledades are framed by the counterpoint of a myth of ascension and a myth of descension. As an idyll of human possibility they are Eu-
ropa: enchantment, sensual intoxication, vertigo; but as a history they must be abandoned as Persephone: to despair and disillusion. Dawn and evening, the limits of the period of a day, the rise and fall of empire, the euphoria of the Soledad primera, the melancholy of the Soledad segunda. But the owl is also the sign of vision in darkness, of the world of time and space fading to the senses and appearing as a being of reason to the mind. In Hégel's metaphor it is the «grey on grey» of philosophical discourse which rises, like the owl Minerva, above the sunset glow of a poetic radiance which is condemned to extinguish itself at the very moment it reaches the inner and outer limits of its inspiration. Mallarmé: «je vais voir l'ombre que tu devins» and the poem as a «shipwreck» of poetry itself, Un coup de dés. The effect of Góngora's truncation of the Soledad segunda is to alienate the reader from the poem, to force him to complete it somewhere else and in another lan-
guage. The achievement that is left behind is the creation of a fragmentary sense of the hispanic which is not bound up in an ideology of repression and exploitation. The appeal beyond is to the kind of community men and women can create only in revolution against the circum-
cumstances that enslave them. Perhaps this is why Latin American writing bears so much of the imprint of Góngora, because it has to be, like the Soledades, a search for a possible culture and society beyond the mul-
tilation which imperialism has visited on its people. For Góngora him-
self and the Spain of his day this appeal was barren; the poet retires again into the night of exile and the sad wisdom of the stoic. But it is an appeal that must be renewed, for the pilgrim at the end of the Soledades simply discloses ourselves on the stage of our hope and struggle:

abrirás el libro del Poeta y leerás unos
versos mientras te desnudas: después,
tirarás de la correa de la persiana sin
una mirada para la costa enemiga, para la
venenosa cicatriz que se extiende al otro
lado del mar: el sueño agobia tus párpados
y cierras los ojos: lo sabes, lo sabes:
mañana será otro día, la invasión recomenzará.

NOTES

1 Maurice Molho, Semantique et poétique: a propos des 'Solitudes' de Góngora (Bordeaux: Ducros, 1969), 13. Dámaso’s dissertation was published as La lengua poética de Góngora.

2 Technology discloses man's mode of dealing with Nature, the process of production by which he sustains his life, and thereby also lays bare the mode of formation of his social relations, and of the mental conceptions that flow from them.” Karl Marx Capital I (Moscow: Foreign Languages, 1961), 872, note 3. Italic. mine.
4 Robert Jammes, Études sur l'oeuvre poétique de Don Luis de Góngora (Bordeaux: Féret, 1967). See especially the section titled "Idéal de Don Luis" (pp. 26-35) for a portrait of Góngora family background, the decline of the petty aristocracy in the transition period between Philip II and the Decadence and the forms of class consciousness to which this decline gives rise. Recently, there has developed an ample literature on the economic and social causes of the Decadence based generally on a revision of the Hamilton thesis. I have found useful Pierre Vilar's synthesis «Problems in the Formation of Capitalism», Past and Present, No. 10 (1956); Noël Salomon's La campagne de Nouvelle Castille à la fin du XVIe siècle (Paris: SEPM, 1964); J. H. Elliott's «The Decline of Spain», Past and Present, No. 20 (1961).
5 Góngora chose Pedro de Valencia as his literary mentor. Valencia was known as a radical arbitraria as well as an accomplished philologist, very much in the tradition of the utopian humanism of More and his Erasmi confreeres in Italy and Spain. Valencia, L. J. Woodward argues, «advocate the break-up of the large estates and their distribution among the peasants, the construction of an economy based on service and as far as possible free from the evil of money and credit.» As in the Soledades (and in Campanella and More), for Valencia «...the rich are objects of contempt, the manual laborers, especially those who work the land, are properly the masters of society.» «Two Images in the Soledades of Góngora», Modern Language Notes, LXXVI (1961), 784.

2. Two Model of Contradiction in the «Soledades».

A. Pastoral and Epic

1 See the text of the Antidato in Eunice Gates, in Documentos gongorinos (México City: Colegio de México, 1940), 85-86.
2 Francisco Casarcas, Cartas filológicas (Madrid: Clásicos Castellanos, 1959), 11, 188.
4 Francisco de Córdoba (Abad de Rute), Examen del 'Antidato' o apologia por las Soledades. Edited as appendix VI in M. Artiaga, Don Luis de Góngora (Madrid: Revista de Archivos, 1925), 406.
5 In Recherches sur le thème paysan dans la 'comedia' au temps de Lope de Vega (Bordeaux: Férét, 1965), 193.

6 Góngora criticism has tended to regard the Soledad segundas as an afterthought, not worthy of the attention elicited by the first. Jammes, otherwise extremely lucid in his presentation of Góngora's texts, falls into this error: «...je suppose qu'une fois terminée la Soledad primera... il restait à Góngora un certain nombre d'ébauches, de projets, ou, comme disent les peintres, d'études qui n'avaient pas eu leur place dans le poème achevé dont elles auraient dérangé l'harmonie.» Or (Góngora) abandonne le thème du mープris de Cour et de, la façon la plus inattendue, il transmotive la seconde Solitude... en poème courtisain.» Etudes 584-6.

This is to mistake an evident dissonance between the first and second Soledades as the product of Góngora's inattention or insincerity. Surprisingly, what Jammes misses is Góngora's sense of history as a process that reveals both a utopian and a tragic dimension. R. O. Jones observes more correctly that «The violence in the second Soledad, indeed, is great enough to have suggested to some readers that Góngora is preparing a poetic retreat from the idealized life of Nature presented in the first Soledad.» «Neoplatonism and the Soledades», Bulletin of Hispanic Studies, 14 (Diz de Rive, the most intelligent of the Banque defenders of the Soledades, argued that it was not meant as a pastoral poem at all, but rather as a novel written in poetic form: «su intención no es trazar cosas pastoriles (estas materias son circunstancias accidentales al fin principal de la obra), sino la peregrinación de un Príncipe, persona grande, su ausencia y efectos doloríos en el desierto.» The Soledades are «aqué que género de poema de que costuría la

Historia othológica de Heliodoro si se reducía a versos.» Discursos apologéticos por el estilo del 'Poliphemo' y 'Soledades'. Test in Gates, Documentos, 51-2.

7 Antidato, in Gates, Documentos, 87-8.
8 Semántiques et Poétique, 35-6.

B. City and Countryside

10 Lewis Mumford, The Culture of Cities (New York: Harcourt, 1938), 30. Giulio Carlo Argan has noted that «the taste for the monumental, with its reference to the classical past, suited the ruling classes, who regarded themselves as divinely ordained to exercise authority and power. The 'grand manner' (which is no more than an extension of the notion of the monument to all domains or art) thus became identified with the tastes and cultural of the conservative class which in turn explains why the middle class began to produce, in rivalry, their own particular of art.» The Europe of the Capitals: 1600-1700 (Geneve: Skira, 1964), 17. Góngora, who is a déclasse aristocrat—thatis, neither aristocrat nor bourgeois—is, addicted to the 'grand manner' but he uses it dissonantly, as Jauregui pointed out, to describe not the city but the countryside. Jammes reminds us qu'en présentant cet idéal de vie rustique Góngora ne prétent pas évoquer la masse des paysans dans son ensemble, mais seulement les plus riches d'entre eux.» Etudes 617, note 87."

3. Sociology of the 'Soledades'

2 I have borrowed from the translation by Harnace Gregory (New York: Mentor, 1960). Ovid's iconography of the four ages. On the use of the ages of metal cycles as a historiastic device see Harry Levin, The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1969), 193. Two modern Latin American novels are comtemporary elaborations of this model: Alejo Carpentier's Los pasos perdidos (from the proposition of the Soledades). «Pasos de un peregrino en carne... perdidos unos, otros inspirados» and Gabriel García Márquez's Cien años de soledad (Góngora in his Elegía piscatoria on the death of the Duke of Medina Sidonia: «are del Sol edades cierto. la gran América»). Carpentier inverts the scheme and presents his pilgrim as travelling backwards in history from the capitalist metropolis (allusively New York or Paris), past the strata of the dependant city (Caracasavana), the Spanish colonial villa, the encomienda (Venezuela's cattle ranges), the jungle and tribal Indian society, to finally a genesis landscape at the 'beginning' of history. Cien años goes the way of a pilgrim in the analysis of the Soledad primera: down the river of a century spanning an initial soledad—Macondo's foundation—to its apotheosis and destruction in the entry of the Yankee banana company, followed, of course, by the Ovidian «flood» and the the of the Buendia dynasty.


5 Jammes has noted the absence of even a passing reference (excepting the indefinito «templo» of 1, 648) to Christian ceremony in Góngora's representation of «the wedding», and yet a cite a veritable 'paganisation' of the ceremonies religieuses, alors que la tendance générale de cette époque était, au contraire, de 'christianiser' l'heritage culturel du paganisme.» Etudes, 599, note 59 Vincente Gaos writes: «La poesía de Góngora es constitutivamente utopía, en efecto.» Temas y problemas de la literatura española (Madrid: Guadarrama, 1959), 150. The secret presence which hovers over the pilgrimage throughout the Soledades is not the Virg
Mary but the Venus who watches over and guides the «dance of matter» in Lucretius' *De rerum natura*.

4. *The Problem of Ending in the 'Soledades'*

1 As cited in Espinosa Medrano’s *Apologético en favor de Don Luis de Góngora* which Ventura García Calderón brought to light in *Revue Hispanique*, XXV (1925).

2 The pseudo-epic form of the *Panegirico* for Lerma has often been taken as contradicting Góngora’s pacifist sentiments expressed in the *Soledades* and elsewhere. But Jammes correctly observes that «sous la plume de Góngora, le duc de Lerma devient une sorte de ‘prince de la Paix’. Image idyllique, certes, mais d’autant plus révélatrice: elle n’exprime pas une réalité, mais l’idéal de Góngora... (qui) correspond sur le plan politique a l’idéal esthétique, moral et social qui s’était déjà exprimé dans les Solitudes.» *Etudes*, 306. There exist three different stages of ending in the earliest texts of the *Soledad segunda*. 1) The version in Vicuña’s edition (which is thought to reproduce the manuscript copies Góngora circulated around 1617). This ends at line 840 of the current text: «al viento esgrimían cuchillo vago». (The referent is the hunting hawks.) 2) The version published by Pellicer and Salcedo Coronel after Góngora’s death in 1627 adds the section which runs up to line 936: «heredado en el último graznido». 3) The version published by Juan Chacón around 1624, apparently with Góngora’s consent, has in addition a sort of coda of forty three lines running from line 937 to the end, describing the end of the hunting and the retirement of the hawkling party along a beach. It is this section I want to deal with here. On the question of the different stages of ending of the *Soledad segunda* see Dámaso’s careful study in his Góngora, *Obras mayores: Las Soledades* (Madrid: Cruz y Raya, 1935), 312-23.