

Góngora's "Esperando están la rosa": A Garden of Heraldry and Symbolism

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Luis de Góngora's "Esperando están la rosa" (1609), a *romance* filled with images of the arrival of spring in Spain, has been interpreted only as a lyric poem. An analysis of the text, however, reveals that Góngora alludes to people and events of his day through descriptions of flowers, trees, and ponds. Although scholars such as Dámaso Alonso, Robert Jammes, Antonio Carreira, Biruté Cipliauskaitė, Antonio Carreño, R. O. Jones, David Garrison, R. John McCaw, John R. Beverley, Melinda Eve Lehrer, and Marsha S. Collins, to mention just a few, have produced anthologies, critical editions, and studies of the bard's verse, very little has been written about his masterful use of botanical and aquatic symbols as commentary on specific individuals and occurrences of his lifetime. It is Góngora's innovative employment of this imagery that distinguishes his *romance* and his poetry from that of his Spanish contemporaries.

"Esperando están la rosa" is a beautiful verbal picture of a garden as a court with a rose as its queen, violets as its *meninas*, and other flowers as its members. Each flower, as well as the ornamental ponds, has attributes linking it to a courtier, and like other Renaissance and Baroque poets, Góngora depicts with floral references the evanescence of life and the disappearance of power and prestige:

Las flores a las personas
ciertos ejemplos les den:
que puede ser yermo hoy
el que fue jardín ayer.
(Carreño 330, lines 93-96)

As the bard elaborates on the outdoor scene, similarities arise between historical figures at the palace of King Philip III and the text's botanical and aquatic images, suggesting that Góngora had certain people in mind when he composed his ballad. Although the reader might be skeptical about the idea of comparing a flower or plant to a specific person in the court, clear analogies emerge and grow in number from the initial to the final line of the *romance*, transforming the garden into a political and social place.

The poem, which has the epigraph "Del palacio de la primavera," begins with all of the flowers of the garden waiting to greet the rose, the "Reina de las flores" (Carreño 326, line 9). Since the rose is deemed to be "a symbol of completion, of consummate achievement and perfection" (Cirlot 263), it is not surprising that this grand flower would assume the role of queen in the *romance*. Upon her arrival at the palace, the rose, protected by her thorns, her bodyguard of archers (cf. Jones 156), is depicted as standing majestically for everyone to view. Likewise, Margaret of Austria, Spain's queen in 1609, had the "Noble Guardia de Arqueros de Corps," which the Austrians introduced into Spain in the sixteenth century (Navarro, Monterero, and Porras 7), to guard her, and the unit's major defensive weapons were not bows and arrows but rather lances with large protruding blades (cf. Carreño 326-27).¹

The purple of the rose's petals identifies the flower as a rose of Castile or old Spanish rose which was brought from Damascus to Spain and cultivated there (Gilmer 1). According to the article "Rosa (Old Spanish Rose Rose)," this flower comes in shades of red and purple and is known for having magenta petals which fade to mauve. The loss of color characteristic of the bloom reflects Queen Margaret's delicate health and coincidentally foreshadows her untimely death from complications of childbirth in 1611. In addition, Góngora's metaphors representing some members of the court as seeking the queen's favor and others as not daring to express their admiration or love bring to mind in part the machinations of the Duke of Lerma (Francisco Sandoval y Rojas), the king's favorite, and in part the plans of supporters of Austrian Hapsburg interests. During the reign of Philip III, the queen and her Jesuit confessor, Richard Haller, were repeatedly at odds with Lerma and his foreign policy which focused Spain's attention on the Iberian Peninsula (Sánchez, "Confession and Complicity" 144-45). Thus the queen and backers of the Austrian Hapsburgs constantly had to work around the duke who behaved much as a drone bumble bee or the Cupid of the flowers in the *romance*.

que el Cupido de las flores
 es la abeja y, si lo es,
 sus flechas abrevia todas
 en el agujón cruel.
 Ella, pues, las solicita,
 y las despoja después;
 por señas, que sus despojos
 son dulces como la miel.
 (Carreño 327, lines 29-36)

¹ José Martínez Millán and María Antonietta Visceglia (1015) note that the duty of the archers, who usually executed their job on foot, was to accompany and protect the monarch (1015). To do so, they relied on a large knife called an *aguja* which they carried across their shoulders.

Whereas the European honey bee is dark brown and mustard in color, the bumble bee is black and yellow (“Everything about Honey Bee” and “Everything about Bumble Bee”). Each type of drone bee is without a stinger (the only *aguijón* being its reproductive organ) and has the job of fertilizing the queen (“Everything about Honey Bee”). Unlike the male honey bee, the drone bumble bee forages for and collects the nectar of flowers (“Everything about Bumble Bee”), the sweet spoils referred to by Góngora. By comparing the insect in the poem to Cupid soliciting flowers and then deserting them, the poet draws a parallel between the drone bumble bee and Lerma. As told by Salvador Miranda in his “General List of Cardinals (112-2007),” the duke wooed and became betrothed to a rich widow, the countess of Valencia, who the *valido* later jilted, cancelling the wedding which was to take place in 1610 and causing the abandoned lady to feel very resentful (cf. Cabrera de Córdoba 418; 421). Moreover, just as the bee steals nectar from the flowers, Lerma is reputed to have pillaged the country, depriving its citizens of their wealth and power as well as taking advantage of the king’s favor to enrich his relatives, friends, and self (Feros 181). Acting as a drone, he had access to the queen, and he tried hard to control her contact with Austrian sympathizers or with anyone whose political motives were contrary to his own. Appropriately, the escutcheon of the Sandoval family has a *field* (“surface”) *or* (“gold”) with a *bend* (“band”) *sable* (“black”)—the colors of the bumble bee.² The Duke of Lerma’s shield is parted *per pale* (“vertically”): the *dexter* (“bearer’s right”) half *or* has a *bend sable* (the Sandoval coat of arms), and blazoned on the *sinister* (“bearer’s left”) half *or* are five *mullets* (“stars”) of eight *azure* (“blue”) (the Rojas escutcheon).³

While the bee visits the flowers in Góngora’s poem, the carnation is seen as elegantly displaying the colors of the rose queen for it is her prince. Obviously, the carnation personifies Spain’s heir to the throne, Philip IV, who, in Juan Pantoja de la Cruz’s 1607 picture, *The Infantes Don Felipe and Doña Ana*, is painted wearing black and silver clothing and a large whitish gray ruff. Although the artist, in a note sent to the accountants of Queen Margaret, states that the child’s outfit is that of a monk (Reuter 264), the little boy appears regal sitting in a throne-like *carretón* on a red carpet; there “the discreet curtains folded back on the upper-left corner of the image ‘crown’ the future Felipe IV” (Reuter 264).⁴ Also, around 1607, Pantoja de la Cruz portrayed the

² For the layman the gold (*or*) of a shield is represented in art by either yellow paint or gold leaf (Franklyn and Tanner 244, s. v. *or*). Throughout the article I have italicized the heraldic terminology and, as is generally done, placed the names of *tinctures* (“furs, colors, or metals”) after the noun.

³ The *bend sable* on the duke’s escutcheon is a thick black band extending diagonally from the upper right corner of the shield’s *dexter* half to the lower left corner of the same half. See the illustration of the Sandoval shield in Grixalba (273). See also the description and drawing of the Rojas shield in Elián (234).

⁴ Giménez and Serraller provide a picture of this painting housed in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (265).

sovereign lady in his work *Doña Margarita of Austria* in which she poses attired in a magnificent black dress with ornate red and silver sleeves and a large two-toned collar of gray and white. Like her son, she stands before a red curtain.⁵ Not only are the hues used to depict the prince, his mother, and the background in the paintings quite similar, but, as mentioned above, the flower chosen by Góngora to symbolize the young boy blooms in the *romance* in the shades identified with the garden's queen, the purple (*Diccionario de Autoridades* 1: pt. 2, 375, s. v. *CLAVEL*) and red of the rose of Castile.

Góngora continues to report on the many flowers of the palace garden in the succeeding strophes of "Esperando están la rosa," noting individual reactions to the arrival of the rose. For example,

En viéndola, dijo: "¡ay!"
 el jacinto, y al papel
 lo encomendó de sus hojas
 porque se pueda leer.
 (Carreño 327-28, lines 41-44)

Accidentally struck and killed by a discus thrown in a game, and soon after transformed into a flower, the beautiful Hyacinthus displayed on his petals an epigraph of his initials or, perhaps, an inscription of the Greek word meaning "alas," a memorial of Apollo's great sorrow for having caused the tragedy (Hamilton 88-89).⁶ Known by the deceased's name, the plant, however, is not the one seen today; it was, rather, a red martagon lily with spots forming the letters *ai* (*ay*) (Kent 220) or a type of iris or larkspur (*delphinium Aiacis*), as each has the markings detailed in the story ("Hyacinthus").⁷

⁵ The portrait is located in the Prado Museum, Madrid. See also the website *Ciudad de la pintura* (<http://pintura.aut.org/>).

⁶ In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the flower is described as bearing the letters *ai*, *ai* (*ay*, *ay*) (240; bk. 10). Cf. the article "Hyacinthus" which states that Apollo was teaching Hyacinthus to pitch the quoit. See also Covarrubias who comments that Zephyr, jealous of the youth's friendship with Apollo, is blamed for deliberately blowing the discus so that it would fall on Hyacinthus's head (709, s. v. *JACINTO*). Cf. Carreño 327 and "Hyacinthus."

⁷ Hamilton explains that the hyacinth was "lily-shaped and of a deep purple, or, some say, a splendid crimson" (88). According to Elizabeth Kent poets always speak of the purple hyacinth, but the modern purple is more of a deep blue, and the blossom of today is frequently blue-purple, seldom approaching the Roman shade which resembled a light crimson (*Flora Doméstica* 220). Unlike the hyacinth in Góngora's poem, the one presently identified as the harebell or the common, wood, or English hyacinth (although it is native to Persia and many parts of Europe) is also called a *hyacinthus non-scriptus* because it does not have the *ai* (see Kent 219; Thomas Martyn qtd. in Kent 219). Kent believes that Martyn has determined the ancient hyacinth to be the martagon lily, but she admits that Linnaeus and others consider it to be the larkspur (245). Cf. Covarrubias who reports that the hyacinth could be a kind of violet (709, s. v. *JACINTO*).

In Góngora's *romance* the *ay* is an exclamation of awe first uttered by the hyacinth upon seeing the lovely queen and subsequently recorded on its blossom for all to read. In both the mythological tale and Góngora's poem, the hyacinth's petals are recognized for this characteristic look. In addition, the name Hyacinthus is associated with a physically attractive man, and according to Miguel Artigas, the nicest and handsomest one at the court of Philip III was Pedro Fernández de Castro (the seventh Count of Lemos), the nephew and son-in-law of Lerma (14). Lemos attended to and upheld Lerma's interests in the kingdom, just as the hyacinth assists the bee in the *romance*. A *mecenas*, the count was a patron of Góngora, who addressed several poems to him,⁸ and a supporter of Miguel de Cervantes, who dedicated to Lemos many of his works, including the second part of *Don Quijote* (see Cervantes 2: 525). Most notably, though, is the fact that the Castro escutcheon has a *field argent* charged with six *roundels azure (heurts) in pale* ("deep blue disks in twin vertical rows") (see Schnieper Campos and Rosado Martín 108), a design imitating the form and color of the hyacinth (larkspur) found in the Europe of Góngora's lifetime.

Present with the hyacinth in the *romance's* garden is the jasmine, a hypocrite whose "white garb is belied by its heady scent that invites to love" (Jones 156):

Ámbar espira el vestido
del blanco jazmín, de aquel
cuya castidad lasciva
Venus hipócrita es.¹⁰
(Carreño 328, lines 45-48)

Suggestive of the duplicity of the jasmine and symbolic of the palace is the Guzmán coat of arms which has a *field azure* with a castle *or* and a *bordure argent* charged with *ermine* ("white fur with black tails") (see Schnieper Campos and Rosado Martín 161). Like the castle, a major icon for the monarchs and their court, the fur is important; it is a sign of both purity, as in Leonardo da Vinci's portrait *Lady with an Ermine* (c. 1490), and

⁸ See the following sonnets in Millé y Giménez and Millé y Giménez: "Al conde de Lemus, yéndole a visitar a Monforte" (484); "En la partida del conde de Lemus y del duque de Feria a Napoles y a Francia" (491, the missing accent mark on "Napoles" is correct); "Al conde de Lemus, viniendo de ser virrey de Nápoles" (509-10); and "De las muertes de don Rodrigo Calderón, del conde de Villamediana y conde de Lemus" (523-24).

⁹ The *tincture argent*, represented by white in art, refers to the heraldic metal silver (see Franklyn and Tanner 14-15, s. v. *argent*).

¹⁰ Cf. Remiro de Navarra: "Es la religión de las damas la viudez, y son las peores de todas, porque vestidas a lo mogigato con mucha propiedad, su castidad lasciva Venus hipócrita es" (95 and qtd. in Carreira 2: 192).

eroticism, as in the first tercet of Góngora's "Descaminado, enfermo, peregrino"¹¹ (1594) in which a *serrana*, "entre armiños escondida," assaults a traveler (Wardropper 166).

Embodying the dual nature of the jasmine and the fur on the shield is Magdalena de Guzmán, who was the Marchioness of Valle and the widow of Martín Cortés de Monroy (the son of Hernán Cortés). At the court, Guzmán held the important positions of lady-in-waiting to the queen (Stachel 1) and governess to Princess Anne, the future Anne of Austria (Feros 96), but unfortunately, she became caught up in amorous and political scandals. In one case, the biographers of the second Count of Villamediana, Juan de Tassis, claimed that the marchioness had a romantic relationship with him. The affair, which ended badly, was documented in a sonnet by an anonymous author (Stachel 1). The poem circulated around the city of Madrid, stating that the count "no se portó muy bien con ella y aún le llegó a poner la mano encima" and that, for this reason, Guzmán simultaneously hated and loved Villamediana (Stachel 1).

Similar to that of the jasmine, the marchioness's dual reputation was evident in another role which she played from 1601 to 1603. According to Magdalena Sánchez, Guzmán was supposed to be Lerma's spy on Queen Margaret, but the marchioness, who gained much power through her office, ultimately won the favor of the queen and became a threat to Lerma (*The Empress* 160-61). Sánchez goes on to explain that in 1603 the duke ordered the marchioness to be taken out of the palace and sent over to the fortress of Simanca where she was tried for abuse of her office and sentenced along with her niece, Ana de Mendoza, to house arrest in Logroño (*The Empress* 161). Although freed in 1608, the women were not permitted in the court, and Guzmán did not return there until after the death of Philip III (Sánchez, *The Empress* 161; cf. Feros 96-97).

Scandals like those involving Guzmán affected other courtiers, especially Pedro Téllez-Girón (the third Duke of Osuna), a nobleman who behaved in a manner harmful to women. Akin to the handsome Narcissus from mythology, Osuna was self-absorbed.

¹¹ Da Vinci's painting of Cecelia Gallerani, the mistress of Ludovico Sforza (the Duke of Milan), hangs in The Princes Czartoryski Museum in Cracow. Regarding the significance of the animal, see the website *The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston*: "To Leonardo the ermine was a symbol of moderation and purity." See also Anthony Mason who, in commenting on Leonardo's drawing *The Ermine as a Symbol of Purity*, notes that the artist thought this mammal "would rather be taken by a hunter than escape into a dirty lair" (17). Of interest are Cecelia's surname, which is a pun on the Greek word for ermine, and the fact that this weasel is an emblem of the duke who was endowed in 1488 with the Order of the Ermine (*The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston*). See verses 9-11 of Góngora's sonnet in Millé y Giménez and Millé y Giménez: "Salió el Sol, y entre armiños escondida, / soñolienta beldad con dulce saña / saltó al no bien sano pasajero" (462). The *serrana* physically and emotionally assaulted the wanderer (Wardropper 166) who was lovesick from a previous relationship (Alonso 2: 150; Salcedo Coronel qtd. in Alonso 2: 150).

However, whereas Narcissus rejected the advances of adoring maidens and caused the disappearance of the nymph Echo, only to fixate on and fall in love with his own reflection in a pool, Osuna paid much attention to women. Like the duke in this respect, the narcissus in Góngora's *romance* ceased to stare at its own reflection in a fountain so as to admire the rose and other plants in the garden:

La fuente deja el Narciso,
que no es poco para él,
y ya no se mira a sí,
admirando lo que ve.
(Carreño 328, lines 49-52)

Yet, Osuna was said to have loved and left his women.¹² Besides fathering a son and a daughter (Juan and Antonia) with his wife, Catalina Enríquez de Ribera (Linde 369), he had children from extramarital affairs (cf. Linde 300). At the time Góngora wrote “Esperando están la rosa” in 1609, the duke had at least three offspring—Juan, born in 1598 (Linde 369), and Pedro (b. 1606) and Ana María (b. 1607 or 1608), both conceived in a relationship with a Flemish woman, Elena de Gambe (Linde 55).¹³ Osuna's amorous escapades included adventures in Flanders which, together with his status as the second son from an important noble family, make it easy to see him as the model for Tirso de Molina's Rodrigo Girón in the play *El castigo del pensequé* (cf. Linde 261). Consequently, the duke's focus on women, which parallels the attraction of Góngora's narcissus to flowers in the garden, emphasizes the fact that Osuna “was known for the reckless dissipation of his life” (“Pedro Téllez Girón Osuna”).

The correlation between the narcissus and the duke is also apparent in heraldry.¹⁴ The Téllez coat of arms has a *field or* with twenty-four half moons *azure*. Arranged in six equal groups so that the points in each group touch, the half moons create yellow flowers outlined in blue. These six blossoms, which resemble one type of narcissus, the daffodil, appear in twin vertical rows of three (Schnieper Campos and Rosado Martín 231). Furthermore, on the website *Grandes de España*, the tinctures of the escutcheon for Téllez Girón (the Duchy of Osuna) are *or*, *gules*, and *argent*, the colors of the different varieties of narcissuses found throughout Spain.

¹² For information on Osuna's love affairs, see Linde 41-42 and 300-02.

¹³ Born later were Rodrigo, Osuna's Sicilian son, and Pietrina, a daughter he supposedly begot in Naples, the result of an amorous fling with the Marchioness de Campo Lataro (Linde 289).

¹⁴ In the story of Narcissus, Hamilton reports that a new kind of flower blossomed where the youth had died (88), and in a tale about Persephone being swept away to the underworld as she was trying to gather narcissuses, Hamilton explains that this flower was “not like ours of that name, but a lovely bloom of glowing purple and silver” (86). Concerning Osuna, the analogy is with the species common to the Spain of Góngora's lifetime and known to the reader of today.

Amidst the array of blooms in the *romance's* garden, another, the *lilio* (*lirio*), stands out. Looking more like a crudely shod Portuguese than like a Spaniard, this flower, a species of iris or lily, envies the attire of the other plants that have arrived at the palace:

¡Oh, qué celoso está el lilio,
un mal cortesano que
calza siempre borceguí:
debe de ser portugués!
(Carreño 328, lines 53-56)

According to Covarrubias the *borceguí* was a half-boot which, as is made evident by an old *romance*, was often worn by the Moors:

Héle héle por do viene
El moro por la calzada,
Borceguíes marroquíes,
Espuela de oro calzada.¹⁵

In Góngora's text it is compared to the light brown bracts out of which the *lilio* emerges (Jones 156; Alonso 2: 57), and referring to the plant as a "lily," Jones explains that the *lilio* "must be Portuguese since the Portuguese did not affect elegant or courtly footwear" (156). They usually dressed in baize and wore boots as Góngora implies in verse 8 of the sonnet "¿En años quieres que plural cometa" (Salazar Coronel qtd. in Salcedo Coronel 676; Carreño 328). Additionally, Carreño (226) notes that, in verse 108 of Góngora's burlesque text "Dejad los libros ahora," the word *borceguí* alludes to *pudendas* (see also Alemany y Selfá 150, s. v. "Borceguí") and that Millé y Giménez (1107) believe this line ("¡Oh maldito borceguí!") is directed against a Portuguese mulatto. Thus, in "Esperando están la rosa," the *borceguí* is clearly brown, and the lily or iris, which closely resembles the *fleur-de-lis*, is probably white as in Góngora's poems "Mientras por competir con tu cabello" (1582) and "Los rayos le cuenta al sol" (1580).¹⁶

¹⁵ Covarrubias defines the *borceguí* as follows: "bota morisca con soletilla de cuero, que sobre él se ponen chinelas o zapatos" (231, s. v. *BORCEGUÍ*).

¹⁶ Directed to a lady, the sonnet's celebrated verses are: "mientras con menosprecio en medio el llano / mira tu blanca frente al lilio bello" (Millé y Giménez and Millé y Giménez 447). Concerning the hand of Jacinta, the *romance* reads: "mas ¿qué mucho si el abril / la vió obscurecer los lilios / que blancos suelen salir" (Carreño 90, lines 7-9). Cf. Carreira who cites lines from Gaspar Aguilar's *Fábula de Endimión y la Luna* and concludes: "El lilio está celoso por el color azulado que ostenta" (2: 192).

The bard's description of this flower is symbolic of the vestments of the Augustinians, which are brown and white as well as black,¹⁷ and it evokes the image of Fray Pedro de Maldonado, the eminent Augustinian who was Lerma's confessor. Although the leading religious figures at the court of Philip III were the Jesuits, Diego de Guzmán and Richard Haller, Maldonado also played a major role there for he was instrumental in defending the job and helping to legitimize the power of the king's *valido*. Much like the duke, who acted as a protector of Góngora, the friar supported Lerma by writing a manuscript, "Discurso del perfecto privado," which was finished in 1609 (Feros 119), the year in which Góngora created his *romance*. The text "described the favorite as the 'noblest and most virtuous part of the monarchy' (just below the ruler) and claimed that the existence of favorites responded to the natural order of things ordained by God."¹⁸ Finally, the name *Maldonado* has its roots in both Spain and Portugal, and the *field* on the family escutcheon is *azure* with five *fleurs-de-lis argent* in *sotuer* (Schnieper Campos and Rosado Martín 182).¹⁹

Besides being adorned with the flowers already mentioned, the garden in Góngora's ballad is further embellished with white musk-roses and dainty carnations, "ladies of the bower" (Churton 2: 91), for whoever wants to enjoy gazing at them. With the exception of a few people, the Duke of Lerma planned for his relatives and creatures to occupy the main positions of influence in, and to impose his authority on, Margaret's household (Feros 97). As many as fifteen of her ladies-in-waiting were his daughters, daughters-in-law, nieces, and other kindred (Feros 98).²⁰ Among these *damas* of the queen were the *dueñas de honor*, women with seniority or social distinction, in particular her *privada*, María Sidonia Riederer (Feros 168), and Princess Anne's governess, Magdalena de Guzmán (Feros 96), who are likened by Góngora to *azucenas*. These "Matrons of the Robes" (Churton 2: 91) were in charge of the queen's garments and linens, but in appraising their apparel, Churton contends that never "Did Matron match, with pearls or lace, / The Lily's snow-white stomacher" (2: 91). Nonetheless, the ladies of the court had their admirers, men such as the second Count of Villamediana. During Góngora's day, the count was linked romantically to several women, notably to Philip IV's queen, Isabel, to a Portuguese lady, Doña Francisca de Tavora, and, of course, to Margaret's *dueña de honor*, Magdalena de Guzmán.²¹ Comments by the modern critics

¹⁷ For details on the clothing of the Augustinians, see "Costume, Ecclesiastical."

¹⁸ I quote from Feros (119). He bases his statement on one of the many copies of Maldonado's manuscript located in the Spanish archives, Mss 18721/48 (n.p.) of the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid.

¹⁹ Cf. Grixalba who describes the shield as having a *field gules* (198).

²⁰ Also, various individuals exploited their favor with Lerma to gain an office in the queen's domestic establishment where they were to serve as sources of information for the duke (Sánchez, *The Empress* 39). However, once at their posts, some of these people acted like Magdalena Guzmán and worked against Lerma (Sánchez, *The Empress* 39).

²¹ According to Alonso, Hartzenbusch proposes that one theory for Villamediana's demise was that the count rivaled Philip IV for the love of the Portuguese lady (2: 187). Alonso adds that another

Antonio Comas and Juan Reglá attest to Villamediana's reputation as an "hombre arrogante, refinado y de extraordinaria sensibilidad" with four vices, "mujeriego, pervertido, jugador, maldiciente," which led to his expulsion from the court of Philip III at least twice (212; cf. Ruiz Casanova 18-19).

In the *romance* under discussion here, the laurel is representative of Villamediana, as it is in Góngora's sonnet "Al tronco descansaba de una encina." Belonging to Apollo, this tree stands for poetic talent, a major characteristic of the count,²² and in the ballad, the laurel holds three nightingales captive, indicating the strength of Villamediana's lyrical words. According to Pliny (bk.10, ch. 29), an excellent presage of a nightingale predicted wonderful music when she sang sweetly in the mouth of the Greek, Stesichorus, who eventually became one of the best choral bards of all time.²³ Similarly, the birds in the tree are suggestive of the high rhythmic quality of Villamediana's poetry which, like the nightingale's song, had foreseeable results; his satirical verses criticizing important men and his daring amorous lines courting prominent ladies almost certainly caused his death.

In keeping with the description of Villamediana's personality, the Tassis escutcheon has a *field or* with a *fess* ("horizontal band") *argent* which is charged with a black bear. According to Cirlot this animal is associated with instincts and denotes the man who is cruel and crude (22). Villamediana attacked in his poetry anyone in public office or with great influence or favor, from the most inconsequential apparitor to the powerful *privado* Lerma and the mighty confessor of the monarch (Barrera y Leirado 481). When the count was slain on the Calle Mayor in Madrid in 1622 (Wardropper 216), Góngora lamented the assassination in his "Al tronco descansaba de una encina," and nearly two and a half centuries later, Barrera y Leirado summarized in one definitive sentence the reason for Villamediana's tragic end: "Con dolor traza la pluma el nombre de este malogrado ingenio, víctima ejemplar y desgraciada de sus extravíos y de sus propios talentos" (479).

The political and social intrigues involving the count and others grew and flourished at the court of Philip III as alluded to by the botanical imagery in Góngora's *romance*. However, besides being adorned with flowers and trees, the palace grounds in the poem are landscaped with ponds which Góngora compares to buffoons. Unfortunately, except in unusual cases, there is no information about the birth, situation, or families of these individuals (Moreno Villa 16), although it is known that, in

theory, also put forth by Hartzbusch, was developed by Narciso Alonso Cortés who suggests that Villamediana was killed because he participated in homosexual activity (2: 187). Luis Rosales's book, however, confirms the theory that Villamediana's love for Queen Isabel was the major cause of the count's murder (cf. Alonso 2: 187).

²² See Wardropper (216) regarding the significance of the laurel in Góngora's sonnet.

²³ Stesichorus was considered by the ancients to be a principal lyric poet and, within his art, a superb choral poet of the Dorians. The themes of his works were mainly heroic (Peck 1497-98).

the fifteenth century, the buffoons distinguished themselves for their undue influence, lewdness, and dangerous witticisms, whereas by the seventeenth century, they seemed to be tame, domesticated, and above all, numerous (Moreno Villa 24). Their cheerful or amusing aspect made their presence at court understandable, but their contemporaries held a grudge against them, either because they were very much favored, or because they abused their positions of trust (Moreno Villa 32-33). In general the jesters acted as messengers and spies, influenced public opinion with their diatribes and criticisms, and played a useful part in service to the crown (Moreno Villa 33).

According to Churton, the Court Fool of King Philip III (a man called Alcocer or Alcocerico) was possibly a Morisco whose amusing mimicry of Queen Margaret would have been even funnier, if he had chosen to speak in broken Castilian like Alcuizcuz in Calderón's play *Amar después de la muerte* (1:80-81). Luis Cabrera de Córdoba reports that, on St. John's Eve in 1605, Alcocer assumed the role of the queen in a masque at the palace of the Ventosilla (253). Fernando Bouza summarizes Cabrera de Córdoba's account of the dramatic entertainment:

[Alcocer] representaba la *parte* de la reina Margarita de Austria en una máscara "disfrazada a lo pícaro" celebrada en el palacio de la Ventosilla, y que remedaba la llegada de la embajada del Almirante de Inglaterra a Valladolid para la ratificación del tratado hispano inglés ese mismo año—el conde de Nottingham fue encarnado por el capón Sevillano, el cardenal don Bernardo de Sandoval y Rojas por un cochero y el propio duque de Lerma por uno de sus criados. (70)

Bouza adds that the buffoons at court were frequently given the titles of noblemen or royalty, probably as a joke, but one in which the least significant person would appear to be very important (142). As indicated above, the *gente de placer* at times pretended to be monarchs and other grandees, and "por un momento la sabandija fing[ió] ser el águila y esto también forma[ba] parte de su laborioso quehacer de hazmerreír de cada día" (Bouza 142).

Regarding Alcocer, his name can be traced to Sancho Sánchez de Alcocer, the son of King Sancho II of Navarra (Grixalba 63). A description of the Alcocer shield, which is divided *per pale*, follows: the *diestra* half has a *field argent* with an eagle *sable*; the *sinistra* half shows a *field sinople* with a *bend or* flanked by twin *mulletts* of eight *or*, each end of the *bend* in the mouth of a serpent head *gules*; and the *bordure gules* is charged with eight *sotueres or* (Grixalba 63). The correspondence between the depiction on the escutcheon and what little is known about the buffoon Alcocer correlates well with the relevant verses in Góngora's poem. For example, the eagle is both a symbol of St. John the Evangelist (Wade 73), as seen in a painting by Gabriel Maelesskircher, and a heraldic

bearing for the monarchs of Spain.²⁴ Alcocer, a *sabandija* (here, a “jester,” and a “reptile” in the figurative sense), played the part of Queen Margaret (an *águila*) at the festival of St. John. Moreover, the shield’s serpent heads represent the *sabandijas*—creatures living in or around the *romance*’s ponds compared by Góngora to buffoons. The *sabandijas*’ goal of obtaining money is conveyed by those same heads “devouring” the *bend or* and by the presence of the eagle, a bird of prey that the jesters imitated, charges which may have inspired the poet to write about the buffoons’ rapacity, and not just their comedic endeavors, in his ballad’s concluding strophes. A few of these lines relate the unamusing humor of the jesters to *lo frío* of the ponds (cf. Jones 157), reflecting a criticism found throughout the *literatura cortesana* in which the *truhanes* were accused of a silliness in their gestures and a lack of wit in their jokes or pranks (Bouza 95).²⁵ In some of the other closing verses, the incessantly chortling buffoons are likened to the ponds which continually murmured, except that the latter made little noise for being as the jesters who boisterously solicited financial rewards, and in the penultimate strophe, neither of the two is said to lack water; the ponds clearly had enough of it, and the buffoons preferred to drink wine or to satisfy their pecuniary “interests” (cf. Jones 157; Carreño 329). In truth the *gente de placer* in the Spanish courts of the Austrians from

²⁴ The picture, *Saint John the Evangelist at His Desk with His Symbol the Eagle* (1478), hangs in the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Madrid (see also the website *Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza*). Appearing on the coat of arms of the *Reyes Católicos* (1492-1506), the *águila de San Juan*, usually black, although occasionally displayed *proper* (“in its natural color”), is shown with wings inverted and a halo behind its head (“Royal Standards of the Catholic Kings 1492-1506”). During the sixteenth century, the emblem was replaced with the Austrian two-headed eagle (“Royal Standards”), a symbol of Spain’s double empire (cf. Wade 72).

²⁵ Cf. Góngora’s poem entitled “A un bufón muy frío llamado Sotés, acatarrado de la burla que se refiere a la margen” which was written in 1614 (see Millé y Giménez and Millé y Giménez 360). Jestors were also the butts of practical jokes, some of which were not funny. As pointed out by Churton, Alcocer suffered pranks at the hands of young courtiers, although the presence of the Court Dwarf, Estanislao, and later that of another *enano*, Simón Bonamí, a Fleming sent to be the playmate of the prince (the future Philip IV) by the Archduchess Isabel, helped to relieve Alcocer of his troubles (1: 81). One example of a cruel trick played on the buffoon, for which he was offered an expensive gift as recompense, is recounted by Cabrera de Córdoba (257). I rely heavily on his narrative. In brief the story goes that the Princes of Saboya went with a group of servants who had harquebuses to surround an inn in which the buffoon was staying. After firing its weapons, the gang proceeded to knock down doors and make a lot of noise as it climbed to the place where Alcocer was sleeping. There, verbally abusing him (without his recognizing any of them), the invaders kidnapped their naked victim and wrapped and tied him in a blanket, all the while threatening to have him punished for his mischievous deeds. Alcocer became so afraid that he began to shout and ask for confession. In his sorry state he was paraded on a mule through the streets of Lerma and out of town to an inn in which the princes had lodging. After shackling the jester in a room there, his captors turned him over for ransom to the queen who, along with the king, knew of the practical joke. In the end a gold chain valued at one hundred and fifty *escudos* (the ransom) was given to the victim. However, the poor fellow felt so insulted by the ordeal that he refused the chain and remained very distraught for quite some time.

1563 to 1700 received a plethora of gifts for their service, items such as cash, clothing, jewelry, and furniture.²⁶

Overall, from Spain's jesters to its royalty and from its ponds to its flowers, the many things that one finds in the palace garden of Góngora's "Esperando están la rosa," when looked at collectively, provide the reader with a vivid picture of life in Philip III's kingdom. Although the poet could not have foreseen in 1609 every way in which his verses, "que puede ser yermo hoy / el que fue jardín ayer," would apply to the members of the Spanish court alluded to in his text, he was aware, of course, that the future is unpredictable, that fortunes are subject to change, and that people are mortal. Undoubtedly, he knew about the imprisonment of Magdalena de Guzmán, the scandals involving Osuna and Villamediana, and the unfavorable politics and corruption connected to Lerma, all major news of his day.

More significant than Góngora's message about the volatility of existence, however, is the fact that his *romance* is not just a lyric poem. The piece's botanical and aquatic images form a garden of symbolism, which, when viewed closely, reveals that its flowers, trees, and ponds stand for historical figures who are either portrayed in art or identified by heraldry.²⁷ Most important, though, is the realization that Luis de Góngora, the widely acclaimed *culterano* poet of Spain's Golden Age, was a keen observer of and masterful commentator on the current events of his lifetime.

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²⁶ See Moreno Villa for an extensive list of "Datos de todos los personajes por orden alfabético" (55-150).

²⁷ There are two exceptions: no particular *meninas* (violets) come to mind, and the identity of the *guardadamas* (cypress tree) is indeterminable.

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